



COVAMS



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Impact of improved information dissemination method

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CONTENTS

1. SUMMARY	2
2. SHIFTING OF METHOD IN CONDUCTING TRAINING	2
2.1 BACKGROUND	2
2.2 INTRODUCTION OF SIMPLIFIED METHOD	3
2.3 DEVELOPMENT OF TRAINING DELIVERY SERVICE METHOD	3
2.4 INTRODUCTION OF TRAINING PARTICIPATION CARD	4
3. RESULT OF PARTICIPATION IN TRAINING	4
4. ANALYSIS OF THE SALIENT OUTCOME	5

1. Summary

A newly introduced trainer's fee payment system enhanced the measures of training information dissemination and as a result, the rate of participation in training courses improved saliently. The result has shown how important the role of information dissemination is.

COVAMS project modified the payment basis of trainer's fee to shorten the scrutinizing time of the submitted report by LFs in 2011. The payment basis was changed from counting participants to training courses. The modification affected the whole of training conducting system in such a way that the target group of each training course became precise as clan and its venue was always convenient for the members of respective clans. A supplement tool to grasp the participants at individual level was introduced as Training Participation Card (TP card). TP cards were distributed to every household and it also worked as a tool which promotes their participation in the training.

The above newly introduced three components under the modification of payment basis worked to increase the participation in the training from 50% in 2010 to about 80% in 2011 in both tree growing and soil erosion control. This result was beyond the project expectations.

2. Shifting of method in conducting training

2.1 Background

The project had to face the fact that the payment system of the Lead Farmers (LF) for training fee in 2010 was inchoate. When the number of villages became numerous, preparation of payment sucked tremendous time in confirming participants in all the training. Upon seeing this, JICA Malawi office suggested modifying the payment system to shorten the time for preparation.

The previous payment system was to pay K20 per participant of a training course. For instance, in a case of 20 participants in a soil erosion control training course, a LF receives K400 for that training. It sounds simple if LFs were able to record the participants properly and honestly with the household number. However, the project experienced that farmers use different names and also LFs tried to create more participants than the actual ones. It made the participants confirmation process very difficult and took so long to finish it. There was a case that the listed name as a

participant of a training course in a training report was still a baby.

2.2 Introduction of simplified method

Upon observing such long process for the confirmation of the participants, JICA Malawi office suggested to simplify the system for the payment of the training fee. The project came up with an idea to improve the situation.

The newly introduced payment system was to pay K400 for every training course didn't matter how many participants were there in a particular training. To eliminate an attempt of increasing number of training course limitlessly, the project management allocated number of training courses to each village. The allocation was done based on the number of households of each village.

The calculation for the allocation was done in such a way that the number of households of a village was divided by 20. For instance, a village consists of 100 households will be allocated 5 training courses. Additionally, one more training course is allocated in order to secure multiple opportunities of participation in a subject so that even when someone misses the training of his or her group, there will be some more chances to participate in the same subject of training. Hence it is 6 times of training in total. However, the size of the group for a training course was flexible. The group could be translated as clan to make the villagers comfortable. If the size of a clan was big, then they can split it into two training courses, while small clan can be combined for a training course. The important point is that they need to stick to the allocated number of training courses.

2.3 Development of training delivery service method

The shift of payment system affected to the venue of training. Since the training groups were made almost synonym to clans, the training venue was set at the vicinity of a clan's houses, so the LFs came to deliver service of training to each clan.

Previously, there was no certain rule on where to conduct the training. In some cases, LFs ask the villagers to come to a venue even though it is a little bit far, in other cases, LFs traveled to a venue where the participants requested.

With this grouping / clan system for conducting training, LFs are able to know with whom to consult on decision making over a venue for the training. Moreover, CCOs mention that clan members are encouraged to participate in the training by knowing

other clan members' willingness of participation in training.

2.4 Introduction of Training Participation Card

The project prepared Training Participation Card (TP card) and distributed to each household with intention to grasp which household participated in the training. Each household was distributed a TP card sheet which consist of 8 TP cards of tree growing, soil conservation, gully control and empty titled cards. Each subject has two of them.

Previous payment system enabled to grasp the participants of the training at individual level but it became impossible with the newly introduced payment system. So the project thought that something needs to introduce to grasp the participants and came up with the TP card. The TP card is to be used in such a way that a farmer who is going to participate in a tree growing training for example, that person shall tear off one of TP card from the TP card sheet and go to the venue with it. The owner of the card will write his or her name and household number on the household list which LF is given by the management as well as the date of the training on the TP card, and submit it to the LF before or after the training is done.

