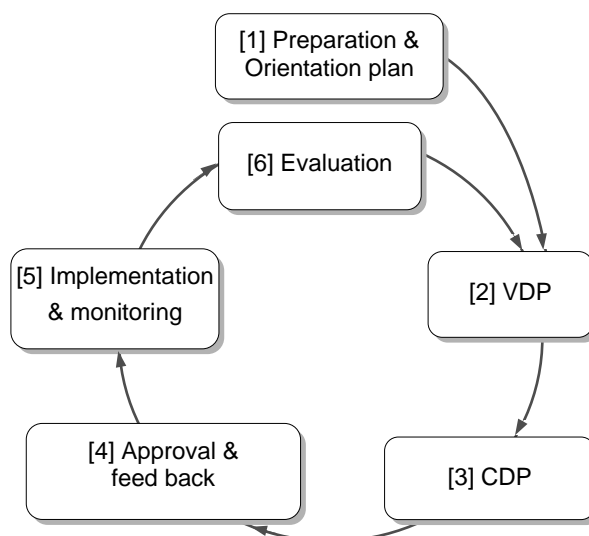


Procedures for Village & Commune Development Planning

Volume I. Guidelines



Purpose and target group of the VDP/CDP Guidelines

The purpose of these VDP and CDP Guidelines is to provide clear instructions how to implement Village and Commune Development Planning. It is developed and serves:

- for Provincial and district authorities and relevant support agencies
- for ETSP Project Management Unit staff for creating common understanding
- as reference document to make first tests on VDP/CDP in some communes and villages in ETSP project area
- as reference document to make related VDP/CDP extension package (incl. field manual for CDP facilitation team) and training courses.

Later on, if the province would initiate a CDP working group, these guidelines would be the base for refining the methodology and adapting it to the requirements of the provincial planning system.

Acknowledgement

These VDP/CDP guidelines are based on the guidelines produced by Social Forestry Development Project (SFDP) and the Department of Planning and Investment of Son La Province. The staff of the project and of the DPI jointly developed, tested and reviewed this participatory planning approach during several years.

Mr. Klaus Kirchmann, SFDP (gtzsfdp@netnam.org.vn) has been devoting great endeavors to compile these guidelines which are the results of the effort in Son La province.

On behalf of Extension and Training Support Project (ETSP), we would like to address our thanks to SFDP for its collaboration and authorization to use the documents in the field of Village Development Planning (VDP).

Abbreviations

CDP : Commune Development Plan/Planning

CPC: Commune People's Committee

PRA : Participatory Rural Appraisal

VDP : Village Development Plan/Planning

VMB : Village Management Board

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1 Introduction to VDP and CDP

Village and Commune Development Planning (VDP & CDP) follow precisely the quotation: “People know, people discuss, people execute and people supervise” by President Ho Chi Minh¹. VDP and CDP are participatory planning methodologies, which integrate the grassroots level with the central government planning system. Based on their local knowledge, villagers discuss the situation of their community, they analyze problems, and define priority activities for the development of their village and commune. Then, they execute the plan with the support of government agencies, and finally, they supervise the results.

The legal base for VDP and CDP is in particular the National Decree No.29/1998/ND-CP of May 11, 1998 (Regulation on the exercise of grassroots democracy). There has been a number of subsequent decisions and regulations at national and sub-national level, and in the discussion about Vietnam’s Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (CPRGS), the Government has once again stressed on the need to reinforce this approach. VDP and CDP are particularly developed to put the decree into practice at field level.

Experiences with VDP in the provinces of Son La, Lai Chau, Cao Bang, Bac Kan, Quang Binh and others show good results. In Son La, the Provincial People’s Committee approved the methodology as official planning procedure for the whole province (decision no. 894/2001/Q§-UB, dated from 07.05.2001).

However, there are still a lot of problems to overcome with regard to the planning and implementation. Scarce budgets are a general limitation for plan implementation. Therefore, it is important to efficiently allocate financial resources according to where they are mostly needed, i.e. to the priorities of the villagers. This is one of the main reasons why efforts need to be invested in grassroots planning.

