

Half Yearly Report
Rural Development Training Centre
Zhemgang
July -December 2016



Abbreviations

APA-Annual Performance Agreement

BTF-Bhutan Trust Fund

CLT- Community Leaders Training

CNR-College of Natural Resources.

DAMC-Department of Agricultural Marketing and Cooperatives

DAS-Dzongkhag Agriculture Sector

DoFPS-Department of Forests & Park Services

EOL-Extra Ordinary Leave

FBT- Farm Business Training

GIS-Global Imaginery Survey

HSI- HELVETAS Swiss InterCooperation

MoAF-Ministry of Agriculture & Forests

NOP-National Organic Program

PPD- Planning and Policy Division

RDTC-Rural Development Training Centre

RgoB-Royal Government of Bhutan

RLP- Rural Livelihood Project

SAP- School Agriculture Program

ToT-Training of Trainer

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1.Executive Summary

The planned training could be fulfilled for the FBTs as usual during the year while some of the planned CLTs could not be conducted owing to budget constraint. The number of aspirant farmers and youth turning up for the trainings provided by the centre is growing steadily. Better coordination and linkages with the gewogs and dzongkhag could still be worked on since timely information to the interested candidates does not reach. The instructor for vegetable production, Mr.Pema Gyeltshen, joined back after successful completion of his 2 years B.Sc in Agriculture course at the College of Natural Resources,Lobesa.With his joining back to duty, there are 7 instructors with ample experience and expertise in their respective subjects. Besides the planned training activities, several exchange program for past participants were also organized successfully.

Upon the proposal put up by the previous director, a Thai volunteer joined the centre.Ms.Pimsiri Danphitsanuparn completed her year long stay in October. During her stay,she developed a training module on Orchid Management and an Orchidarium which is being looked after by the trainer of nursery & seedlings management,Mr.Karma Wangchuk. Currently, floriculture is not very popular as a means of livelihood in Bhutan and we haven't received any request for such training yet.

Proposal for additional Dairy,Poultry and Piggery Sheds built with climate smart adaptive technology is underway. With fund approval, these additional structures will add to the current infrastructure of the training centre.With funding support from the BTF,incorporation of Climate Smart Agriculture in the current curriculum development is underway in close consultation with all relevant agencies. The new curriculum shall be introduced for all the FBTs from the next academic year,along with its incorporation on all trainings provided by the centre.

2. Background

During the half year, 122 participants from all over the country came to avail the different farm business oriented training at the campus. Most of the enterprising youths attending the trainings come from Dagana, Tsirang and Samtse. Interested participants from the far East cannot make it to the training centre due to the long tedious journey so we don't have much participants from far-flung dzongkhags like Lhuntse, Trashigang, Gasa, Trashigang, Mongar, etc. Therefore, a provision of providing such trainings in regional centres has been chartered and hopefully it will materialize soon.

Owing to budget constraint and difficult road conditions in the monsoon, the SAP for school students could not be conducted during the summer break. Also the planned CLTs could not be conducted due to limited budget and the inclusion of the trainings from the old training calendar.

During the year-end, the official website of RDTC which had already been launched by His Hon'ble Secretary, was made operational. The website provides periodic update on the activities of the centre so participants interested to attend particular training can make use of the information available.

Inclusion of external resource persons from relevant agencies in some of the trainings makes learning even more of a better experience. Experts can provide more detail and in-depth knowledge on issues required by some of the enterprising participants. In this regard, the dzongkhag provided a ToT on Organic production with support from the National Organic Program and the DoFPS provided hands-on training on chain-saw utilization. In the management front, since the previous Director, Mr. Karma Sonam left on EOL for a period of 2 years, the centre is currently headed by Mr. Dorji Wangdi, Project Manager of RLP.

Besides fulfilling the mandate of providing training for youths and farming communities, the centre has been principle in providing various facilities to the Dzongkhag and other agencies by facilitating the conduction of workshops/training/farmers tour etc. These services will continue being provided to all those agencies that may require the same hereafter. This would hopefully build stronger coordination amongst the relevant stakeholders for future endeavours.

3. RDTC Objective

- Enhance skills and knowledge on agriculture production, marketing & rural development
- Contribute towards enabling environment for self-employment, and employment & income opportunities
- Support market-oriented farming through training in sustainable production methodologies
- Support institutional strengthening of producers' groups.

4. Training activity highlights

The main activities of the centre makes up on the 7 modules FBTs, 6 modules CLTs and experience exchange program for the past training participants. The periodic review and updates on the existing modules is desired beyond the current capacities of the faculty members.

