



COVAMS



Working Paper

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Specified Village Training Approach and its procedures

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1. SUMMARY

This working paper introduces the feature of the newly introduced approach Specified Village Training Approach (SVTA) which is developed from the experience of implementation in PRODEFI approach and how the project implemented the SVTA for the target villages in 2009.

SVTA maintains the same principles as PRODEFI approach in the implementation of training. However, there is a significant distinction between the two approaches. The subjects of the training are already set in land conservation subjects such as tree growing and soil erosion control measures on SVTA. In this sense, it can be said that SVTA is a kind of top down approach, while PRODEFI is the opposite.

The limitation of training subject allowed the project attempt to nurture and utilize village human resources as trainers. The village human resource is named "Lead Farmer (LF)" that is to be utilized as trainers for the training subjects. The intention of the project in utilization of LF is to enable rapid expansion of the areas with practice of the training subjects.

The role of Project Implementation Unit (PIU) was shifted from being trainers to monitoring and technical support provider for the Lead farmers, although they sometimes gave follow-up to the farmers directly.

The project made a trial of SVTA with LF operation mechanism in 50 villages that exist along a catchment area of one of the Shire River tributaries; Lunzu- Ntenjela catchment. Since the acceptance of the LF operation mechanism by the villagers was not sure yet, the project tried this system in soil erosion control technologies only.

PIUs found some technical inadequacy with the LF in setting of contour makers, but it was tolerable technical shortfall. Most of the villages seem to be accepting the operation mechanism and the training was conducted smoothly except for some villages whose village head was not so cooperative to their LFs.

2. BACK GROUND OF SPECIFIED VILLAGE TRAINING APPROACH (SVTA)

The COVAMS project found that PRODEFI Approach (here in after Integrated Village Training Approach (IVTA)) requires intensive interaction with villagers (Assessment on effectiveness of IVTA and its limitation, 2009 COVAMS project). In order to achieve the mission of the project that of mitigation of siltation in Shire River in a reasonable period of time, two options are considered to be possible. One option (option 1) is to increase the number of PIU members, the other one (option 2) is to modify the IVTA in simpler approach, in order to minimize the time in the interaction of PIUs with a village. However, the time minimization should be achieved without disturbing the development of the villagers' capacity building in their village development and establishing good relation between the project and the villagers.

The option 1 implies lots of inputs and funds for procurement of mobility for new PIUs and its running cost such as fuel as well as field allowances, with a condition that of availability of adequate extension officers in the area. On the other hand, the option 2 requires focusing on relevant training themes to the project mission so that one PIU will be able to look after multitude of villages. But this modification will work when the villagers' needs and the training themes matches. Accordingly, it is absolutely depends on the reactions of the villagers in the relevant training themes such as soil conservation and tree growing.

The option 1 will be possible when Malawi government successfully convinces donor organizations which can provide the necessary inputs. Meanwhile, the option 2 had a room to try by the COVAMS project, because an enthusiastic reaction from five villages in the soil conservation activity in 2008 was observed although the village residents of seven villages baffled the project in tree growing.

The effectiveness of the option 2 was ambiguous though, the project opted to deal with the option 2 and observe the reactions of the villagers for the year 2009.

3. FEATURE OF SVTA

3.1 TRAINING THEMES

The SVTA was developed by extracting some of the training themes in soil erosion control and tree growing from IVTA. The difference between SVTA and IVTA is that there is no room for the villagers to decide the training themes but fixed on SVTA. By

specifying the training themes, SVTA aims at maximizing the dissemination of soil erosion control technologies and tree growing in the target areas, in order to realize mitigation of siltation in the Shire River in the soonest period.

The themes are as follows;

- ① Contour ridging with box ridges
- ② Contour hedges
- ③ Soil structure improvement
- ④ Swale ditches
- ⑤ Tree growing
- ⑥ Gully reclamation

① Contour ridging with box ridges

The contents of the subject are as follows;

- i) How to identify slope of a garden
- ii) How to identify contours using line level or A-frame
- iii) How to construct contour markers
- iv) How to realign the planting ridges according to the contour markers
- v) How to make box ridges

② Contour hedges

The content of the subject is how to construct hedge row with Vetiver grass along the contour markers in order to mitigate the occurrence of run-off as well as to fix contour markers in the original position.

③ Soil structure improvement

Utilization of agro-forestry species and manure making are the main contents, linking with improvement of soil fertility.

④ Swale ditches

How to construct ditches along the contour markers and its role are the contents of the subject.

⑤ Tree growing

The basic contents are how to raise tree seedlings up to out-planting of the seedlings and management of the planted seedlings. Seed collection of trees and beekeeping are

optional. Especially implementation of beekeeping training has a condition for that a village should show their strong commitment by procuring necessary planks for construction of a beehive at least.

The reason for inclusion of beekeeping in tree growing is that promotion of beekeeping encourages the village residents to improve tree situation in the village by carrying out in tree planting or natural regeneration.

