

(GCSP/LAO/011/JPN)
SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR FOOD SECURITY
LAO PDR

Report of Joint Final Evaluation

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SPFS Project Lao PDR (GCSP/LAO/011/JPN) - Final Evaluation Report

Executive Summary

As the terminal date (31 August 2007) of this project approached, the final evaluation mission visited Lao PDR between 29 July and 7 August 2007. The mission comprised M. Kato (FAO), N. Tamura (Donor/Japan) and Soudchay Nhouyvanisvong (Lao PDR). This summarizes the main findings and recommendations of final evaluation report.

Main Findings

A. Relevance and adequacy of the project approach/design

i. Both the objectives and approach are clear and coherent, and quite relevant to the felt needs of the target groups (poor and food-insecure villagers) for their self-reliant development, food security and poverty alleviation as well as to the priority policy objectives of the Government for promoting food security and poverty reductions in poor rural communities. However, the design is rather optimistic with respect to the national implementation capacity and time frame.

ii. The features of the approach that are particularly appropriate include: (i) capacity building of the target Farmer Organizations (FOs) and Farmer Groups (FGs) for self-reliant development, (ii) improving FOs/FGs's productivity by implementing activities through Farmer Group Development Plans (FGDPs – planning tool for production activities implemented by FO farmers) and Revolving Fund System (RFS – mechanism for building resources for shared use based on paying back for inputs provided by the project), (iii) strengthening the capacity of the district agriculture/forestry extension staff (district support teams - DSTs), and (iv) linking the FOs/FGs and DSTs for planning and implementing production activities and facilitating access to improved technologies, inputs and markets.

B. Main Results

iii. The project implementation was slow during the first three years due to several factors, including changes in the number and location of target villages, high turnover and delayed recruitment of project staff, and cumbersome FAO arrangements for channeling the funds to the field sites. Since 2004, however, the implementation pace and process have shown considerable achievements with improved efficiency and effectiveness, especially in the recent years.

iv. Development of FOs/FGs – eight village FOs with a total of 1,008 households have been established as planned, making progress towards functional self-reliant units with their own rules and management arrangements. The members have developed strong sense of ownership of their FOs, and are learning how to plan and implement their

production activities through the use of FGDPs and the RFS resources. Since 2004 they have implemented some 270 activities with RFS inputs of Kip 585 million, with some FOs achieving considerable savings from the profits of their activities. However, the FOs are not yet sufficiently robust in their capacity to manage their activities, including management of FGDP and RFS processes. Constraining factors included the socio-economic and institutional limitations faced by the target groups (many FO members being minority tribes with low literacy), relatively short duration of actual implementation experience with the project approach (since 2004) and some technical weaknesses in the DSTs' support capacity.

v. Strengthening of DSTs – DSTs have been providing useful technical services to the FOs/FGs in the implementation of FGDP based activities (a total of 265), but their effectiveness has been uneven, with weaknesses in some important subjects, such as participatory development approaches, use of FGDP/RFS process, and marketing.

vi. Production and productivity improvement – considerable achievements have been made, including (i) increased area for paddy production due to the irrigation systems (230 ha in the dry season) as well as increased paddy production in the six FOs (those in operation since 2002) from 1, 200 tons to 2,300 tons between 2001 and 2006, with an average increase of 50% on per capita basis, (ii) crop diversification, especially cash crops, vegetables and fruits in practically all villages, often supported by better irrigation and water management, (iii) intensification and diversification of livestock production, with significant increases in the number of animals since 2001 (150% for pigs, 450% for goats, and 200% for poultry).

vii. Improved livelihood and food security – production increases, including diversified food supplies, much of which consumed in the villages, have contributed to improved food security in these villages. Between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of households with food insecurity (one to 6 months) declined in all the villages by 50% or more (from 90-98% to 12-40%). Similarly, the monthly incomes of households increased two- to three-fold in five of the six older FOs to some \$ 1,600 (\$330 percapita), with an increasing number of FO members having better access to key public services (health clinics, primary education, clean water supply, etc).

C. Conclusions

viii. Overall. Despite the initial delays, much improvement has been made in the project implementation since 2004. While progress in achieving the main planned results has been uneven with shortfalls in the capacity development of FOs as self-reliant and self-managing entities, significant progress has been made in improving food and agricultural production, achieving good advances in food security and reducing poverty. On the whole, the project approach has shown considerable promise of effectiveness in promoting food security and livelihood improvement as well as participatory community development in these poor rural areas. The FO members have embraced the approach and developed a strong sense of ownership (learning to be self-reliant and eager to learn new production techniques through FOs).

ix. Sustainability of project Results and Issues. The eight FOs have not yet achieved sustainable status, requiring further consolidation to achieve a more solid basis, especially for self-management and effective use of the FGDP/RFS processes. Similar needs also exist for strengthening the DSTs, including a longer need to strengthen the capacity of agricultural extension at district level. In view of the encouraging results achieved, it is urgent that the issue of how to sustain the project results be addressed, to the maximum extent under the framework of the current project, in the first instance.

Recommendations

x. With the project scheduled to terminate in three weeks, there are essentially two key issues. One is the immediate question of how to strengthen, to the maximum extent, the prospect for sustaining the project results. The other is what should be the follow-up to this project in order to make the best use of its results in national programmes and projects for rural development, including the possibility of up-scaling the project approach.

xi. Recommendations for Immediate Follow-up. It is recommended that the project's period is further extended by several months (if possible six months) within the authorized and available budget. During the extended period, the NPD and PMU team should be maintained in full strength, and the work should focus on the following three aspects:

- a) implementation of planned but delayed activities, especially those in support of capacity building of FOs towards greater sustainability as well as further strengthening of DST capacity in selected areas;
- b) conduct of a systematic assessment of the project's results and impact drawing on all the available data. Building on the earlier impact assessment, it should provide more systematic assessment, including the role played by the project in achieving the results. The findings should be widely shared with the national and international partners, and should provide a basis for decision on future follow-up to the project;
- c) contributing actively to the process of identifying and preparing proposals for follow-up, as appropriate.

xii. Recommendations for Longer-term Follow-up. Following are suggested: (a) the Government should review in depth the effectiveness and suitability of the project approach, using the above systematic results/impact assessment, before deciding specific follow-up measures; (b) the PMU should be maintained as a core team to support the planning and implementation of a follow-up project or programme; (c) NAFES may review the performance and experience of its extension approaches so as to ensure its services are relevant and delivered effectively to meet the needs of the rural communities, especially poorer smallholders.

I. Introduction and Background

A. Introduction

1. The SPFS project in Laos is part of a suite of four country projects funded by Japan (also two regional projects¹), all in support of implementing pilot projects in four Asian countries during 2001 and 2007 (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Laos and Sri Lanka). The Lao project, with original donor funding of US\$2,624,519, began implementation on May 2001 for five years with the terminal date of May 2006, which has been extended twice, first in 2006 to May 2007 with additional funding of US\$ 275,783, and then to August 2007 (the latter to allow for the final evaluation). Thus, the donor funding has amounted to US\$ 2, 900, 302, with the Government of Laos providing some US\$ 1,000,000 in kind. In accordance with the FAO procedures for evaluation, the three parties (the Government, the Donor and FAO) agreed to field the final evaluation mission during July and August 2007 covering all the four countries: the evaluation mission visited Lao PDR during 29 July and 7 August. The mission comprised Messrs. Masa Kato (team leader, FAO designated), Nariaki Tamura (agricultural development specialist, Donor designated) and Soudchay Nhouyvanisvong (Senior International cooperation officer, designated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry). The mission's Terms of Reference and itinerary are given in Annexes I and II, respectively.