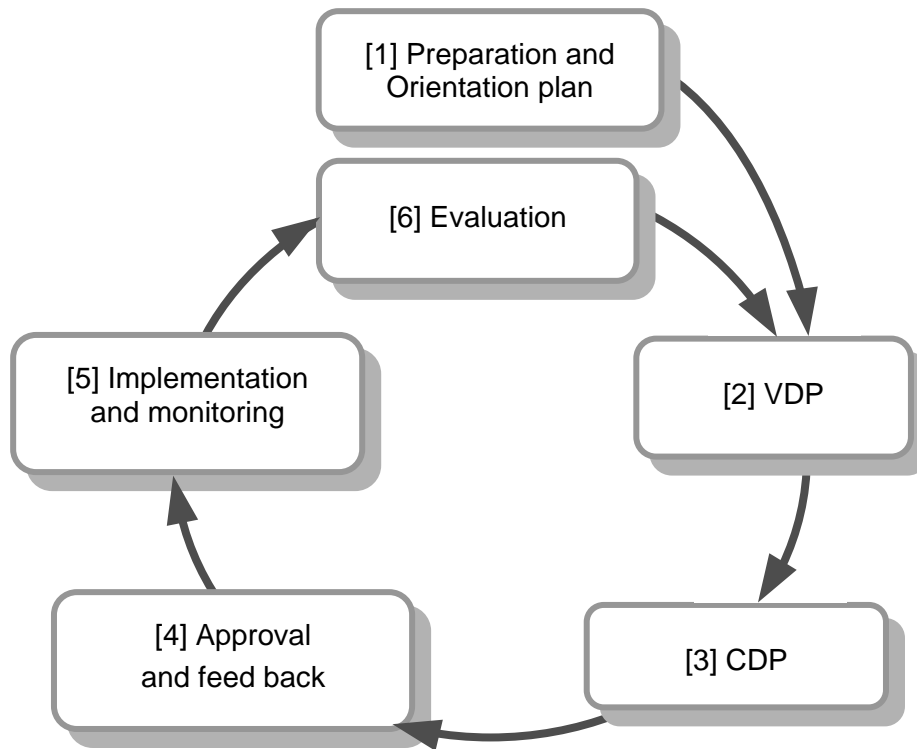
These guidelines for VDP/CDP are designed as a reference document, how to attract grassroots participation into practice in planning and implementation in order to address livelihood needs in the ETSP project area of Dak Lak, Thua Thien Hue and Hoa Binh provinces.

1.1 *The VDP/CDP cycle*

VDP and CDP are tools for mid-term and annual planning. They support the annual government and/or project planning through basic data and priorities for development activities from grassroots level. VDP/CDP are therefore not a single event, but a repeating, cyclical exercise. The whole process is best illustrated in the “VDP/CDP cycle” with six steps.

Figure 1: The VDP/CDP cycle with six steps

¹ Quotation in: Vietnam Development Report 2000 – Attacking poverty. Joint report of the Government – Donor – NGO working group. Consultative group meeting for Vietnam, Dec. 11-15, 1999.



As indicated in the figure, VDP/CDP doesn't only exist for a planning exercise at village and commune levels (steps [2] and [3]), but it requires as well a proper preparation, particularly of the orientation plan from higher level. VDP/CDP also requires skilful management of the results after data collection.

The critical point however is the follow up of plan implementation. In case communes and villages won't be supported for VDP/CDP implementation, villagers will certainly lose interest in participating to planning efforts soon. Therefore, it is necessary that both villagers and government services/ projects should be committed to contributing and supporting the plan implementation.

1.2 *Standard CDP material*

The required material for VDP/CDP exists of a set of eight standardized forms. The complete set must be available to the CDP facilitation teams before starting the village and commune planning exercises.








During the village sessions, in addition to the eight forms, several flipchart papers and markers are also necessary for noting down the PRA results, and the village plan.

Following is a brief overview about the eight forms. The usage of each forms is described in chapter 2. Samples of the forms are presented in the annex.

**Commune database
[CDP B1]**

Basic information on the commune and its villages such as population, land use, etc.
(Annex 2)



Orientation plan [CDP B2]	Containing information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current government regulations ▪ Frame for potential support to the communes/villages by programs/projects from different levels (Annex 3)	
PRA questionnaire [CDP B3]	Simple guide of how to facilitate farmer groups in assessing the village situation, and for noting down: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potentials & problems, solutions & activities ▪ Priority ranking for the three most important activities in each thematic area (upland cultivation, forestry, livestock...) (Annex 4)	
Village planning form [CDP B4]	Standardized planning form for filling planning results at the village meeting, containing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mid-term and yearly village plans with prioritized activities for each thematic area (Annex 5)	
Commune planning form [CDP B5]	Compiled activity list with quantities and priorities for all villages of a commune, copied from the village planning form [CDP B4] (Annex 6)	
Consolidated village planning form [CDP B6]	Consolidated priority activities per village, including 2 rows per activity, one for approved results by higher level and one for actually carried out results (Annex 7)	
Commune priority overview form [CDP B7]	Overview table presenting priority activities per thematic area (forestry, livestock, etc.) of each village in the commune (Annex 8)	
Commune level activity form [CDP B8]	Priority activities per thematic area (forestry, livestock, etc.) at commune level (Annex 9)	

