



COVAMS



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Modification of the coordination system on the training

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1. Summary

The intention of this paper is to record how the COVAMS management office modified and improve the system of coordination on training implementation.

COVAMS management recognized several problems in the first system. The first system was that the trainers, who are mostly PIU members, should visit the villages to collect detail information on the contents of the particular training theme and plan the date of the training together with the expected training participants. This system drove PIU members to implement lots of training courses as they wish. Additionally, there was a tendency for the trainers to spend unnecessary days for the training. A few months later, the village residents complained on this situation, so the COVAMS management modified the system.

The modified system did not work to solve the problems of the first system. The modified system was that two PIU members who are in-charge of a target village should coordinate the training plan together with the village residents, and the in-charge PIU request possible trainer to organize the training course. With this system, it was expected the number of training courses in a month would be reduced in a village. Besides, more particular needs of the participants would be obtained and conveyed to the trainer. However, it did not reduce number and duration of the training courses but maintained the same tendency.

Upon seeing the consequences of depending on PIU members for the communication with the target villages, the project management office has come up with the idea of direct coordination system. Meaning, the project management office is going to collect information on the training by itself and give instructions to the trainers like outline of the training contents and training style, class room or field. The number of training courses and duration of the training course will be under the control of the management office.

2. Initial coordination system and arrangement for remuneration of the training

2.1. Coordination system

COVAMS training started in June 2008 in 5 target villages while other 2 villages started in March 2008. The system to implement the training was that the extension officers from each sector in respective Traditional Authority, Kapeni and Kuntaja implement the training as trainers, according to the request made by the target villages. The timing of implementation for each theme will be decided together with the expected participants and the trainer, considering their suitability. The procedures in order to coordinate the implementation of training were as follows:

- ① Discuss with some of the expected participants of a training theme to find out on what kind of shortfalls they have in the theme.
- ② Then, the trainer is going to prepare the contents of the training theme and its time table, according to the result of the discussion. If the training requires several training courses in different month to complete the whole contents, the trainer should also make a training schedule to show the timing of each training courses.
- ③ The trainer submits the prepared documents to Field Management Officer (FMO) as training proposal. The FMO scrutinizes the proposal and give approval if no changes will be suggested to the trainer.
- ④ After the approval, the trainer is going to set a date for implementation of the training with the expected participants and the training will be implemented.

2.2. Remuneration arrangement

COVAMS project provides remuneration to the trainer for the implementation of the training. The rate of remuneration is MK1,200 for the main trainer and MK300 for the assistant on daily basis. Hence, the more the trainers spend days for training, the more they earn.

3. Result of the training coordination

It is obvious that the PIU members have not implemented many training themes that the PIU members seem not to be familiar with. The training themes that left behind are such as mushroom culturing, knitting, pottery, soap making, tailoring, juice making and so on. Most of the implemented training courses in the respective villages were almost the same training themes in every target village as table 1 shows.

Table 1: Implemented training themes

Village	Training theme
Zwanya	Small scale business management, Irrigated vegetable growing, Tree growing, Bee keeping, Soil conservation
Chiwalo	Small scale business management, Vegetable growing in rainy season, Tree growing, Bee keeping, Soil conservation
Mtema	Small scale business management, Irrigated vegetable growing, Tree growing, Bee keeping, Soil conservation
Kamwendo	Small scale business management, Vegetable growing in rainy season, Tree growing, Bee keeping, Soil conservation
Chitawira	Small scale business management, Irrigated vegetable growing, Tree growing, Bee keeping, Soil conservation
Tambala	Small scale business management, Irrigated vegetable growing, Tree growing, Bee keeping, Soil conservation, Wood saving stove (2)
Chuma	Small scale business management, Fish culture, Irrigated vegetable growing, Tree growing, Soil conservation

The implemented number of training courses and their number of days spent from June to August 2008 are shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Number of implemented training courses and spent days for them

Village name	June			July			August			September			October		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Chuma	2	3	6	2	2	3	3	3	6	0	0		2	2	3
Tambala	1	1	1	2	4	7	3	3	5	2	3	3	2	2	3
Chitawira	1	1	4	2	2	4	4	4	7	0	0	0	2	2	3
Zwanya	2	2	4	1	2	4	2	3	5	2	2	4	2	2	2
Kamwendo	0	0	0	2	4	8	2	2	4	2	3	6	2	2	2
Chiwalo	1	1	2		2	4		4	7		4	6		1	1
Mtema	1	1	2	1	1	2		4	10		2	3		2	2

Note: (1): Number of themes of the month

(2): Number of training courses of the month

(3): Total number of days spent for the training courses of the month

As the table 2 shows, the number of training courses of respective villages was

increased gradually toward August. The number of training does not mean the number of training themes. Because the number of training includes some cases that a class was split into two in different day with reasons of too many expected participants or inconvenience with the date arrangement for some participants.

