

Livestock Farmer Field Schools (LFFS) in CBRM ... pioneering in Pakistan

Mujibur Rahman¹

The concept of farmer-centered approaches for technology transfer was pioneered by IC in its projects in NWFP. The first step in this direction was the introduction of Farmer Field Schools (FFS) in horticulture in the SDC funded Project for Horticulture Promotion (PHP) in the late 1990s. The FFS approach was successfully applied for introducing and disseminating integrated crop management (covering Integrated Pest Management as well crop management practices) in fruit and vegetables. Cabi-Bioscience International was IC's partner in this venture. Later, Participatory Technology Development (PTD) approach was introduced in two projects (CBRM, PLI) in 2001 which highlighted farmers' role as researchers, successfully tried by IC and other development agencies (e.g. ETC, AME) in other countries. These approaches were introduced with the joint collaboration of relevant Government line agencies at local and decision-making levels. Seeing the effectiveness of these approaches, the Provincial Agricultural Policy (announced in 2005) aimed at institutionalizing PTD and FFS in the overall working methodology of the department. In addition to this, IC happily noted that other development agencies in government and non-government sectors in and outside NWFP are also promoting farmer-centered approaches and are exploring ways and means to build their own and their partners' capacity in FFS and PTD. These are only the initial impacts, which prove an evolutionary process in the field of agriculture extension in Pakistan.

The Project for Horticultural Promotion (PHP) addressed following issues through the FFS approach:

* Indiscriminate use of agro-inputs was common in horticultural crops in the Province due to a general perception of farmers that application of more agro-chemicals leads to higher production.

* Limited information among farmers on the different kinds, dosage, time of application and safe handling of pesticides was a persistent



problem, which had endangered human and animal lives across the Province (even throughout the country) with increasing severity of the issue.

* The inward looking resource-poor farmers were totally dependent on the so-called experts who only relied on chemical solutions and had no idea of innovative practices for the betterment of rural communities resulting in a 'technology gap'.

In such a scenario, a strong need for farmer-centered approaches were felt. The FFS starts from land preparation and lasts till harvesting (even marketing in some cases) of crops and takes into account all the possible methods/technologies including the validated indigenous practices, which ensure better crop production. Training of Facilitators (TOF) and FFS cycles, extended over the entire growing seasons of crops, were conducted on some selected crops and proved to be very successful. Not only was the use of chemicals reduced, but the production also increased tremendously despite the fact that external input supply was rationalized.

Capitalizing on PHP's learning and experiences, CBRM during its Phase-II formulation opted to introduce the FFS approach in livestock. The

¹ NRM Coordinator, CBRM

holistic approach of FFS was considered to be the best available methodology for resolving complex issues in livestock sector at the farmers' doorsteps. In this connection, a concept paper on the initiation of livestock FFS was developed at the project level, to share ideas with the decision makers in the relevant organizations active in livestock at government and non-governmental levels. The idea was welcomed by all the organizations since they already knew the approach through PHP. A Provincial Livestock Advisory Forum (LAF) was established to provide guidance in promoting FFS in livestock in a systematic manner. Keeping in view the challenges and potential of the area, CBRM was keen to efficiently utilize the services of this forum in the planning and implementation of the FFS approach. On the recommendation of the Forum, the Project conducted following two studies to build an in-depth understanding of the situation in the project areas:

- i. Baseline survey on livestock farming
- ii. The use of native medicinal plants in the treatment of livestock diseases under the traditional farming system

An 8-member team comprising of management and field staff went on an exposure visit to Kenya in September 2003 to practically see and participate in the livestock FFS sessions since the FFS activities in livestock are more advanced in Kenya. The induction of Kenyan experiences into Pakistani LFFS programme and learning from them was helpful for designing a future strategy.

A working group comprising of technical experts formulated an outline of the draft curriculum, which was shared with International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Kenya and thematic expert at IC Bern for their feedback. They suggested that farmers' group should determine priorities to be included in the contents of the curriculum in order to make it demand-oriented. Following these preparations, ILRI conducted a pre-condition survey, followed by the Training of Facilitators (TOF). The trained facilitators have now established the schools on different livestock enterprises in districts Buner, Peshawar and D.I. Khan with male and female livestock farmers. Using various PRA tools, they have not only identified and prioritized their problems, but have also developed the experiment options, which will be practiced

during the life of the FFS.

FFS Livestock with women in Village Tarinan, Buner

Bakhat Jehan²

Tarinan (female) Farmer Field School consists of 19 active farmers. The training session is held each Thursday in an easily accessible place in the village. The women represent a poor community with high dependence on livestock. The livestock population in Tarinan mainly consists of buffalos and goats. The women identified goats as their enterprise since they had a direct control over them for making income. They identified various diseases in goats as 'problems' as these reduced production of milk and hence loss of income. The problems were prioritized and analyzed to identify their causes and effects. This led to developing a seasonal calendar for identifying when the problems occur and when a solution should be applied. Various options were developed for addressing problems and were reflected on the calendar. The final outcome of the exercise was a set of experiments to be conducted in the FFS during 2006, which will hopefully lead to identifying solutions of farmers' problems. The solutions should come from the farmers themselves as they go along the experiment and see things happening in a certain direction. Further a plan for operating the FFS was chalked out, roles and responsibilities distributed among members and terms of partnership signed with the FFS group.



²Female subject matter specialist in livestock and facilitator FFS livestock. Field Support Unit Buner, CBRM