For clear definition of the standard material, each form is named by a code [CDP B...]; B is the abbreviation for “Bieu” (vn, table). The table forms [CDP B2] to [CDP B8] are all in one MS Excel file. The tables [CDP B5] to [CDP B8] can directly be used for aggregating and summarizing the VDP results from table [CDP B4]. Table form [CDP B3] is not designed for transcribing VDP results to computer. Paper copies are enough, as PRA results are difficult to aggregate on computer anyhow.

2 Implementing the six steps of the VDP/CDP cycle

Step 1: Preparation and Orientation plan

- **Preparation**

The preparation for the planning process at commune and village level consists of different activities as follows:

Meeting at commune level with representatives of all villages

The main purpose of this initial commune meeting is:

- to provide information on the planning process and its legal base to the commune authorities and village management boards
- to set up (confirm for following years) a CDP facilitation team whose main responsibility is to assist the villages and commune to develop, implement and monitor CDP/VDP. The members should have a real interest in participatory planning, are willing to listen and respect the concerns of the poor. Ideally this team shouldn't extend 7 persons, comprising commune and village leaders, local resource persons and whenever possible a representative of the district.
- to establish a detailed activity schedule for the upcoming planning steps at commune and village level.

Capacity building

The CDP facilitation team has to be trained and coached by professional service providers in facilitation and communication skills, PRA, and the different steps of VDP/CDP cycle.

Overview VDP/CDP cycle

Steps		Outputs
Step 1: <i>Preparation and Orientation plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Meeting at commune level with representatives of all villages - Capacity building - Identification of information needs and data collection • Orientation Plan 	Commune database [CDP B1] Orientation plan [CDP B2] Maps (commune and villages)
Step 2: <i>Village Development Plan (VDP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial village meeting and selecting a representative group of villagers (VDP working group) • Village appraisal by the VDP working group (PRA) • Elaboration of VDP proposal by the VDP working group • Village meeting to discuss PRA findings and to review VDP proposal 	PRA results based [CDP B3] Village planning form [CDP B4] VDP proposal (A ₀ paper)
Step 3: <i>Commune Development Plan (CDP)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiling VDP results at commune level • Review and consolidation of VDP results at commune level • Prioritizing village activities at commune level • Preparation of common activities at commune level • Finalizing CDP 	Commune planning form [CDP B5] Consolidated village planning form [CDP B6] Commune priority overview form [CDP B7] Commune level activity form [CDP B8]
Step 4: <i>Approval and feedback</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening commune and village activities and providing feedback • Information management on CDP/VDP at district level 	Approved Consolidated village planning form [CDP B6] Approved Commune level activity form [CDP B8] with information on possible support from higher level
Step 5: <i>Implementation and monitoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation • Monitoring 	Consolidated village planning form [CDP B6] Commune level activity form [CDP B8]
Step 6: <i>Evaluation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation 	

Identification of information needs and data collection

The information needs and related information sources on commune and village characteristics (population, land use, etc.) have to be initially defined. The collection of the basic information (secondary data) is the first task of the CDP facilitation team. The data can be recorded in the “Commune database” [CDP B1], which has to be regularly updated.

Whenever possible, accurate commune maps, e.g. base plan with basic administrative information; and thematic maps such as current land use, should be made available.

Missing basic information required for the establishment of village and commune development plans can be completed during the VDP step using PRA tools.

- **Orientation Plan**

Planning at grassroots level must be in line with government policies, and should be done in consideration of currently available support programs. Thus, with several weeks in advance, respective information has to be prepared, which the CDP facilitation team then can use during the VDP and CDP process. The District People’s Committee should be responsible to establish an overview of what the government agencies and the different projects can potentially support in the upcoming year(s). All this information is summarized in the orientation plan. This includes as far as possible also the plans from support agencies like Agricultural Extension Centre/Station, and national programs such as 135 and 661. The orientation plans include the broad categories of potential support and investment, and the available budget frame per item.

This orientation plan should be concise in order to give quick and helpful guidance to the CDP facilitation team, the commune authorities and the villagers. A simple form of the “Orientation Plan” [CDP B2] is provided in annex 3.

Tip for the facilitator:

The orientation plan should serve only as a guide. In a first step, the villages should discuss their development priorities irrespective of the orientation plan. After that, the facilitator can discuss with the villagers in how far the plans fit with the orientation plan, and which activities are more likely to be supported.