COVAMS management office hesitated to limit the number of training courses to be implemented as far as there were demands from the target villages. Because the office expected that implementation of several training courses in a village in a month could help to promote awareness of COVAMS and to establish good relations between the project and the village residents. However, the results of the implemented training courses give the project an idea that the PIU members have been conducting training as they want to do, without reflecting to the villagers' needs.

4. Reaction of the village residents to the first system

4.1 Contribution to creation of trust between the village residents and the project

As a result of the implementation of training courses and follow-ups by the PIU members, the good relations seemed to be established temporarily between the village residents and the project.

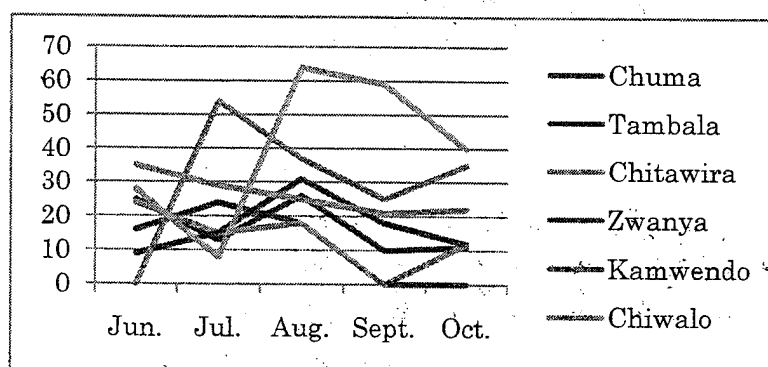
In August, the COVAMS management office started an activity for promotion of soil conservation to mitigate siltation to Shire River. The project attempted to promote soil conservation with establishing demonstration plot. The demonstration would be established in some fields by volunteers in the respective villages. The technologies which would be demonstrated are Contour marker with reinforcement material like Vetiver grass and contour ridges making, soil structure and fertility improvement with some agroforestry species like Gliricidia and Tephrosia, river bank afforestation and gully reclamation. The materials such as Vetiver grass, Gliricidia and Tephrosia will be provided in form of seeds or seedlings for the participants on the demonstration programme.

The reaction of the village residents in all the villages was quite impressive and many people participated in its training course. The PIU members also reacted to the farmers' serious commitment to the soil conservation activity after the training. The PIU members were requested by the participants to give advice at practicing in their field and so they did, visiting their field at around 6:00 am on the scheduled date for the practice. Through this PIU members commitment to making follow up, good relations between the village residents and the PIU / project was temporarily established.

4.2 Complaints from the participants of the training

The system of planning and arrangement for training established temporal good relations between the target village residents and the project. As it was mentioned earlier, the number of training courses in a month was quite many. It was like the PIU members were aiming at conducting training courses, rather than aiming at improving the livelihood of the village residents by giving them training courses to increase their knowledge and skills.

Figure 1: The movement on number of participants in the training courses (2008)



Gradually, the number of participants was decreased towards September as figure 1 shows. A reason of decreasing the number of participants was revealed by the village heads, saying that “there was no time for practice, because PIU gave us lots of training courses”.

Not to disturb the farmers’ practice, the PIUs made an adjustment on a time of conducting training. It used to be in the morning but it changed to the afternoon. However, it seemed that the PIUs’ intention was to keep the number of training courses many.

5. Modification of procedures for implementation of training

Upon receiving such complaints from most of the villages, the COVAMS management office analyzed the situation as follows:

- ① The training courses may be implemented, not according to the village residents’ demand but PIU’s.
- ② Current procedures for the implementation of the training courses are not functioning for the village residents to control the situation by themselves.

The COVAMS management office modified the procedures to improve the situation. The modification is made that the office appoints two PIU members for the respective villages with responsibility of coordination on planning of training courses, instead of planning by the trainers. The two responsible PIU will have discussion with the village to plan the following month's training courses. The followings are the points of modified procedures.