B. Background

2. Lao PDR, with estimated GDP per capita of US\$ 416 (2005), is one of the Least Developed Countries (LDC) - 26% of its population living below the poverty line of US\$ one per day (2003) and some 21% being undernourished (during 2001-03). Over 80% of the population lives in rural areas and agriculture sector accounts for over 50% of GDP. While agriculture and rural sector is central to the socio-economic development and poverty alleviation of the country, the sector is largely subsistence oriented with low productivity, centered on rice cultivation largely in rain-fed conditions. Although low productivity and instability of production are an important aspect, the food security problem is also exacerbated by the access constraint, due to low purchasing power of the rural poor as well as transportation/marketing limitations.

3. The Government strategy on poverty reduction and food security has been evolving recently in the context of deepening of the New Economic Mechanism (NEM, introduced in 1986) with greater reliance of market forces and administrative decentralization for accelerated development. While initially, stress was on achieving rapid production growth (for agriculture the emphasis being on more favourable areas along the Mekong river basin), food security and poverty reduction have become one of the top development priorities with the intention of achieving by 2020 the MDG

¹ These are the project funding the Regional SPFS Coordinator, located in Jakarta, Indonesia (GCP/RAS/180/JPN) and another in support of the APFS Asia Information Management System, operated from FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (GCP/RAS/182/JPN).

development targets to graduate from the LDC status. In particular, the current Sixth National Socio- Economic Development Plan (2006-2010) has targeted the 47 poorest districts as priority for improving the food security and poverty problems. This evolution is reflected in the experience of this SPFS project.

4. This project was designed to support the Government policy for agriculture and rural development by evolving a replicable approach, initially for expanding food and agriculture production with emphasis on the central Mekong basin areas where irrigation based agricultural development had been promoted during 90's. As the project implementation began in May 2001, however, its focus shifted towards greater emphasis on food security in poorer districts, reflecting the emerging policy stress on addressing food security and poverty reduction issues. Specifically, the project's target sites were changed from the original ones (12 villages in 7 provinces) to selected villages in poorer districts. Since the reorientation in 2001, the project has been aimed at participatory community development of the eight villages of eight poor districts in five provinces (Luangnamtha, Oudongxay, Vientiane, Bolikhamxay and Champasak), covering a total of 1,008 households with population of 5,700.

5. The project is implemented by the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry through the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Organizations (PAFOs) and their district extension services. In particular, it is the National Project Director (NPD, who is also Deputy Director-General of NAFES) who manages and directs the project implementation, with support from the Project Management Unit (PMU, funded by the project budget, and comprising the National Field Manager (NFM) and four experts covering agronomy, livestock, forestry and irrigation. At the national level, the National Project Task Force (comprising the senior leadership of the Ministry) provides the overall policy guidance and coordination, and at the provincial level the Provincial Project Coordinator (senior staff of PAFO) plays the key management role by mobilizing the district extension staff (District Support Teams-DSTs) for the provision of extension support and production inputs to the villages through Letters of Agreement with the FAO Representative. Technically, the project has been backstopped by the Regional SPFS Coordinator (RSC).

II. Project Approach and Design

A. Project Objectives

6. Overall Objectives. The overall objective is to ensure that all people in Lao PDR at all times have access to the food they need for a healthy, active life and to alleviate poverty in rural communities, by increasing agricultural productivity as well as ensuring stability in year-to-year production.

7. Immediate Objectives. Although not formalized in the project document, the original five objectives² were replaced by three during the first year of the project implementation when the target project villages were changed. Since the revised objectives have guided the implementation process, these can be taken as the operative immediate objectives:

- a) strengthening national, provincial and district extension and communication system and capacity of rural communities through participatory planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of rural and agricultural development initiatives (support to decentralized planning and management);
- b) increasing food production and productivity through water control, crop intensification and diversification of production; and
- c) increasing household income and access to healthy and nutritious food through reducing post harvest losses, agro-processing and marketing of product and management of natural resources as important source of food.

8. These objectives are very relevant to both the policy priorities and the felt needs of the target villagers/farmers. At policy level, development of a practical and effective approach to rural community development with focus on food security and poverty reduction would be a valuable contribution to the Government effort in formulating a coherent strategy for accelerating development of the poor rural areas. In particular, the immediate objectives correspond to the needs of the target villagers and farmers for strengthening their community capacity for more effective development actions as well as accessing to improved technologies, production inputs and markets for their products.

B. Project Approach and Design

9. The project approach combines participatory community development of the target villages with providing technical and institutional support in accessing to technical know-how, production inputs and markets for improving food and agricultural production and income earning. In particular, it stresses strengthening the capacity of target groups (farmers and villagers) for more self-reliant development in terms of their mindset, institutional capacity and productive skills/assets. Technically, emphasis is on providing practical solutions for improving agricultural productivity, especially through better control and management of water resources, intensification of rice and other food production, as well as for diversifying agricultural production and non-agricultural income generation. In view of the pervasive constraints in human, institutional and technical resources at local levels, including the technical capacity of the agricultural

² These were: (i) to achieve sustainable food security through development of individual and community capacity to participate in planning, management and development of local physical and natural resources, (ii) to intensify crop production and increase food production by introducing, demonstrating, and promoting appropriate new technologies and practices to farmers, which will intensify and increase food production and ensure sustainable and participative water and soil management, in small scale irrigation schemes and under rain-fed conditions, (iii) diversify farm production and increase household incomes by introducing and promoting new cash and field crops and intensified livestock and fisheries production, (iv) improve quality, promote added-value and increase market access of agricultural products from villages, and (v) strengthen the capacity of provincial and district extension staff to provide effective support to farmers to improve on-farm water management and agricultural development.

service staff, stress is given to capacity building and incremental approach. In this regard, the project has included a South-to-South Cooperation (SSC) component involving a team of Vietnamese technical specialists and technicians to reinforce the capacity of PMU, PAFOs and DSTs in project implementation.

10. The approach is thus generally appropriate and coherent, and certainly much more so than the original one outlined in the project document. It has also been clearly articulated, and following can be highlighted, in particular:

- a) capacity building of the target Farmer Organizations (FOs) and Farmer Groups (FGs) for self-reliant development – poorer farmer households in each site form FO (part of the village organization) as their development institution to be managed by them, and within FO, several FGs through which farmers participate in project assisted production activities (normally these cover crops, livestock/fishery, forestry and water management);
- b) improving FOs/FGs's productivity through Farmer Group Development Plans (FGDPs) and Revolving Fund System (RFS) – each FO formulates a broad community action plan, which is translated into specific development micro-projects through FGs covering technical design, implementation process, and to the extent possible, budget and cash flows projections. The formulation of FGDPs is assisted by the district agricultural support staff (DST), assigned by the PAFO and supervised by the Provincial Project Coordinator. These FGDP micro-projects are supported with inputs from the project, which form the basis for the RF – these inputs are channeled through the PAFO through LoA, while major inputs, such as irrigation works, are procured through the contracts by FAOR;
- c) strengthening the capacity of PAFO staff, especially the DST staff - to strengthen their technical capacity, the staff are trained in those skills necessary for them to provide FOs/FGs with adequate technical support, especially for effective delivery of participatory extension; and
- d) linking the FOs/FGs and DSTs for planning and implementation of production activities and facilitating access to improved technologies, inputs and markets – such working link has been weak and the project is designed to fill this important gaps by organizing the farmers through FGDPs and RFS on one hand and supporting the PAFO in strengthening its extension capacity as outlined above.