If villagers only set up their plan along the orientation plan, outcome is likely not to be a comprehensive village plan but rather a “shopping list” for asking externally offered services.

Step 2: Village Development Plan (VDP)

Making VDP in the villages is more complex than the other steps of the VDP/CDP cycle in the sense that a number of different tasks have to be fulfilled at the same time:

- the CDP facilitation team inform villagers about current regulations, plans and programs from higher level and/or projects
- basic information has to be collected from village level
- villagers discuss the situation of their village, potential and problems, causes, solutions, and priority activities
- a dialogue between top down and bottom up planning has to be facilitated in order to achieve more realistic and appropriate plans at village level.

It is expected that analytical skills, sense of ownership and self-responsibility of villagers will be enhanced through VDP activities. Overall, the purpose is to increase grassroots capacities for managing local development in a broad sense.

The expected outputs of this step are achieved through a series of activities as follows:

- **Initial village meeting and selecting a representative group of villagers (VDP working group)**

In a initial village meeting, the CDP facilitation team has to inform the Village Management Board (VMB) and villagers about the VDP/CDP process, and exchange to complete the information on village characteristics for commune consolidation.

During this meeting, a representative group of villagers, which is called as VDP working group, has to be selected to participate in making the village assessment, and elaborating a proposal of VDP . It is crucial that this group members are nominated is identified by the villagers themselves, and should include village leaders, and other community members with special knowledge or skills including women and representatives of disadvantaged groups. This VDP working group should ideally consists of 10 to 15 persons.

Finally a working schedule has to be agreed on conducting the village appraisal using PRA tools and on making a proposal for VDP.

- **Village appraisal by the VDP working group (PRA)**

The purpose of the village appraisal is not only to obtain information about the village's reality, but to help people to discuss and analyze the village potential and problems, to identify and figure out possible solutions and develop related activities in relevant socio-economic domains. It is important to well prepare and carefully implement this participatory appraisal as it is the backbone of the VDP and CDP.

Following thematic areas can be explored:

-
- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| ▪ Land use planning & land/forest allocation | ▪ Livestock |
| | ▪ Organizational capacity building |
-

▪ Forestry	▪ Marketing & input supply
▪ Upland cultivation & paddy	▪ Infrastructure
▪ Cash crops & home garden	▪ Other issues

At early stage of participatory village and commune planning, areas related to natural resource management should be focused, while other areas such as education, health may be added later on.

Each area should be discussed separately to prior prepare a structured activity proposal for the village meeting. The VDP working group can even split into two or three small subgroups to work more efficiently in parallel. It may be useful that two groups are working on the same area, and afterwards combine their results to elaborate a common proposal.

In general, the structure of discussion for any area should always follow the same pattern:

- Create a joint understanding of the present situation of the specific thematic area
- Discuss potentials in the village (which can be further developed), and main problems
- Analyze the causes of the problems, and think of the consequences in the future
- Find out possible solutions
- Select the three most important activities to put into the village plan.

These steps can be implemented by using the “PRA questionnaire” [CDP B3]. Depending on the situation, the CDP facilitation team might diversify this questionnaire by employing appropriate PRA tools such as time line, transect walk, mapping, seasonal calendar, etc. However, the facilitation team should not lose track, spending too much effort in the PRA tools themselves. (See **Annex 3**)

The important output of every group work is the list of activities, with maximum three priorities per thematic area. However, it might be possible that the group decides only for one or even no activity in the concerned thematic area.

Tip for the facilitator:

PRA tools are only for facilitating group discussions and analysis. PRA is not done for the sake of coming up with nice graphs, tables and maps (even though they can be very helpful). Very often, facilitators concentrate so much in HOW to properly perform a specific tool, e.g. to produce a nice village transect, that they forget WHAT actually should be the CONTENT of the discussion.

Another issue is that PRA does often not include an analytical part. E.g. frequently there is no conclusion after drawing a VENN diagram. Therefore, it is important to include an analytical part, i.e. the discussion about problems in this specific area, causes of the problems, and potential solutions.

It is better to use simple PRA tools, and be mindful of the questions for encouraging constructive discussions among farmers.