⑥ Gully reclamation

The content of the subject is how to construct check dam in a gully. The scales of the check dam are small and medium sizes with use of locally available materials.

3.2 STRATEGY ON THE TRAINING IMPLEMENTATION

Shortage of trainers and inadequate follow up at the villagers' fields under SVTA may happen because of its mission that of rapid expansion of area. To cope with the forthcoming situation, the project opted to utilize village human resources as trainers by developing their skills in soil erosion control and tree growing.

To gain a tangible impact on the mitigation of siltation, at least an entire catchment of a tributary should be targeted at one time. Therefore, the project planned to deal with a catchment lies between STA Kapeni and TA Kuntaja: Lunzu - Ntenjela catchment which involves 54 villages.

Although SVTA limits its training themes in the three spheres, the PIUs' devotion to a village in the soil erosion control and tree growing activity will still be enormously required. Allocation of four to five villages to a PIU gave the project a dread in quality and quantity of the training as well as the subsequent follow up for the farmers who practice the technologies after the training. Hence the project management came up with an idea that changes the operation mechanism in terms of trainers.

The project management proposed to the PIU members that trainers should be fostered in each village and the role of PIU would be shifted to monitoring and supervising the LFs as well as the farmers, accordingly. The idea was accepted by PIUs. Because of uncertainty on the effectiveness of the changed system without practice, the project decided to try the system in soil conservation activity only in 2009.

3.3 ROLE OF PIU

The roles of PIU are to be shifted to giving technical advice to and monitoring of LF's activities from being trainer. Under SVTA, the LFs are the one who are going to give training and follow up to the fellow farmers in their villages. However, training for the farmers to be a LF is conducted by PIUs.

4. APPLICATION OF SVTA IN 2009

4.1 SELECTION OF TARGET AREA

COVAMS project started training activity with seven villages in 2008. The villages are located along Lunzu – Ntenjela catchment. Hence the project pondered that it would be effective and efficient to have activities in this Lunzu – Ntenjela catchment area for implementation of SVTA in 2009, and decided to select the area.

The project began its activity from identifying villages in the area by visiting the area together with PIU members. As a result, 54 villages that include the previous seven villages are identified in the area, although the main part of one of the villages is along another catchment. However, it was found that the locations of three villages among the 54 are out of sections of current PIUs. Therefore, the three villages were put aside until a solution will take place. So the number of the villages becomes 50 villages and 8 households.

4.2 SENSITIZATION

Sensitization to the target villagers on COVAMS project activities was carried out; opening at Traditional Authorities (TA) level followed by village head's level and gradually reached to common village residents' level. The contents of the sensitization were focused on occurrence of soil erosion in their gardens and benefit from countermeasures against the erosion as well as what the project can and cannot provide for the villagers.

PIUs suggested enhancing the understanding of COVAMS activity by the village residents in the target villages at the review meeting held in March 2009. PIUs faced many challenges which attributed to inadequate understanding of the project's principle as well as importance of (benefit from) the soil erosion control and tree growing activity. In addition to this, it had also been attributed to a complexity in understanding of the

word “Project” by all the stakeholders of the project; “A project should provide some inputs”. This tacit expectation to the project by the village residents including PIUs had led to a delivery of vague explanation of the project’s principle and poor understanding on the COVAMS project.

To dissipate such situation, it was agreed among the project staff that the project should give adequate information about the project activities and its principles to the village residents from onset of the activity of SVTA.

The sensitization meeting was conducted once per village. The average of the participants’ ratio in a village was 46% out of whole households of the village. The number of villages which recorded more than 40% was 40, which is 78% of the total target villages. This shows that the information on the sensitization meeting was delivered adequately although some of villages were observed poor information delivery.

In the sensitization meeting, DVD show was took place with such contents as: the situation of their gardens at heavy rain, situation of the siltation in Nkula power plant dam and technologies to mitigate soil erosion in their gardens as well as benefit of the farmers from putting the countermeasures. Besides, the project invited some farmers who joined soil conservation activity in the previous year in order to convey their experience on their increased harvest by conserving their land. However, this invitation was not done in TA Kuntaja because of communication breakdown between the management and PIUs on this matter.

After the DVD show and telling of the farmers’ experiences, PIU gave further explanation about the project and its principles, then, facilitated a discussion on the forthcoming activities. The duration of the meeting in a village was about half day.

4.3 SELECTION OF COVAMS LEAD FARMERS

The project set a criterion for the selection of farmers as candidates for the LFs that it has to be elected by the village residents who participated in a LF candidate selection meeting. The criterion was set to secure recognition of the person as a LF by the village residents, and to choose a person whom the village residents feel trustworthy so that the LF would be utilized effectively and efficiently by them.

The definition of the LF under COVAMS context is that the LF shall conduct training

for the fellow farmers as well as follow-up after the training to give further technical support to the farmers who are practicing the technologies.

The number of the LFs in a village is basically two, ideally one man and one woman. It was considered that having a woman LF may encourage women's participation in the training and their practice.