III. Assessment of Project Implementation, Efficiency and Management

A. Overall Status

11. As mentioned above, the project implementation was affected during its first year in a major way, entailing changes in approach and target villages. As part of shift of emphasis towards addressing the needs of poorer districts, target villages/districts were changed both qualitatively and quantitatively: the 12 villages originally selected (in 7 provinces) were replaced by poorer 6 villages/districts in four same provinces (two

provinces were eliminated entirely, and only one of the original villages in the four provinces remained: two more villages in Champasak were added later in 2005. Further more, implementation was slow during the first three years due to several factors, including (i) high turnover of NPD and NFM and slow recruitment of project staff at various levels, (ii) changes in FAOR, (iii) cumbersome FAO arrangements for channeling the funds to the field (apart from larger inputs through individual contracts by FAOR, much of operational expenditures was covered through petty cash).

12. However, considerable improvements have been made since 2004, as the project staffing became more solid, its operational process became better organized with the introduction of the FGDP and RFS approach, and flow of project inputs was better organized through the use of Letters of Agreement for channeling inputs for FGDP/RFS (agreements between FAOR and PAFOs, introduced in the second half of 2004). As noted above, two villages (Pako in Sukhuma district and Makngeo in Bachieng district) of Champasak province were added to make the total target villages to eight. The pace of implementation has accelerated in recently years, and with the arrival of new NPD this year, there seems to be new momentum. Nevertheless, the delivery rate at the end of 2006 was some 83% of the approved budget, with substantial funds remaining.

B. Main Activities Implemented

13. Besides the preparatory work, such as PRAs and baseline survey of the target villages, the project implementation has covered following main aspects:

- a) capacity building of the PMU and DSTs in the project districts;
- b) formation and capacity building of FOs and FGs in the eight villages (six during 2002 and 2004, and eight since 2005), including the use of FGDPs and RFS;
- c) irrigation system development in all sites;
- d) intensification/diversification of food and agriculture production (crops, livestock, forestry and water management); and
- e) south-south cooperation with the Vietnamese technical team.

14. Capacity building of PMU, staff of PAFOs and district agriculture service staff, and DSTs. The PMU staff training included the main methodologies and tools used by the project, such as PRA and participatory surveys, community development planning, IPM/FFS, FGDP, RFS and monitoring and evaluation - many also participated in specialized workshops within Laos and abroad. They also provided the main technical resource persons for training of provincial and district staff as well as farmers. Training of the provincial and district staff, especially the DSTs has been a priority, especially during the initial years. The training has covered such subjects as agronomy, livestock and fishery, forestry, irrigation management, IPM and FFS, FGDP, RFS and project monitoring and evaluation.

15. Formation and capacity building of FOs/FGs. To date, eight FOs have been formed and developed as shown in Table 1. These FOs have been formed within the existing structure of village organization, covering most of the village households (especially the poor ones), and with their own rules and regulations, including their management

committees elected by the members. They have several FGs for project activities (normally crops, livestock/fishery, forestry, water management, and some also women groups). They have been trained mainly in technical subjects through “farmer field school” method, covering crops (production of key crops, such as rice, vegetable, fruit tree plantation, mushroom production, organic fertilizer, animal feed production), livestock management (pig and chicken production, animal health, vaccination programme, feeding system and feed production), aquaculture production, forestry (forestry management, non-wood forest product management, nursery management, forest plantation/reforestation, and community forest management) and irrigation (water management, water user group management, operation and management, gender and water use management). While they have been also exposed to the FGDP and RFS principles, their training on these subjects has been limited, except that the FO leaders, especially FG leaders, treasures and secretaries have been trained in related subjects, like book keeping and basic accounting skills.

Table 1: Name, Location and Features of Village Organizations				
Province	District	Village/FO Name	No of households	No of persons (annual income percapita, US\$)
Luangnamtha	Namtha	Namlue	101	441 (74)
Oudongxay	Xay	Nasenkham	167	880 (48)
Vientiane	Kasi	Sisangvone	53	267 (116)
Vientiane	Hineheub	Khonekeo	223	1,475 (117)
Bolikhamxay	Paksane	Kuay-Hinelath	118	544 (258)
Bolikhamxay	Bolikhane	Phonekhan	151	900 (172)
Champasak	Bachiang	Makngeo	65	382 (168)
Champasak	Sukhuma	Pako	130	818 (152)
Total			1,008	5,707

16. Irrigation System Development. This aspect was particularly emphasized initially, and in all six sites (except for the two in Champasak province, for which smaller schemes are planned but not yet constructed as of July 2007) considerable investments were made in irrigation systems (all handed over to the FOs in 2004 and 05). It is estimated that over US\$ 0.8 million have been spent for this (about one-third of total project expenditure³, by far the single largest component). However, many of the system had poor designs and have been plagued with cost-overruns, requiring substantial repair works - irrigation works in Namlue, Nasenkham and Phonekhan villages were destroyed by floods. For these six villages, the installed irrigation systems have a total of 470 ha of command area for wet season (ranging 21- 179 ha) to and 214 ha (5-87 ha) for dry season. Similarly, a total of 16 water user groups (between one and four at each site), with a total membership of 380, have been established and trained for operation and maintenance work. In all sites irrigation has become an important asset for intensified and diversified crop production, especially in the dry season.

³ One –third of the US\$ 2.566,600 excluding the support cost to FAO.

17. FGDP and RFS. Since their introduction in 2004, a total of 265 FGDP activities have been implemented by the members, involving a total of 2,082 farmers. The bulk was for crop production (187 or 71%), followed by livestock production (18%), women group activities (6%) and forestry development (5%). These FGDP activities have been supported by RFS resources from the project, totaling some 585.3 million Kips (about US\$ 60,000): as noted earlier, the cost of irrigation system and some other activities, like livestock vaccination programmes, were funded separately through contracts. Given the uneven capacity for working with FGDP and particularly RFS at GOs/FGs and DSTs levels, PMU staff had to spend considerable time in reviewing and correcting the work done at the district level. For technical aspects, farmers were trained in their activity subjects through “farmer field school” methods (centred on field demonstrations), together with guidance by the DST officers.

18. Intensification and Diversification of Crop Production. The focus has been on improving productivity of rice (the central concern of food security in these communities), through adoption of improved varieties and cultivation practices. While rice has been the central crop, an important consideration has been to promote cropping systems appropriate to the particular agricultural conditions and farmer’ needs through selection of suitable crops/varieties and diversification of crops. In this regard, improved water management through the irrigation improvements, together with access to better seeds and other inputs, has been an important factor for introducing improved technical packages and diversification of crops, especially for dry season production. Thus, besides rice, priority has been given to vegetables (cucumbers, beans, chili, tomato, eggplants, Chinese cabbage leafy vegetables, etc), cash crops (maize, Job’s tears, cotton and rubber) and fruit trees (mango, litchi, orange and lemon). Similarly, for income generation, mushroom production and beekeeping have been introduced to some villages.

19. Livestock and Fishery Production. While livestock has been part of farming systems in all of these sites, its development has generally lagged behind, and the project has promoted livestock for improved food security and cash income. For improved animal production and husbandry, emphasis has been on breed improvement, feed and fodder practices (especially use of by products), and housing/stable improvement as well as veterinary aspects, especially vaccination programmes – in the veterinary field, farmer volunteers were trained as village veterinary assistants. Pigs, chicken and goats have been popular among farmers, especially women. While fishery, especially aquaculture, has been a traditional activity with all villages having access to fishponds, it did not receive much attention through the project until recently. Since 2005 aquaculture activities began in four villages (Khonekeo, Sisangvone, Makngeo and Pako) with priority for introducing new species, supply of fingerings and feeding.