- **Elaboration of VDP proposal by the VDP working group**

As described above, the elaboration of the VDP is a logical consequence of the village assessment (PRA), done by the VDP working group. The proposal of priority activities should be detailed with location, expected time frame, contributions, etc. The more specific the formulation, the easier the justification of activities, and the better the chance to get the specific support for implementation. The

outputs of the group work related to each thematic area have to be noted down into the “Village planning form” [CDP B4]:

Thematic area / Activity	Unit	Quantity	Location	Time Frame		Village contribution	External contribution	Priority (1 to 3)
				Start	Finish			

This VDP proposal has a mid-term time frame (3 to 4 years) which makes the plan more flexible in terms of its approval, the negotiation for its financial support and implementation. However, an annual plan has to be elaborated at the upcoming village meeting, in which the PRA results and the VDP proposal are again at full disposal though they are not yet binding at this stage.

The results of the planning at preparation stage have to be written on A₀ paper with the same content as the “Village planning form” [CDP B4]. This eases the presentation at the village meeting.

- **Village meeting to discuss PRA findings and to review VDP proposal**

In this meeting, the VDP proposal is openly discussed, the priorities of suggested activities are reviewed and the plan has to be ratified.

This village meeting could take around 3 hours. It is of critical importance to limit the time for the presentation of the PRA results (one hour). Instead, more time has to be reserved for discussing the proposed activities in VDP.

Ranking of the priority activities is another important step of the village meeting. For each thematic area (forestry, upland cultivation & paddy, etc.) up to three activities can be prioritized. The facilitator asks for votes from the villagers to define the most important one. The priority rank has to be recorded in the last column of the “Village planning form” [CDP B4]. Though, more activities can be put into the plan, only up to three will get a priority rank. This ranking exercise is repeated for each of the thematic areas separately.

Based on activities with a mid-term time frame (3 – 4 years) in VDP proposal, prioritized activities have to be annually selected for implementation (right part of the [CDP B4] form).

Output of VDP at the end of the village meeting

The outputs of the VDP steps, after being ratified by the village meeting, are as follows:

[CDP B3] Results from the village assessment (PRA results), transcribed to A4 paper. The original version has to be sent to Commune PC, meanwhile a copy will be kept by the VMB.

[CDP B4] Village planning form with mid-term and annual activity plan, transcribed to A4 paper. The original version has to be sent to Commune PC, meanwhile a copy will be kept by the VMB.

VDP proposal on A₀ papers. The prioritized activities have to be displaced in a public place where villagers can easily access, e.g. village meeting hall.

Difference between VDP in the first year and in subsequent years

In the first year of VDP elaboration, more time is required for the situation assessment. Normally, 2 or 2.5 days are necessary. The additional value of extending the village appraisal to more than three days is questionable and not realistic considering the time constraints of involved commune staff.

In the subsequent years, the time for village appraisal can clearly be reduced as the one hand the VDP working group and CDP facilitation team will get more and more competent and experienced, and moreover a mid-term plan already exists. Around one day for village appraisal (PRA) and annual VDP elaboration should be sufficient. As previous years, the list of prioritized activities has to be discussed and finalized during the village meeting.

Another thing to be done in subsequent years is to evaluate the implemented activities of the previous year. This is an ideal starting point for defining the upcoming yearly activity program of the VDP. The former VDP can be assessed in participatory way in the field. Guiding questions are as follows: which activities have been fulfilled? which not? why not? how to make it better? what was successful? etc.

Step 3: Commune Development Plan (CDP)

• **Compiling VDP results at commune level**

The compilation of VDP results into a Commune Development Plan (CDP) is firstly a more administrative task. There are standard commune table forms for compiling and computerizing the village data. All these forms are available in one Excel workbook.

Activities of “Village planning form” [CDP B4] of all villages have to be compiled into the “Commune planning form” [CDP B5], which gives an overview of all quantified and prioritized activities in a commune.

Commune planning form [CDP B5]

		Commune	Village 1		Village 2		Village 3	
Thematic area / Activity	Unit	□ Quantity	Quantity	Priority (1 to 3)	Quantity	Priority (1 to 3)	Quantity	Priority (1 to 3)
B. Forestry								
Cinnamon plantation	ha	25	10	1	0	2	15	1

- **Review and consolidation of VDP results at commune level**

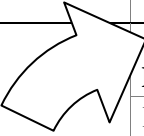
The “Commune planning form” [CDP B5] may contain activities and/or corresponding quantities which are not realistic or unlikely to be supported. Therefore the CDP facilitation team, together with the Commune PC and representatives of the VMB need to review and consolidate the data.

Consolidated village planning form [CDP B6]

The details of the reviewed VDP activities, such as quantity, location and time frame have to be written up into the “Consolidated village planning form” [CDP B6] into the first row, marked with “VDP”.