4.1 Farm Business Training

Month	Training	No.of participants	Gender		Dzongkhag
			M	F	
July					
August	Poultry Production Training	26	14	12	Chukha, Tsirang, Samtse, Bumthang, Trongsa & Zhemgang.
September	Level II; Milk Processing (Yoghurt) Training- Dairy Sector	17	11	6	Dagana, Tsirang, Trongsa and Samtse.
October	Organic Vegetable Production Training	24	16	8	Dagana, Punakha, Trongsa & Zhemgang.
November	Pig Production Training	15	14	1	Bumthang, Chukha, Tsirang, Sarpang & Zhemgang
December	Mushroom Cultivation Training	40	30	10	Dagana, Tsirang, Punakha & Wangdue.
	Total:	122	85	37	

4.2 Community Leaders Training

The 6 modules CLT is deemed very useful for capacity building of upcoming farmers groups and cooperatives to build a sustainable foundation with group business ethics. These trainings are provided to the executive members of the groups who will have prominent roles in successful development and growth of the business. We have been providing these training to various Agricultural, Livestock and Forestry groups upon their demand and our training plans. However, since the last lap of HELVETAS Swiss InterCooperation support phased out by 2015, we have had budget constraint in carrying out the training activities outlined in the training calendars. The budget commitment made by DAMC for conducting the CLTs were not released stating that the funds were meant for providing training to In-service personnel and not for the farmers. Therefore, the planned CLTs could not be conducted during the year. However, we are hopeful of getting budget approval as per the training proposals so all the planned training activities can be successfully completed.

4.3 Farmers Experience Exchange Program:

A total of 34 participants comprising progressive farmers who had attended the FBTs at RDTTC were taken for the program. In November, 17 participants of the Nursery and seedlings production management training were taken for field visits to Bhur, Tsirang, Dagana, Paro. And a second batch of the program was conducted for the past trainees of Pig Production training. Along the journey during the 12 days program, they visited and interacted with the progressive piggery producers at Sarpang, Samtse, Dagana, Chukha and Tsirang.

Month	Program	No. of Participants			Dzongkhag
		M	F	Total	
November	Nursery & Seedlings Production participants	13	4	17	Dagana, Sarpang, Zhemgang and Tsirang.
December	Pig Production participants	12	5	17	Sarpang, Samtse, Chukha & Tsirang
Total:		25	9	34	

4.4 Milestones

- Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Finance made a short visit to the centre on 1st November 2016.
- Visit of Program Officer(Bhutan & Nepal) from HELVETAS Swiss InterCooperation in November 2016.
- Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Economic Affairs also visited the centre on October 17th,2016 along with his entourage.
- Mr.Karma Sonam left on EOL for a period of 2 years and the centre is currently headed by Mr.Dorji Wangdi, Program Analyst(Project Manager) of RLP since mid October 2016.
- The official website of RDTC launched by the Hon'ble Secretary was made operational with periodic update on the activities of the training centre.
- A 3 member faculty from CNR,Lobesa led by Dr.D.B. Gurung visited the centre on September 2016 to discuss the future plans of collaboration.

4.5 On-Farm Activities and Progress

There are 3 Agri production sectors comprising of Vegetable, Mushroom and Nursery/Seedlings Management units and 3 Livestock sectors-Dairy,Poultry and Piggery units. These farm units does not function for commercial production with optimum utilization of recources but aims for practical training purpose only.Enhancing the production capacity would result in excess supply within a limited market. The revenue generation from these sectors doesnt cover the cost of production.

- Dairy Farm:currently there are 7 Jersey cows including 3 milking and the revenue generation from milk production and sales during the period was Nu.97,937.500
- Piggery Production Unit: there are 11 animals comprising of 9 Gilts,1 Boar and 1 fattener. The unit supplies piglets to farmers at the subsidized government rate and the revenue during the period was Nu. 15,302.00 from sale of Pork and Nu.7,500.00 from piglets.
- Poultry Production Unit: The unit has a capacity of 250 Layer birds with revenue contribution of Nu.141,022.00 from the 187 layer birds during the period of six months.
- Vegetable Farm: Of the 2.6 acres total area of production, 1.6 acres of terraced land is used for vegetable cultivation with provision for expansion in future. The revenue from sale of vegetables during this period was Nu.4,115.00

- Mushroom Shed: the one unit of mushroom production shed is used to provide training to the participants on spawning and management of Shiitake mushroom production.
- Nursery & Seedlings Production Unit: A green house for fruits nursery distributes seedlings to farmers for free and provides practical training on pruning, grafting and management of orchard.

5. Key Issues and Challenges

- of late, after the last support from Helvetas phased out in 2015, many of the training activities could not be conducted due to lack of budget and issues with obtaining the initially committed budget. Budget allocation and proper planning of training activities and other non-planned activities need a better work out to ensure the main activities of the centre is completed. The budget from RgoB is not sufficient to cater to the planned activities target.
- Strengthening collaboration and linkages with grassroots level still remains a challenge to some extent. Focus need to be made on building better communication channel with the gewogs to ensure the potential participants receive training information on time.
- Periodic TOTs and Workshops on module development and upgradation is found necessary for the faculty members to keep themselves abreast of the latest developments in agriculture and small farming business enterprises and to incorporate new knowledge/skills in the existing training modules.
- Training Duplication is an issue that needs strong advocacy. Other agencies are also conducting similar training for farmers.
- The existing training courses provided are useful but not able to meet the increasing demand from the youth and the farming communities. Their demand for market oriented training interventions are not being met currently.
- Unable to fulfil the Annual Performance Target agreement due to the limited training activities that has to be met within the limited budget and complexity of the new performance appraisal system in the context of the outcomes of the centre.
- Regular monitoring and post-training follow-up and evaluation of the trainees is difficult due to nation wide distribution of the participants. Also not all the potential participants take up farming as a source of livelihood to make any gainful contribution to agricultural production.