- ① The responsible PIU members will have discussion with village residents to coordinate training themes and their dates for the following month, considering the suitability of timing for the training themes.
- ② Upon agreed with the village on the training plan, the responsible PIU members will liaise with possible trainers for them to start preparation of designing of the training.

Following these two points, the trainer will take the same procedures as the previous one from No. ②.

6. The effectiveness after the modification

As far as seeing the plan submitted by PIU members for September, the tendency of PIU in conducting training courses was remained the same as before. It means that PIUs still wanted to conduct training courses as they wish, and the responsible PIUs did not control other PIUs, or they did not discuss with the target village residents on their needs in terms of the number of training courses. It was revealed that the modification did not work well.

However, there were some changes in the number of training courses implemented for each village. It was reduced. The fact was that the villages made lots of postponement of planned training courses by giving the trainers various reasons.

Seeing the result of activity plan of the PIU, the COVAMS management office decided to make another review of the procedures for planning of training in October 2008. To make the village residents' will and demand reflected to the planning of training, the office came up with an idea that FMO shall communicate with the target villages directly to confirm their demand for the training every month.

As a trial of this system, FMO went around the villages to hear about their training demands. As the visit went on, the FMO found more critical demands and opinions on the design of conducting training from the village side.

The demands are as follows;

- Training should be at the field with practice, including some lecture so that it becomes more interesting and understandable for every participant rather than separating in class training and its practice.
- The participants prefer one-day training rather than continuing for several days.

Opinion

- The participants thought that the training design was made by the project. Hence, they thought there was no chance to request for making the design convenient for the participants.

During the discussion, it was revealed that the responsible PIU did not inquire any request or demand from the village residents for the preparation of training. Apparently, the responsible PIU were allowing trainers to continue PIU driven training implementation.

This consequence possibly attributed to the remunerate system for the trainers. It will be hopeless to expect that the PIU will adjust training design spontaneously in order to make it effective and efficient, as long as remunerate amount is counted on dairy bases.

7. Lessons learnt

It is a key that the project establishes trust between the target village residents and the project. To achieve this relation, the project should not impose the village residents what we want them to do, but listen their needs for planning and implement activities with village residents' consensus.

The project assumed that PIU members were obtaining all the information by hearing from the village residents. Indeed the PIU members had occasions with some of village residents like village headman to obtain the information. However, it is not always that the information they collected was not reflected the residents' real needs.

An effective information collection is essential to provide effective training for the village residents. Collection of information should be made, especially on training themes, their contents and the way of dissemination of training information. The project was depending on PIU members for the information collection since the beginning of the project. However, it seems that it was too much workload for them and

it did not work effectively as a consequence.

8. Re-modification of the procedures

In order to have effective communication with the target villages for training coordination, the project requests the villages to select someone who cooperates with the project in communication as in-charge (communicator).

To facilitate the system, the office suggests to all the villages to appoint a communicator apart from the village headman. The detail role of the communicator will be agreed upon later but coordination of training demand among the village residents is expected. The idea of appointing communicator in each village was well accepted by all the village headmen.

Taking into account on all the matters of the previous training coordination system, the COVAMS office will take the following countermeasures as the way forward;

- ① FMO is going to communicate with village communicators to coordinate and confirm training theme and its contents for the following month. The communicator should collect necessary information from the expected participants beforehand.
- ② COVAMS management office shall have periodical meeting with the communicators to build their capacity on their roles.
- ③ FMOs give suggestions to the trainers on preparation of training materials in consideration with efficiency and effectiveness of the training.
- ④ Further study on remuneration system should be made. Ideal system might be contract based remuneration system which gives limitation to the amount by evaluating entire volume of workload of each training theme.

9. Trial of the modification

According to the re-modification, the COVAMS management office tried the procedures in a village except communicator system.

One of the FMOs visited the village and collected information about the training needs on rain fed vegetable growing. The villagers' needs were the followings: ① how to sow seeds ② seedling management ③ bed making, and ④ how to transplant the seedlings. Additionally, the villagers wanted to finish the training in a day.

The FMO designed an outline of the training with the result of the collected information. Especially, the request of the duration was considered seriously to make the training completed within a day. Hence, the FMO gave the trainer of the training a suggestion

that the trainer should prepare seedlings for the training so that all the stages up to transplanting can be demonstrated within a day. So the trainer agreed on the suggestion and tried it. According to the trainer, the suggestion worked well and all the participants appreciated the arrangement.

The trial can be evaluated that the modified procedure can provide more effective and efficient training which matches with the needs of the villagers.