20. Forestry Activities. These have been particularly popular in the hill or mountainous areas (Namlue and Nasenkham in the north and Makngeo in Champasak plateau) with significant forest resources, including non-wood products, and where slash and burn shifting cultivation has been an important issue. Thus, focus has been on forest resource management, including reforestation, nursery management, community forestry, and non-wood forest resources management. In these villages with shifting cultivation practices,

considerable stress was given on promoting alternative and diversified production systems (combination of crops, livestock and non-agricultural income generation).

21. South-to-South Cooperation. Through this programme, with an estimated cost of some US\$ 430,000, two teams of Vietnamese experts and technicians, totaling 4 experts and 9 technicians provided technical support during 2001 and 2006 (first group of three experts and 7 technicians during 2001-2004 and second of one expert and two technicians for the Champasak villages during 2005 and 06). While their technical contribution (especially introduction of hybrid rice and bee-keeping) is well appreciated by the project staff, their effectiveness was undermined by the problems faced by farmers in adopting them immediately and by language barrier.

22. Other Aspects (agro-processing and awareness building on nutrition, food security and livelihood). Agro-processing has much potential in theory, but due to the generally slow pace of implementation and marketing constraints, it has proved impractical, perhaps premature, to promote this aspect. However, as production improves and links with markets are developed, there are likely to be much better prospects in the future. For nutrition, awareness raising activities started during last two years with focus on training of FO members, especially women. These activities covered such subjects as food processing and handling at household level, child and adult nutrition and health, and a total of 570 villagers have been reached through 27 training activities. Promoting better understanding of concepts like food security and livelihood oriented development was also pursued as part of the project activities through several workshops, especially for the project staff at all levels (including the staff of PAFO and DSTs).

C. Adequacy of Management

23. Efficiency of project implementation has been adversely affected, as noted above by several factors, especially during the first few years. Of particular importance in this respect has been the frequent changes in NPD (6 persons) and NFM (4 persons) as well as delays in recruitment of some PMU staff at the central level and some gaps in the DST staff. In general, however, the PMU staff has been hard working (actually filling gaps left in the uneven performance of DSTs, especially on the FGDP and RFS processes) and more broadly performance of the project has shown improvement more recently at all levels. The new NPD, who arrived in April this year, appears to have clear ideas about the nature of this project and how to direct and manage it in broader national development context.

D. Support Given by the Three Parties

24. Despite the unsatisfactory performance of the project during the early years (partly due to broader policy changes in the national development strategies as well as consequential reforms/reorganization in the Ministry), the Government has made efforts for improved execution, implementation and management of the project. In particular, a clearer direction is emerging for managing the project within the emerging national strategies for food and agriculture development. The Donor has been very supportive of

the project, including active participation of the mid-term review and provision of additional resources and extension of the project period by one year. FAO's record is more mixed in the context of its own on-going re-organization affecting the field operations: while it has provided adequate technical support, the frequent changes in the FAOR (four during the project period) and FAO's slow and complex financial arrangements for channeling the project funds have hampered the project implementation.

IV. Assessment of Emerging Results

A. Development of Self-Reliant Village Farmer Organizations

25. There is no survey assessing the operational status of the 8 FOs formed, and it is difficult to make generalizations regarding their functional status based on the brief visits to three of them (Nasenkham, Makngeo and Pako) and rather limited discussions with the project staff. Clearly, the progress made so far is below what is necessary to make them robust, fully functional organizations. Besides the relatively short time of implementation (some three years), it must be considered that these villages started from low levels, not only in terms of production technologies, but also in terms of overall socio-economic factors, including such basic aspects as languages and education. Further, the national implementation agency has some important limitations in its capacity to support adequately the FOs, especially at local levels.

26. Nevertheless, it can be said that on the whole a good start has been made towards developing the FGs into self-reliant farmer organizations. Farmers have developed strong sense of ownership of their FOs and FGs - they have their own rules and procedures, select their management committees, and can influence decisions of FOs/FGs. They also appreciate strongly the technical knowledge and skills they are acquiring through FOs/FGs and the contacts they have developed with the DSTs. Since 2004 they have been learning how to plan and implement their decisions regarding what and how to undertake through FGDP with their own resources, supplemented by the RFS. Most of them have been able to make good and important progress with the implementation of FGPD activities.

B. Use of FGDP and RFS

27. The FO members learned how to prepare community action plans as a framework for defining more precisely how to plan and implement individual FGDP micro-projects. However, learning how to work with the FGDP and RFS has been much more challenging for most members. Thus, while the FO/FG leaders have progressed in using these tools, most members at large are still at early stages in learning their application, and rely on assistance of DSTs and PMU staff. It seems that most FOs rely on the Provincial Coordinators and DSTs for operation and management of the RFS, and repayment rates for RFS loans are reportedly low (the average of some 40%) and highly variable. Clearly, FOs need further training and support to achieve greater capacity and autonomy, including making some of rules on interest and saving rates more transparent

and consistently applied. So far, collectively FOs have been able to implement over 270 FGDP activities with RFS inputs of Kip 642.8 million, of which Kip 57.4 million from their own savings from the incomes (the rest represents the project's inputs for establishing RFS).

C. Strengthening of Local Support Capacity

28. The structure established for supporting the FOs/FGs, involving PAFOs, district agriculture services and DSTs, has worked adequately in providing the farmers with technical information, advice and production inputs which they need: during field visits, both very positive and negative cases were observed. While the arrangement has not always worked well (with some important weaknesses), it represents a vast improvement for most farmers over the past when they seldom had such contacts. Some of the important areas for improvement include (i) strengthening of skills of DST staff in key subjects, such as community development, participatory approaches, FGDP and RFS (both more thoroughly) as well as in some technical areas like marketing, (ii) more systematic monitoring and reporting of the project activities by PAFOs and DSTs, and (iii) ensuring more systematic and integrated functioning of NAFES and PAFO at provincial, district and village levels as one support unit.

D. Food and Agriculture Production

29. The main results can be summarized as follows:

- a) area increased by irrigation – the total command area served by the systems amounts to 479 ha during the wet season and 230 has during the dry season. The benefit of better water control during the dry season has been particularly significant as it has made possible a second cropping of rice (a net addition of 230 has for rice) and other crops (e.g. vegetables) in dry season. The availability of additional fields for cultivation in the upland areas has also contributed to reduction of slush and burn area from 139 ha in 2001 to 29 has in 2006. However, two important issues are emerging on the irrigation. First, the high cost of electricity for operating irrigation pumps has become a major issue at many of the project sites, and secondly, it would be essential to ensure that the irrigation systems operate properly, and the systems are properly maintained, including active functioning of the WUGs;
- b) rice production – the area planted with rice has increased in both wet and dry seasons between 2001 and 2006: in the six villages (excluding the two in Champasak province), increase was from 480 to 517ha in wet season, and from zero to 213 ha in dry season. The yield level also increased by 20-70% to 3.5-4 ton/ha for the wet season crop, but overall yield levels in 2006 were similar between wet and dry seasons. In term of production, the total output of rice in the villages increased from 1,200 to 2,300 tons in the same period, with production per person increasing substantially (by 5 to 185 %), especially in poorer villages in the northern provinces and Vientiane province;
- c) other crop production – the lack of systematic data regarding production of crops other than rice makes it difficult to ascertain the production results of

these crops. However, as noted above, farmers have taken up production of an increasing variety of vegetables and cash crops, which have become important source of income in many villages: the 2006 survey shows “crops” has a significant share (2-15% but generally about 10%) of household incomes of the five villages with the data, and of these five villages only one village (Namlue in the north) reported higher share for paddy (22% versus 13% for crops);