After the sensitization meeting, a date was set for LF candidate's selection meeting in all the 50 villages. On the selection day, PIU explained the roles of the LFs prior to the election. Upon understanding the roles, the participants of the meeting elected some farmers to their village.

107 farmers (53 female and 54 male) were elected as candidates for the LFs although it was observed that a village elected only men farmers because, there was no willingness from women to be a LF. Some villages elected more than two farmers with reasons such as the wide extent of the village and the big numbers of the households.

4.4 TRAINING IN SOIL ERSION CONTROL

4.4.1 Training for the elected farmers

The LFs are going to conduct training in soil erosion control technologies such as contour ridging in their respective villages. Therefore, it is indispensable that they vest themselves with knowledge and their skills in the technologies. Accordingly, the project provided training, with provision of MK300 as lunch support, in the technologies, focusing on practical aspect.

PIUs were the ones who conducted the Training of Trainers (TOT) for the elected farmers after given brush up course on soil erosion control by two personnel from District Agriculture Development Office. The TOT was designed of three days. The TOT was held in a group form which composed of four to five villages that abut each other. The venue was selected by the elected farmers themselves.

The contents of the TOT are shown in table 1.

The project management set three conditions for the elected farmers to be the LFs. First condition was to complete the 3 day course TOT in soil erosion control technologies and the second one was to practice the technologies they learnt during the training by themselves except gully reclamation and control. The third condition was to experience training, which PIU conducts, as an assistant in order to build skills in conducting

training before they start to conduct their training. Most of the elected farmers fulfilled the conditions.

Table 1: Contents of soil conservation TOT for lead farmers

Day	Subject	Contents
Day 1	Compost making	Process of Chimato making
Day 2	Contour ridging	Required tool making, Identification of slope, Contour marker ridge construction, Realignment of the planting ridges, Swale construction
Day 3	Gully reclamation	Small scale gully reclamation with empty bags, stones and brush wood

Note: The compost making was included from the soil structure improvement point of view. Chimato is one of the methods to make compost in Malawi.

After the training, the project management provided a provisional certificate for the farmers who completed the training as provisional LFs (pLF). Subsequently, a proper certificate will be given to each after they conduct the training for soil erosion control as well as follow-ups. However, the conferment of the certificate is not automatic. The fellow villagers shall evaluate pLF's performance and have the rights to decide if they accept them as a proper LF or not.

Apart from the provision of technical knowledge and its skills, the project management pondered that developing skills in how to deliver knowledge to trainees is vital as a trainer. In this sense, the LFs were instructed to participate in a training course as an assistant, which was conducted by PIUs, so that they would be able to grasp the essence of the delivering skills by seeing and experiencing. The training was conducted by each PIU for demonstration sake in one of the villages of a group, inviting all the member pLFs of the group.

4.4.2 Village meeting for recognition of the pLF

Accessibility to the pLFs by the village residents has to be secured. Poor recognition of them by the village residents would cause inadequate utilization of the pLFs, and it may happen if no countermeasures put in place. So the project requested all the village head to hold a village plenary meeting in order to introduce the pLFs to the whole village residents, and the meeting was conducted in all the villages.

4.4.3 Training by pLFs

The pLFs commenced conducting training in soil conservation technologies from July, and most of the villages went through with the training in October 2009. Most of the villages requested them to conduct the training by clan. It was observed that no farmers of a few villages wanted to participate in the training although they were interested in the technologies, so no training was organized in those villages. Instead, the farmers approached the pLF individually, asking technical support when they constructed planting ridges and the pLFs responded flexibly to those requests.

There was a provision of incentives for the pLFs to conduct the training. The project management decided to pay trainer fee to them based on the number of the participants. MK20 per participant is to be paid. The payment was not done unless the training was organized.

Most of the lead farmers fulfilled the conditions and conducted training of two day course in contour ridging and repeated several times as far as there is a demand. Some of them conducted the training together helping each other, others did it alone. Several pLF did not practice the technologies in their gardens and they were refused to be a trainer in a few villages.

Many of the training participants practiced what they have learnt in the training. However, the training seemed not to be enough to make the participants confident in practicing the technologies by themselves alone. As a result, the farmers requested the pLFs to come to their field when they practice. They devoted their time to support the farmers' practice.

While the pLF were conducting the training and making follow-ups, PIUs also devoted their time giving technical support to them and farmers directly. The technical support was given at the time of conducting training and practicing in their fields. Besides, PIUs worked as a lubricant between village head and the pLFs or village head and the whole village residents.

The benefit of soil erosion control practice should be enjoyed by individual household not as village. Hence the project thought that those farmers who are interested in the technologies would participate in the training and carry out in practice, no matter what a village head's attitude is. It was however, not that simple. Generally, it was observed

that a village without strong support to soil erosion control activities by village head ended up with poor participation in the training and practicing the technologies. In order to improve the situation, the method PIUs took was to have discussion with the village head and to organize a village general meeting for explanation on what kind of benefit they are going to enjoy. With this PIUs' effort, some of the villages improved their turn- up.