The second row (“PD”) of the form is reserved for the approved results by the higher level, the district authority. The third row (“TH”) is reserved for summarizing the implementation results, on which the evaluation will be based at the end of the year .

Example how to fill in the reviewed data into the “*Consolidated village planning form*” [CDP B6]

Activity		Unit	Quantity	Location	Time frame		Village contribution	External contribution	Priority (1 to 3)
					Bắt đầu	Kết thúc			
	VDP	ha	10	Location a	02.03	05.03	Contrib. x	Assistance y	1
	PD								
	TH								
	VDP								
	PD								
	TH								

VDP: Đề xuất của thôn (VDP proposal) PD: Phê Duyệt (approval) TH: Thực Hiện (actually carried out)

- **Prioritizing village activities at commune level**

In order to make appropriate choices by establishing the “Consolidated village planning form” [CDP B6], the priority activities of all villages have to be considered. Therefore, a “Commune priority overview form” [VDP B7] has to be established, containing priority activities of all villages. However, this step is not a simple copy exercise. To do it, thematic area wise, all priority activities are written up. For instance, all forestry related activities of all villages in one commune are written on an special paper. As per convention a village can place maximum three priorities per thematic area, the list will have maximum 24 priority activities if the commune comprises 8 villages. In reality however, some villages suggest only one or two priority activities, and many activities may be identical in various villages. Therefore, it is likely that the list will only contain between 10 to 15 different priority activities per thematic area.

It is suggested to include in the [CDP B7] table form only maximum 12 prioritized activities per thematic area. In other words, less frequently mentioned activities by villages won’t be considered in the CDP.

Commune priority overview form [CDP B7]

Thematic area / Activity	Village name							
	T 1	T 2	T 3	T 4	T 5	T 6	T 7	T 8
B. Forestry								
Cinnamon plantation	1	2	1				1	2
PTD experiments	2		2	2	2		3	1
Forest management		1				1		3
Enrichment planting					3		2	
Nursery			3	1				
Activity y		3			1	2		
Activity z				3				

The next step is to check priority ranking of the village activities in the corresponding forms [CDP B4] - [CDP B6]. The priorities have to be adjusted accordingly to [CDP B7] form.

- **Preparation of common activities at commune level**

After the consolidation and prioritization of the VDP results, there is as well a need to define common activities at commune level. These activities might be the logical consequence of the village planning process, others could be of overall importance in the commune, such as the creation of a commune forestry board, or creation of a commune grazing area.

The Commune PC with participation of the village heads plan these activities by using the “Commune level activity form” [CDP B8], which is very similar to [CDP B6].

- **Finalizing CDP**

One of the important responsibilities of the commune authority is to mediate between the village and the district level. Many of the relevant public services and investments are decided and managed by the district level institutions. By introducing to the district the CDP with the consolidated VDP results, appropriate support is expected responding to the need-based and decentralized planning effort at village and commune levels.

To facilitate the negotiation process with the district level authority, a simple and easily understandable CDP has to be established.

The CDP should contain following parts:

- Cover page and introduction
- Commune database [CDP B1]
- Consolidated village planning form [CDP B6] of all villages of the concerned commune
- Commune level activity form [CDP B8]


Step 4: Approval and feedback

- **Screening commune and village activities and providing feedback**

At district level, the required support and suggested activities of the CDPs have to be screened, taking into account available funds, human resources of district field staff, available project support and should be consistent with governmental regulations. The screening process, using the “Orientation Plan” [CDP B2] as reference document, and related adjustments have to be done by representatives of District PC, Office of Agriculture & Land Administration, Extension station and CDP facilitation team.

The “Consolidated village planning form” [CDP B6] for village activities and “Commune level activity form” [CDP B8] for common commune activities have to carefully checked and adjusted accordingly.

The approved data for the different commune and village activities are written into the “Phê Duyệt” (approval) row of forms [CDP B6] and [CDP B8] as follows:

Activity		Unit	Quantity	Location	Time frame		Village contribution	External contribution	Priority (1 to 3)
					Start	Finish			
	VD P	ha	20	Location a	02/03	05/03	Contrib. x	Assistance y	1
	PD	ha	15	Location a	04/03	06/03	Contrib. x	Assistance z	
	TH								
	VD P								
	PD								
	TH								

The finally approved activities of the village plans have to be feed backed to the VMBs so that they can adjust their VDP corresponding to approved results of the district institutions. For not approved activities, the villages can still self-finance with their own means or search for other alternative support.

- **Information management on CDP/VDP at district level**

VDP/CDP processes are for strengthening grassroots democracy, and for improving the quality of public services and investments towards communes and villages It is important that District PC, district support agencies and projects have updated information on village and commune planning results.