- d) livestock production – through the FGDP micro-projects, farmers obtained new animals and learned to produce fodder, and to prepare feeds from the agricultural materials as well as to provide better stables and veterinary care. While animal diseases continue to be a major issue, some important progress has been achieved through vaccination programmes, periodic monitoring of animal diseases and the formation of a network of village veterinary assistants. Thus, the stock of main livestock animals in the project villages increased substantially between 2001 and 2006: buffalo by 7% to 750, cattle by 57% to 1,100, pigs by 144% to 1,900, goats by 363% to 370, and poultry by 135% to 22,600. Animal production has also contributed to a significant share in household income of the villagers, accounting on average for some 20%, with a range between 8 and 44 %;
- e) forestry, fishery and agro-processing – in forestry, four tree nursery farms established by the FGs (31 households) now produce some 40,000 seedlings in total for sale in the respective villages. Some 65ha has also been planted with fruit trees and rubber, involving some 55,000 seedlings. For fishery, aquaculture activities recently began through FGDP in the Champasak villages, but there is as yet no systematic data on production. Similarly, no specific activity has been implemented in the area of post-harvest and agro-processing.

E. Income Generation

30. So far, the main contribution of the project to income generation in the eight villages has been through agricultural production. In particular, as noted above, cash crops (maize, Job’s tears, rubber, cotton, and including paddy where it is marketed), vegetables and fruits (mango, litchi, orange and lemon) as well as livestock have been the major source of cash income, all together accounting for some 30-35 % of the household income – in some villages this proportion reaches nearly 80% (Namlue village) and 54% (Nasengkham village). In some villages, NTFPs, such as medicinal herbs, seem to form an important source of cash income (11% for Sisangvone village). Thus, the project’s contribution in this regard has been likely more significant in the poorer three villages (two in the northern provinces and Sisangvone in Vientiane province): it would be premature to discuss this aspect about the two villages in Champasak province.

F. Progress in Enhancing Food Security and Reducing Poverty

31. Improved food security. Production increases in food, combined with increased cash incomes, have led to supply of more and diverse range of food at the household level and contributed to improved food security. Between 2001 and 2006, the total output of rice in the project villages nearly doubled from 1,200 tons to 2,300 tons, and per capita

production increased by over 50% to 330kg per year. During the same period, the proportion of households with rice insecurity (one to 6 months) declined in all FOs by 50% or more (from 90-98% to 12-40%), and those households with rice security throughout the year in 2006 accounted 56-95%. While this progress may not be entirely attributed to the project, given the largely subsistence nature of agriculture in many villages, especially those with high incident of food insecurity in 2001, the project can be credited with having played a significant role in this progress.

32. Contribution to poverty reduction and improved livelihood. The 2006 survey showed that between 2001 and 2006 household annual income increased sharply in all villages, except for one (Nasenkham). For the five villages where household income increased, the increment ranged from 70% (Kouyhinlat to Kip 15.1 million) to 385% (Khonkeo to Kip 7.3 million). The decline in the Nasenkham village seems to reflect a large inflow of poor family from the outlying hills to the village due to the village consolidation programme. It is interesting to note that (i) largest increases were recorded by the two villages in Vientiane province, followed by the two in Bolokhamxay province (both provinces with higher income levels), and (ii) by the national poverty standard of monthly household income of Kip 80,000, all of the six villages would be above the poverty line. Similarly, in all villages, increasing number of FO members have improved access to key public services, such as health clinics, primary education, clean water supply. The 2006 survey also showed that in four of the six villages, the share of health care in the household expenditures increased significantly (double or more) between 2001 and 2006, while in one village it remained unchanged, and in another village, it declined by nearly half.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions (including issues and lessons)

33. Overall conclusions regarding the project relevance, efficiency and effectiveness are as follows:

- a) relevance of objectives and approach/design – the immediate objectives (as revised during the implementation) are very relevant (increasingly so vis-à-vis the emerging the national development policy with greater emphasis on the MDGs) as well as to the needs and aspirations of the target villages. In particular, the project approach is both clear and sound with a strategy aimed at self-reliant, participatory development of the poor villagers by building capacity of farmers through FOs and the provincial/district technical staff as well as by improving productivity for food security and poverty reduction through micro-projects planned by the villagers themselves. The use of the FGDP as a tool for disciplined planning and implementation of micro-projects as well as the establishment of RFS for building the FO's resource basis, are also very appropriate. In retrospect, however, the implementation design was based on rather optimistic assumptions about the existing institutional and technical capacity as well as on the time frame for achieving the planned results. Another

weakness was that the design did not specify the exit strategy for the project nor how to verify the achievement of project as pilot for developing an appropriate approach. Similarly, its priority attention was rather imbalanced in favour of investment in irrigation systems and inadequate stress on the capacity building needs. The SSC component can be questioned in terms of cost-effectiveness;

- b) efficiency of implementation – the implementation suffered serious delays in the initial years due to changes in the number and location of target villages as well as slow recruitment of project staff, exacerbated by frequent turnover of NPD and NFM as well as cumbersome FAO procedures for channeling project funds. Considerable improvement has been made since, and the overall implementation efficiency can be considered adequate with an encouraging prospect of further improvement. Nevertheless, project effectiveness continues to depend critically on the general effectiveness of NAFES and PAFO, especially at district level;
- c) effectiveness in achieving the results – this aspect of performance is mixed. On one hand, a promising start has been made in developing the eight self-reliant FOs, and good progress has been made in improving agricultural productivity and in creating a basis for transforming the agricultural production system. Similarly, adequate progress has also been made in capacity building of the FOs/FGs and the DSTs, together with strengthening of the PMU. On the other hand, the results fall short in several aspects, including the extent of strengthening FOs as self-managing groups and their ability to use FGDP and RFS. Some FOs have made good progress while others have lagged behind. However, two points need to be recognized. Firstly, the project approach has been rather ambitious in relation to the existing institutional and technical capacity at time of project start-up, and in any case, the realization of the outcomes would require longer time frame than five years. Secondly, despite the uneven achievement of key results, the project has been strongly embraced and supported by the target groups, and equally importantly, it has been progressing in the right direction, with a promising prospect;
- d) sustainability of the project results – it is doubtful if the FOs are sustainable as they now stand, including the process of FGDP and RFS. These institutional aspects, however, would be essential to ensuring satisfactory empowerment and sustainability of FOs, for which FOs would need to be further consolidated. Similar consolidation would be also necessary to ensure sustainable capacity of PAFOs and district services. It is likely that many of the production technologies introduced have better prospects of being sustained as these have been well accepted by the farmers, most of them being sustained within the means they have. One issue in this respect is the operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems, especially those depending on high electricity inputs. Thus, in general, further measures for consolidation would be essential for sustainability of the project results, and from this viewpoint, the continued presence of the PMU would be essential. Some recommendations are offered below in this regard;
- e) gender and women – while this aspect did not receive particular emphasis, there was an adequate level of participation of women in the project planning and

implementation, especially in the preparation of community action plans in the initial stage and subsequently in the FGDP/RFS process. Women have been serving on the FO's executive committees and most FOs had women groups as one of the main FGDP groups.