The TP card however, is not something that makes the training exclusive. Supposing there are more than 2 people who want to participate in the training in a household, all of them can participate in even though the third person won't have TP card. Moreover, there may be a case when some households were not given the TP card because they were not registered in the village. Even in such case, it doesn't matter they can still participate. In that case, the LF shall record their names on a piece of paper and submit it to the management.

3. Result of participation in training

As a result of modification of the payment system with group / clan approach and introduction of TP card, the participation rate was tremendously improved even under numerous target villages situation.

The participation rates in soil erosion control training were around 60% and 70% in 2008 and 2009 respectively although the number of participants was not counted as household. It was relatively smaller number of target villages like 7 and 50 villages. When the project expanded the number of villages to 169 in 2010, the rate went down to 50%.

During those times, the communication method for training to the villagers depended on village headman and Village Development Committee (VDC) members and LFs themselves. They had to go around their village by shouting at the clan's vicinity. Hence it was quite a cumbersome job for them. While it was small number of target villages, CCOs could pay more attention to the information delivery to the villagers but when it grew to such numerous villages as 169, the information delivery had to depend on LFs and VDC members with inadequate monitoring by CCOs. Hence, the drop of the participation rate could somehow be attributed to this inadequate monitoring by CCOs. However, the project could achieve very high rate in participation in the training courses even with such number of target villages (244 villages) with 33,583 of households in 2011. The table below shows the results of training participation in 2011.

Training subject	No. of Participants	Rate of participation
Tree growing	21,808	78%
Soil erosion control	24,046	83%
Gully control	12,562	53%

Note: Each rate was figured out with different population parameter. The parameter was decided depending on submission of data by the villages. In tree growing, 36 villages didn't submit the data and 5,725 households were subtracted from 33,583, hence the parameter became 27,858. Other subject's parameters were also calculated in the same way and they became 29,026 and 23,591 with subtraction of 30 villages and 68 villages for soil erosion control and gully control respectively.

As the above table shows, the participation rate in soil erosion control was 83% in 2011. Moreover, the rate in tree growing was also quite high with 78% despite inadequate monitoring by CCOs continued due to fuel shortage in the year. Therefore, the improvement could be attributed to the introduction of clan approach, training delivery system and TP card.

4. Analysis of the salient outcome

The 160% of improvement in the rate of participation in the training indicates that COVAMS project is approaching the most effective way in dissemination of information of training to everyone in a village. In other words, it appears that there is an enormous effect and impact in convincing people to participate in training when the information of training reaches to every household.

The approach COVAMS project employed aims at providing equal opportunity of

training participation for every villager. In order to provide the equal opportunity for everyone, dissemination of information to entire village and every household is the key ingredient apart from provision of number of training courses of a subject. COVAMS project, hence, has been discussing with the CCOs on the method of information dissemination and how to achieve adequate dissemination from the onset of the project.

In a village, the common way of information dissemination is through village head. For example, when a CCO has information which needs to be disseminated to the entire community of a village, the CCO has to visit the village head and request for delivery of the message. The village head commonly uses VDC or / and lead farmers (LF) in case of COVAMS for the dissemination. The VDC members or LFs need to go around the village with the information and tell to anyone available in every clan or shout at the vicinity of the clans for the message to reach to every household of the clan.

In case of the training of COVAMS, it is not only once with one subject in a village but it can be repeated several times as far as there is a demand in the same village. Hence, the informants require doing such exercise repeatedly when they plan to conduct training since each training targets entire community of the village. In this way, it is not difficult to understand that reduction of actions for dissemination of information happens as the number of training increases.

The TP card could reduce the work load of the informants. The LFs distribute it to every household at the onset of the training season. By receiving it, the villagers will be able to recognize that there will be training in the village. Moreover, some says that they feel they are invited to the training with it and that motivate them to participate in the training. On the other hand, the TP card brings to some people a distorted expectation that they will receive fertilizer in exchange of the card although all the LFs are informed that there will be no such case and it should be explained to all the villagers beforehand. But they still expected and because of it, they came to the training.

Clan approach also contributed to the increase of the participants of the training as it was mentioned at 2.3 “Development of training delivery method”. Simultaneously, the LFs will only deal with a clan at a time, so information dissemination became easy. Besides, each clan has a leader to whom the LFs need to inform the date of the training. As the training will be conducted for the particular clan only, the clan leader feels that he /she has a responsibility to tell the fellow members about the training. It worked like

that.

Additionally, training delivery system worked in increasing the number of the participants as well. The training will be conducted at the vicinity of a clan so the training will be exposed to every household. Since the training is not exclusive, anyone can join when they want to do so even after the training has started. This means that the exposure itself got a role in dissemination of information.

These could be the factors of increased number of participants with the three modifications.