Such information offers the opportunity to enhance the integration of planning efforts between village/commune and district levels. By establishing their work plans, public and project service providers will be able to respond to need-based requests of villages and communes.

Computerized data management is needed when conducting VDP/CDP in the whole district due to the important data quantity. An appropriate and easy manageable informatics system needs to be set up at district level, containing all village and commune planning forms (excel workbooks).

Sorting o available village and commune planning results, e.g. per thematic area, eases to establish sector plans for corresponding district agencies such as Extension Station, Plant Protection Unit, Forestry Protection Station, etc.




Step 5: Implementation and monitoring

The Commune PC and VMB are respectively responsible for the implementation and monitoring of CDP and VDP, meanwhile district support agencies, e.g. extension station, have to provide appropriate support for agreed activities, listed in [CDP B6] and [CDP B8].

Before implementing the activities, it may be useful to establish simple activity sheets providing more information such as the detailed budget and planning, required material, etc. It is also necessary to establish simple contracts with chosen service providers by defining the terms of reference with expected results and financial conditions.


The “Commune extension booklet” is produced on the basis of the agreed planning forms [CDP B6] - [CDP B8]. These table forms can be prepared in a small booklet with plastic cover for its protection during the field work. This booklet is used throughout the year as excellent working tool for extensionists for following up activity implementation and monitoring.

Commune extension booklet

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 - Cover: “Annual work plan – results of CDP/VDP and approval by district PC / Extension station – commune <name>”, and short introduction
- 
 - “Commune priority overview table [CDP B7]
 - “Consolidation village table form” [CDP B6] and Commune level activities table form [CDP B8], including the “VDP”/“CDP” proposal (in the first line), and the approved results “PD” from district level (second line).
- 

Step 6: Evaluation

The evaluation of the activity implementation is done at the end of the year before preparing the new CDP/VDP. The Commune facilitation team supports the village working group to assess the quantitative and qualitative results. Each activity has to be evaluated individually and the quantitative results can be noted in the third line “TH: thực hiÕn = carried out” of [CDP B6] form.

Activity		Unit	Quantity	Location	Time frame		Village contribution	External contribution	Priority (1 to 3)
					Start	Finish			
	VD P	ha	20	Location a	02/03	05/03	Contrib. x	Assistance y	1
	PD	ha	15	Location a	04/03	06/03	Contrib. x	Assistance z	
	TH	ha	16	Location a	04/03	07/03	Contrib. x	Assistance z	
	VD P								
	PD								
	TH								

Tip for the facilitator:

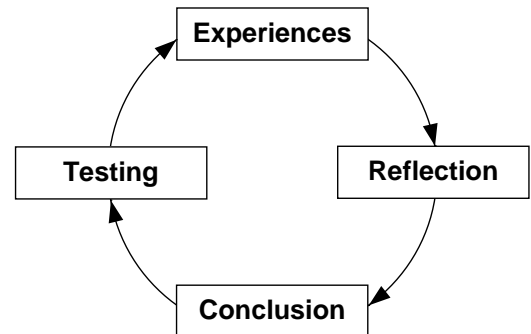
At the evaluation, the basic facilitation skill is to ask appropriate questions such as: what went right? what was not so good? why? why not? what can we learn from that? what can be improved the next time? what should be repeated in the next plan? etc.

Annex 1: Brief Facilitation Guide

VDP/CDP is not only an administrative exercise of collecting and processing data. VDP/CDP is at the same time a tool for human resource development. By discussing problems and their causes, by searching for relevant solutions, and by exchanging experiences and ideas, villagers increase their analytical skills and their organizational capacities.

This learning does however not occur in a single VDP/CDP event. It is a much longer process that takes place throughout the whole VDP/CDP cycle. This cycle thus can also be seen as a “learning cycle”, very similar to the learning cycle developed by the pedagogue Kolb. His explanation about experiential learning became the basis for most adult learning concepts and training approaches.

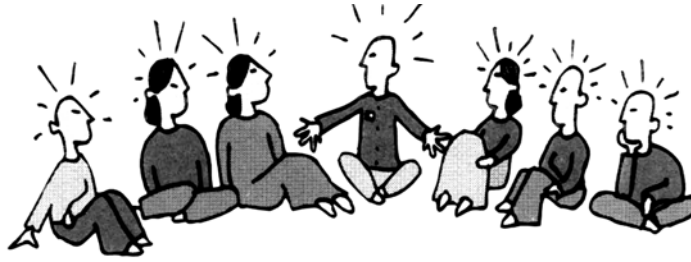
Learning cycle by Kolb



What is facilitation?