34. Critical Factor affecting the Project Performance. Numerous factors have affected the performance:

- a) factors with positive influence – these include (i) the relevance of the project approach aimed at participatory community development and at meeting the priority needs of the target villages (self-reliant development and access to appropriate technologies through FGDP/RFS), (ii) strong reception and sense of ownership among the target groups in the project, (iii) appropriate technical interventions for food and agricultural production, (iv) improved performance of PMU and NPD during last years, and (iv) improving support of the NAFES reflecting new national policy orientation as well as consistent support by the donor. These factors contributed to achieving the results that are overall encouraging, despite the implementation weaknesses;
- b) factors with negative influence – important factors affecting project efficiency and effectiveness include (i) delayed implementation in the first few years due to policy changes and reforms within the Ministry as well as inadequate project staffing, (ii) technical and institutional constraints of the national implementing agency, especially at field level, and the failure to reflect these adequately in the implementation strategy, and (iii) the imbalance of project components with greater emphasis on irrigation aspects and insufficient attention to capacity building at all levels.

35. Emerging Lessons. The project experience points to some broad lessons relevant to similar development work in Lao PDR. These include:

- a) that the participatory community development approach with the twin aim of promoting self-reliance of the target groups through FOs and supporting their agriculture and livelihood development is appropriate and effective;
- b) that such an approach requires a long time for successful implementation, certainly longer than five or six years, especially in the conditions like in Lao PDR. Furthermore, such a project should have a strong capacity building component for FOs as well as for the national implementation agency, especially in initial stage;
- c) that FAO needs to ensure also that the participating Government agencies appreciate fully the nature and significance of the proposed project, especially its strategy and assumptions relating to their roles and that it develops with the national partners a strategy for the project's exit. FAO also needs to find a more suitable means of channeling project funds to the implementing national partners (LoA still takes time and not suitable for Lao partners);
- d) that similarly, FAO needs to ensure that it has staff who can dedicate considerable time to coordinating project implementation process with national agencies involved and with FAO units, preferably on a full-time basis and in the country;

- e) that it has been difficult to apply a systematic monitoring, and lesser extent, evaluation throughout the implementation process/period. The project seems to have much data that could have been used as a basis for in-course decision making as well as for structured assessment of the results. FAO needs to ensure that this weakness is addressed in future. In this connection, it is commendable that the PMU took initiative to commission an impact assessment by a national firm, which has been very useful for this final evaluation.⁴

36. Key Issues. Some important issues emerge regarding the future, especially for improving the sustainability of the project results and the related question of follow-up measures:

- a) given the clear need for further consolidation of the FOs, it would be essential to assist further FOs/FGs in achieving more sustainable capacity, and for this purpose it is critical to maintain the NPD/PMU. In particular, the need exists for strengthening the FOs' management capacity, including managing and operating FGDP and RFS;
- b) the capacity of DSTs should also be strengthened in some subjects (e.g. participatory development approaches and marketing), including the streamlining of management and supervision by PAFO. In the longer term, this is likely to involve a larger question of strengthening the agriculture and forestry extension system/approach;
- c) there is a need to clarify the exist strategy for this project and how the project results may be used in the context of rural community development in poorer districts. In this connection, the NPD/PMU could play an important role in preparing proposals for follow-up, which could consider various options, such as (i) continuation and expansion of the project covering more but limited number of villages in the same or nearby districts, (ii) a larger national programme for replicating the project approach (with appropriate modification) in a large number of villages, and (iii) application of the project approach to suitable on-going projects or programmes as opportunities arise;
- d) the project has been intended as a pilot undertaking for developing a suitable approach to rural community development with emphasis on food security and poverty reduction. Given the mixed but encouraging results, it would be important to make an in-depth assessment of the project's effectiveness, especially the usefulness of the project approach for achieving self-reliance of FOs and improved food security and poverty alleviation. Such an assessment would provide an objective basis for deciding future follow-up; and
- e) one particular issue emerging is that of high cost of energy (electricity) for irrigation operation in most of the project villages, and some villages (e.g. Phonkharn and Kouayhinlath) are having problems with the high cost, with a declining trend of areas for irrigated rice.

⁴ "Final Impact Assessment Report of Special Programme for Food Security and South-South Cooperation" by Loa Alliance Consultants CO., Ltd (Koutiane Sithivong, Team Leader), March 2007

B. Recommendations

37. While the project achievements fall short of realizing all the major expected results, its approach has shown considerable effectiveness in promoting participatory community development, food security and poverty reduction in the eight villages. In particular, the villagers developed strong ownership of the approach and FOs on one hand, and the national authorities in charge of the project now appreciate better the project on the other. However, the project is about to end in three weeks' time, but with some un-spent balance in the project's budget due to the implementation delays. Thus, there are essentially two key issues. One is the immediate question of how to ensure that the project leaves its results in a state as sustainable as possible. The other is what should be the follow-up to this project in order to make the best of its results in support of national programmes and projects aimed at participatory rural development for food security and poverty reduction, including up-scaling into a national programme of food security. Related to the latter point is the need to clarify more conclusively the effectiveness and usefulness of this project through a systematic assessment of the project's results and impact, building on the useful but incomplete impact assessment prepared by the project.

38. Recommendation for Immediate Follow-up. Given the urgent need to consolidate further the project achievements for their sustainability as well as some funds remaining in the project budget, it is recommended that the project's period is further extended by several months (if possible by six months) within the authorized and available budget. It is further suggested that during this period, the project PMU is maintained in its full strength, including the NPD, and the project concentrates on following three tasks with assistance of consultants, if appropriate:

- a) implementation of the planned but not implemented activities, especially those in support of capacity building of FOs/FGs and their implementation of approved micro-projects through the FGDP/RFS process in collaboration of PAFOs and DSTs. It is suggested that particular priority be given to strengthening the institutional management capacity, including that of the FGDP and RFS processes (securing RFS assets) and to close monitoring by the PMU of the implementation process at the local level. The project implementation would also include continuing support to capacity building of the DSTs, especially in strengthening their competence in participatory development approaches, FGDP and RFS mechanisms, and monitoring/reporting. In particular, it would be desirable that the DSTs' work with FOs becomes integrated into the regular work of PAFO and district agricultural services;
- b) carrying out a systematic assessment of the project's results and impact ("results study"), drawing on all the data available at the field level (some field surveys may be needed). This exercise should build on the "impact assessment" carried out earlier, but should provide more systematically an in-depth analysis of the main results/impact, including an analysis on what role the project approach played so as to provide an insight into the catalytic role of the project approach

for these results⁵. It is also suggested that as part of the study, the issue of cost of energy, especially electricity, be addressed to review financial cost-benefit of irrigated farming. The findings of the “results study” should be widely shared with the national parties involved in the project and similar projects as well as international partners interested (some of the donors interviewed by the evaluation mission expressed strong interest in such a study);

- c) active contribution to planning and preparation of proposals for any specific follow-up programmes and/or project. This would be based on the findings of the above study and on the opportunities available within the national development programmes and/or external donor supported projects.

39. Recommendations for longer-term Follow-up. Following are suggested:

- a) the Government should review in depth the effectiveness and suitability of the project approach with a view to drawing lessons from the experience and to deciding on possible use of the approach in its programmes and projects. The “results study” mentioned above should feed into such a review process, which would also consider other relevant experiences of similar projects. Based on such an in-depth review, proposals for future follow-up to this project, if appropriate, should be prepared. As noted above, various alternatives should be examined, including (i) another follow-up project with focus on the same villages to complete the pilot process to identify a suitable approach, (ii) up-scaling of the project approach to a greater number of villages and districts, including the possibility of an national-wide programme, and (iii) selective application of those aspects of the project approach that are considered particularly effective and useful;
- b) if it is decided that the project approach be further applied to similar programmes and projects, it is suggested that the capacity and experience of the project PMU is retained as a core team to guide the planning and implementation of such programmes and projects;
- c) with a view to strengthening the effectiveness of extension services in future agriculture and rural development work, it is suggested that NAFES reviews the performance and experience of its extension approaches so as to ensure that its services are relevant and efficient in meeting the emerging and changing needs of rural communities, especially poorer smallholders.