- Screening of participants to identify the potential producer is an issue we are struggling with. In the face of budget constraint, it would be desirable to provide training to those progressive and enterprising youth and farmers who would stay back in their villages and contribute to agricultural production and food security. Youths attending the training and going to urban areas in search of employment only leads to wastage of the government resources.

6. Way Forward

- The Centre is in the process of incorporating curriculum on Climate Smart Agriculture with funding support from the BTF. Accordingly, in consultation with all the relevant stakeholders a consultative workshop will be held soon to take forward the development. Within the year, curriculum development and incorporation to existing training modules will be completed and training from the next academic year will have the new technologies and farming methods incorporated.
- Designs are underway for building climate smart technology incorporated farm sheds for the three livestock production units of the farm (dairy, poultry and piggery). We are exploring budget allocation for the same and hoping to kickstart the project soon with budget realization. Piggery unit will aim to produce and supply piglets sufficient within Zhemgang Dzongkhag.
- Outreach training program will be implemented to ensure the training needs of all potential clients are met. Trainers will travel to central regions and provide the trainings as per demands from the clients thereby eliminating the difficulties of traveling long journey.
- Upgrade the capacities of the current faculty members and possibly recruit additional professionals for all the sectors. This would ensure improved quality of training and also development and incorporation of needs based new training on improved sustainable agricultural farming and commercial marketing of farm produce.

7. Lessons Learnt

- Feedback from the training participants have mostly been positive but most expressed their concern about the lack of reliable public transportation to reach the centre. A few times they had small complaints about the quality of food and the lack of bedding facilities especially for those coming from far flung regions. The management could take into consideration the provision of proper bedding facilities in the hostels if adequate budget is approved for the same.
- Difficulty in fund mobilization for carrying out the planned training activities of the centre is an issue that needs strong reprisal. Commitment of funds for training and timely release of budget should be firm and binding.

8. Conclusion:

Besides the planned FBTs and periodic tracer survey conducted with an interval of 2 years, the experience exchange program for farmers is found to be very useful as a part of post-training refresher course. It provides them a platform to share their ideas and impart skills and knowledge from their personal experiences. Such programs lets them discuss about the challenges and successes of the respective farming enterprise and share ideas about marketing strategies. The block visits included as part of every FBTs also gives the participants more knowledge about the updated farming machinery/tools and better management practices. For those participants with lesser level of literacy, practical sessions and demonstrations during such visits gives them more knowledge than classroom theoretical sessions. Despite the challenges currently faced by the training centre, most of the activities have been successfully carried out with plans for improvements from the lessons learnt.

Annexure 1. Outcome Indicator and Progress as on 30th December 2016.

Outcome	Indicator	Achievement
Outcome 001 : Enhance capacity of youths and farming communities(FBTs,CLTs and SAP)	Youth, Farmers, Extension officials, Teachers and Students trained on farming skills for enhanced production and sustainability.	Planned training activities completed successfully.
Output 001: Enhance knowledge and skills on farm management(Farm Business Training)	Youth and Farmers trained on Farm Business Management	122 participants trained in the 6 modules of FBTs
Output 002: Enhance capacity of the executive members of farmers groups & cooperatives(Community Leaders Training)	Executive members of farmers' group & cooperatives trained on Leadership and Management skills.	DAMC had initially committed to release funding for CLT but later it was not released stating the fund was not meant for training farmers groups but for In-service training.
Output 003: Improve capacities of extension officials	Extension Officers trained on Book keeping & Business Planning, Farm Management and marketing.	The planned training could not be conducted owing to lack of funds.
Output 004: Conduct training on school agriculture	Students and teachers attend agriculture training programme	Due to budget constraint after the initially approved budget was not released, the SAP could not be conducted.
Output 005: Strengthen institutional capacity	Relevant training for staff in their respective field of expertise	2 Faculty members attended a 3 days' workshop in Gelephu organized by RLP on Business Planning.
	GPS training organized by the DoFPS	Mr.Pema Gyeltshen attended the training

		and developed the demographic map of the campus.
	Technology promoted as Technology Park	Activity to be carried forward after budget allocation for the same.
Output 006: Periodic Tracer Survey	Training need assessment conducted Post training evaluation/surveys – 156 participants were interviewed from different regions.	Tracer Survey study conducted for past trainees to bring improvement to the existing modules.
Output 007: Training Module Development	With funding support from the Bhutan Trust Fund, a training module based on climate smart agriculture training curriculum development is underway.	The new program will be implemented from 2018 after incorporating the context of new curriculum to the existing training modules.