⁵ These aspects were discussed by the evaluation mission with the PMU staff and the national consultant who carried out the impact assessment in Vientiane, but if further clarifications are needed, the mission members should be contacted freely as necessary.

Annex I. Terms of Reference for the Evaluation (to be inserted)

Terms of Reference (Final)

Joint Final Evaluation Mission by Government of Japan, FAO, Government of Lao PDR, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

GCSP/LAO/011/JPN, GCSP/INS/073/JPN, GCSP/SRL/ 049/JPN and GCSP/BGD/033/JPN

1. Background

The projects addresses the problems of food security and malnutrition of rural and peri-urban communities of different Agro Ecological Zones (AEZ), and increased involvement of target beneficiaries at all levels of decision-making. The projects are intended to demonstrate effective local and improved technology for water control, intensification of cultivation and diversification of farming systems and carry out capacity building for the planning, implementation and monitoring of interventions, all of which is aimed at achieving self reliance for sustainable development.

The development objective of the SPFS projects is to assist in improving national, household/individual food security on an economically and environmentally sustainable basis by rapidly increasing food production and productivity, reducing year to year variation of production and improve access to food as a contribution to equity and poverty alleviation.

SPFS projects funded by the Government of Japan namely Lao PDR (GCSP/LAO/011/JPN), Indonesia (GCSP/INS/073/JPN), Sri Lanka (GCSP/SRL/049/JPN) and Bangladesh (GCSP/BGD/033/JPN) have been implemented consecutively since 2001. The allocated total budget, the EOD and the NTE of each project are determined as below:

Table 1. Project budget, EOD and NTE

	Project symbol	Total budget (US\$)	EOD	NTE
Lao PDR	GCSP/LAO/011/JPN	2,900,279	23/05/01	22/05/07 (31/08/07) ⁶
Indonesia	GCSP/INS/073/JPN	3,099,637	17/09/01	16/09/07
Sri Lanka	GCSP/SRL/049/JPN	1,812,518	01/03/02	30/06/07 (31/07/07)
Bangladesh	GCSP/BGD/033/JPN	3,296,075	01/07/02	30/06/07 (31/08/07)

The target beneficiaries of the project are primarily the poorest of the poor and the most disadvantaged segments of the population in the selected project villages. They belong to the landless, marginal, small and medium categories with particular emphasis on woman and other disadvantaged groups.

⁶ NTE of Lao, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka will officially be extended after approval by the donor. All the budget revision will be treated by budget neutral extension.

Table 2. Beneficial HH and FG

	Beneficial HH	Province	District	Village	Farmers group	Number of FGDP
Lao PDR	1,283	5	8	11	8	265
Indonesia	1,759	5	5	20 (25) ⁷	36	150
Sri Lanka	5,234	6	17	17 (49) ⁸	17	250
Bangladesh	4,600	6 Administrative Divisions	16	21	21	600
Total	12,876	22	46	69	82	1,265

The SPFS Projects are directed by Steering Committees in Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, and a Task Force in Lao PDR.

The project review mechanisms undertaken thus far include: one Consultative Review Mission in Bangladesh and Midterm Evaluations in each of the four countries, as per the schedule below:

Table 3. Project Evaluation History

	MTE/CRM	Time	Mission member
Lao PDR	MTE	Feb 2004	Bernd Bultemeier (PBEE): Mission leader Toshimitsu Nakaya (Japan) Bounkouang Souvannaphanh (Lao)
Indonesia	MTE	Oct 2003	Masa Kato (PBEE): Mission leader Takahito Misaki (Japan) Arif Hariyana (Indonesia)
Sri Lanka	MTE	Oct 2004	Robert Moore (PBEE): Mission leader Hiroshi Suzuki (Japan) D.G. Samarasinghe (Sri Lanka)
Bangladesh	CRM	Oct 2003	R.B. Singh (FAO): Mission leader Minoru Nakano (Japan) Shin Imai (FAO)
	MTE	May 2005	Daniel Shallon (PBEE): Mission leader Hiroshi Okudaira (Japan) Mohd. Sher Ali (BGD) Nasrin Naher (BGD) Shohelur Rahman Khan (BGD) Mohd. Mizanul Haq (BGD)

MTE : Mid-term evaluation

CRM : Consultative review mission

Each of the SPFS programmes has adopted the Farmers Group Development Plan (FGDP) and Revolving Fund System (RFS) as a major function. The FGDP is a method to analyze whether proposed interventions are technically feasible, economically viable and environmentally acceptable. RFS is another tool for assessing household level project sustainability.

⁷ Total beneficial village in Indonesia is increased up to 25 villages.

⁸ Total beneficial village in Sri Lanka is increased up to 49 villages.

Project impact assessments have been conducted in each country. The results of these impact studies will serve as an important input to the final evaluation and will be made available to the team before the start of the evaluation.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

The SPFS programme is believed to have generated interest in each of the participating countries and there are indications that there is a desire in each country to institutionalize and internalize the SPFS concepts into government systems linking them with National Programmes for Food Security (NPFS). The present evaluation, scheduled as all of the projects come to a close, is intended to make an in-depth assessment of the progress made propose recommendations for further development of the SPFS programme to each government involved, as well as to FAO and the donor as necessary.

3. Scope of the Evaluation

The joint tripartite evaluation mission (hereinafter refer to as “the mission”) will for each project assess the:

- a) Relevance of the project to development priorities and needs of the country.
- b) Clarity and realism of the project's development and immediate objectives, including specification of targets and identification of beneficiaries and prospects for sustainability.
- c) Quality, clarity and adequacy of project design including:
 - clarity and logical consistency between, inputs, activities, outputs and progress towards achievement of objectives (quality, quantity and time-frame);
 - realism and clarity in the specification of prior obligations and prerequisites (assumptions and risks);
 - realism and clarity of external institutional relationships, and in the managerial and institutional framework for implementation and the work plan;
 - cost-effectiveness of the project
- d) Efficiency and adequacy of project implementation including: availability of funds as compared with budget for both the donor and national component; the quality and timeliness of input delivery by both FAO and the Government; timeliness and quality of activities; managerial efficiency in dealing with implementation difficulties; adequacy of monitoring and reporting; the extent of national support and commitment; and the quality and quantity of administrative and technical support by FAO from Headquarters, the Regional Office and from coordination projects (GCP/RAS/JPN/180 and GCP/RAS/JPN/182).

e) Actual and potential project results, including a full and systematic assessment of outputs produced to date and progress made towards achieving the immediate objectives:

- The communities develop self-reliance in diagnosing opportunities and constraints, and testing and implementing practical solutions to achieve sustainable food security.
- Strengthening institutional capacity all levels.
- The production and productivity of rice and other crops of resource poor farmers increased crop intensification through improved water control and integrated nutrient management.
- Promote farming system diversification and nutrition and energy conservation awareness and develop location specific integrated farming system of rural house hold especially women and vulnerable groups to enhance production, income generation and availability of nutritional food and to improve nutritional status of the people.
- Promote small scale agro-processing, post harvest handling technology and on-farm and off-farm income generating activities through promotion of community based produce handling methods, supported by marketing, credit and other agriculture support services and identification of constrain.

f) The prospects for sustaining the project's results by the beneficiaries and the host institutions after the termination of the project, particularly regarding:

- intensive livestock and fisheries production system;
- marketability of agricultural products;
- strengthened Government extension, communication and training services;
- organization and management of farmers groups, including management of village revolving fund;
- general socio-economic improvements (in particular for groups, women and disadvantaged people);
- capacity of Government to sustain the project initiatives (central, provincial and district Government) and;
- replicability of the project results by the respective government.

g) The overall cost-effectiveness of the project, especially in terms of serving as piloting various development activities, including the identification of appropriate approaches and lessons/issues for future.

In conducting the evaluation, the mission will pay particular attention to the following issues: project ownership, partnerships among stakeholders, utility of analytical concepts introduced through the projects (i.e. FGDP and RFS), quality of the impact studies carried out, effectiveness of South-South cooperation, gender awareness, appropriateness of site selection, relevance of planning and training approaches, and viability of the micro credit and revolving fund systems.

Based on the above analysis the mission will draw specific conclusions and make proposals for any necessary further action by Government and/or FAO/donor to ensure sustainable development, including any need for additional assistance and activities of the project prior to its completion. The mission will draw attention to lessons of general interest derived from the projects as a whole.

4. Composition of the Mission

The mission will comprise:

- A Team leader (Evaluation Specialist), appointed by FAO;
- Specialist in “Rural Development” appointed by the donor (Japan)⁹;
- Specialist in “food security” in each participating country.

In each country, the mission should be briefed and debriefed by the FAO Representative. The mission will debrief RAP, PBEE and TCOS on the mission’s findings and recommendations. Mission members should be independent and thus have no previous direct involvement with the formulation, implementation or backstopping of the projects.

5. Timetable and Itinerary of the Mission

The timetable and Itinerary is shown as follows. This trust funded programme is supported by the Government of Japan therefore the courtesy call to Embassy of Japan and discussion is planned. (Annex-I)

6. Consultations

The mission will maintain close liaison with the representatives of the donor and FAO and the concerned national agencies, as well as with national and international project staff. Although the mission should feel free to discuss with the authorities concerned anything relevant to its assignment, it is not authorized to make any commitments on behalf of the Government, the donor, or FAO.

7. Reporting

The mission is fully responsible for its independent report which may not necessarily reflect the views of the Government, the donor or FAO. The mission will prepare a general report, based on a comparative examination of each of the projects under review, to draw lessons for the future. The general report will also specifically assess the quality and quantity of technical support given to the projects by all sources within FAO. The Mission

⁹ Perhaps two individuals covering different countries

Leader will decide on an appropriate format for the general report. The individual country reports will be written in conformity with the headings as given in the Annex-II.

The country reports will be completed, to the extent possible, in the country and the findings and recommendations fully discussed with all concerned parties and wherever possible consensus achieved.

The mission will also complete the FAO Project Evaluation Questionnaire.

The mission leader bears responsibility for finalization of the report, which will be submitted to FAO within two weeks of mission completion. FAO will submit the report to Government(s) and donor together with its comments.

Annex II.

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- C. Adequacy of Project Management
- D. Support Given by the Three Parties

IV. Assessment of Emerging Results

V. Main Conclusions, Issues and Recommendations

- A. Main Conclusions (including identification of constraints and issues)
- B. Main Recommendations

Annex-II: Mission Itinerary and Persons Met

A. Mission Itinerary

29 July – Sunday	Mission arrival Vientiane
30 July - Monday	Meeting with FAOR Meeting/briefing by NPD and PMU Meeting with DG of National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service, MAF Briefing with Vice Minister, MAF Dinner with Deputy DG, Planning Dept. and PMU staff Departure for Champasak (by car)
31 July – Tuesday	Arrival Pakse, Champasak Visit to Makngeo village and Pako village Dinner with Deputy DG, Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Organization (PAFO)
1 August - Wednesday	Depart Pakse for Vientiane (by plane) Meeting with PMU
2 August - Thursday	Depart for Oudongxay (by plane) Meeting with Deputy DG
3 August - Friday	Depart for Luang Prabang (by car) Debriefing with Vice Minister MAF & Permanent Secretary in Luang Prabang Depart for Vientiane (by plane)
4 August – Saturday	Report writing
5 August - Sunday	Report writing
6 August - Monday	Wrap up meeting with Deputy DG, Planning Dept., MAF Meeting at Japanese Embassy Meeting with JICA Meeting with PMU Debriefing meeting with FAOR
7 August - Tuesday	Departure from Vientiane

B. Persons Met

1. Mr. Khamjane Vongphosy, Vice Minister (Planning), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
2. Mr. Bouthone, Director-General of PSO, MAF
3. Mr. Xaypladeth Choulamany, Deputy DG, Planning Department, MAF
4. Mr. Phoumy Phoumanivong, Director-General, NAFES
5. Mr. Kham Sanatem, Deputy DG of NAFES and NPD

6. Mr. Phatnakhone Khanthamixay, NFM, Project Management Unit (PMU)
7. Mr. Khamleck Bounnavong, Deputy Director, Department of Agriculture and Forestry, Champasak Province
8. Mr. Kazuhiro Fujimura, Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Japan
9. Mr. Yuichi Metoku, Second Secretary, Embassy of Japan
10. Mr. Hiroaki Takashima, Resident Representative, JICA
11. Mr. Makoto Hatano, Assistant Resident Representative, JICA
12. Mr. Akira Nagaoka, Expert for Agricultural Policy, JICA
13. Mr. Serge Vernniau, FAO Representative
14. Ms. Rebecca Host-Madsen, Food Security Officer, Office of FAOR

Annex III - Project Budget Status (see overleaf - page 25)

WORKPLAN FROM
SEPTEMBER 2007 TO FEBRUARY 2008

Project Symbol: GCSP/LAO/011/JPN
Project Name: Special Programme for Food Security and South-South Cooperation
Project ID: TFJP150001254
Operating Unit: FAOR LAOS
Budget Holder: Mr. Serge Verniau

Revision: JJJ
Date: 31 August 2007
Starting Date: 23 May 2001
Previous completion date: 31 August 2007
Revised completion date: 31 January 2008

ACCOUNTS	DESCRIPTION	Prior Years Expenditures Up to Period: 2006	2007	2008	Future Years	Revised Total Revision "JJJ"	Approved Total Revision "JJJ"	Changes
5300	Salaries Professional	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5500	Salaries General Service	40,785	0	0	0	40,785	40,785	0
5570	Consultants	214,504	66,759	11,200	0	292,463	275,568	16,895
5650	Contracts	950,539	110,955	6,400	0	1,067,894	1,064,234	3,660
5660	Overtime/Temporary Assistance	96,597	23,098	3,911	0	123,606	117,259	6,347
5900	Travel	200,194	37,489	3,700	0	241,383	247,138	-5,755
5920	Training	175,859	85,759	6,500	0	268,118	267,738	380
6000	Expendable Equipment	102,978	29,446	500	0	132,924	138,134	-5,210
6100	Non-Expendable Equipment	139,818	6,870	0	0	146,688	162,144	-15,456
6110	Hospitality	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6150	Technical Support Services	43,534	9,966	7,600	0	61,100	58,534	2,566
6300	General Operating Expenses	170,419	17,914	2,743	0	191,076	194,503	-3,427
6400	General Overhead Expenses	582	0	0	0	582	582	0
6500	Chargeback	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6510	Chargeout	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Sub-Total	2,135,809	388,256	42,554	0	2,566,619	2,566,619	0
6130	Support Cost (13% of subtotal)	277,655	50,473	5,532	0	333,660	333,660	0
	TOTAL	2,413,464	438,729	48,086	0	2,900,279	2,900,279	0

Budget Revision "JJJ"