Facilitation is a way of guiding discussions so that the group can achieve its objectives more effectively. This is helpful in village meetings, field experiments or in training courses. It is based on the principle that adults learn best from own experiences and from discussing about their experiences. Technical knowledge is offered by the facilitator according to the need of the farmers and discussed in a participatory way.

Mostly, the group is to draw conclusions or to agree about next steps. Especially in this step, the facilitator should leave the full stake to the group and not impose own ideas.



The key competencies of a good facilitator

- 1. Group moderation**

This is the most frequent task of a facilitator to guide a group to exchange ideas and experiences in order to come up with joint results, conclusions, or work plans.

Good facilitation requires to pay attention to group dynamics, and to integrate the weaker group members, mostly women or poor people.
- 2. Communication**

Group moderation builds upon personal communication skills. Among them, asking appropriate questions and listen actively are the most important ones.
- 3. Technical knowledge**

Additional to farmers' experiences and knowledge, the facilitator should contribute specific technical knowledge – however, not in a top-down but in a participatory way, respecting farmers' interests and demands.
- 4. Personal attitude**

An authentic and positive attitude towards the farmers is the most important base for good facilitation. A person who thinks that farmers are lacking education and do not understand can never be a good facilitator.

How to do facilitation

1. Group moderation



Moderate the group discussion

- Clarify with the group what is the task or objective.
- Conduct meetings where participants are active.
- Pick up the contributions from the group and help structuring different ideas.
- Encourage also weaker group members, especially women
- Mediate conflicting positions.
- Use different methods for visualization, e.g. small cards, pictures, A0 paper, black board, etc.
- Help the group in participatory decision making and to define conclusions and/or action plans.

2. Communication



Ask questions and listen actively

- Ask questions for getting information, clarifying situations and opinions, encouraging people's participation, managing group processes, or enhance learning processes.
- Ask preferably open questions: How? Why? When? Who? What?
- Use questions to foster analytical thinking: Strong points? Weak points? So, what is the conclusion?
- Use probing
- Listen actively.
- Give feedback, and invite participants to give feedback

3. Technical knowledge



Contribute technical knowledge and use teaching aids

- Figure out what technical knowledge is demanded by the farmers.
- Make examples or practical demonstrations.
- Prepare easy understandable handouts.
- Use teaching aids for active training
- Do not impose your ideas, but offer your knowledge as a contribution to a learning process. Discuss with the farmers in which way they might apply the technical know how.

4. Personal attitude



Convey empathy

- Express eagerness and commitment in his work so that participants enjoy the session.
- Listen actively to the people's experiences and needs.
- Give positive and helpful feedback.
- Be respectful and interested in the participants experiences
- Build up mutual understanding and trust, and encourage participants to respect mutual comments, especially of weaker group members and women. This is the most important base for good facilitation.

Annex 3 : PRA questionnaire [CDP B3]

Village:	Thematic area (forestry, upland cultivation & paddy, ...)
Date:	

Tip for the facilitator:

A good facilitator knows how to support group discussions with proper questioning. Here is a list of questions which you can use as a guide for facilitating the VDP working group. Remember, it is only a guide, and there is no need to stick exactly to all these questions. Just pick out what is helpful in your opinion.

Current situation

What is the current situation of forestry, livestock etc. in the village?

How many households are concerned?

How was the situation five years ago?

Potentials and problems

What are the potentials in forestry, livestock etc.?

What are best practices in the village? Who in the village has the best results / best performance?

What are the main problems?

Who are the most concerned in the village, whom less?

Are these problems discussed among farmers?

Causes and consequences

What are the causes of the problems?

What will be the consequences in the future?

Possible solutions

What practices have you already applied to respond to the problems?

What are the good experiences available from other farmers for you to adapt?

Which new solutions could be tried out?

Three priority activities

What are the most promising activities to tackle the problems or to reinforce positive practices already applied in the village?

Do you have the resources to carry out the activities?

What are the most important three activities to put into the village plan?

Tip for the facilitator:

PRA tools are only for facilitating group discussions and analysis. PRA is not done for the sake of coming up with nice graphs, tables and maps (even though they can be very helpful). Very often, facilitators concentrate so much in HOW to properly perform a specific tool, e.g. to produce a nice village transect, that they forget WHAT actually should be the CONTENT of the discussion.

Another issue is that PRA does often not include an analytical part. E.g. frequently there is no conclusion after drawing a VENN diagram. Therefore, it is important to include an analytical part, i.e. the discussion about problems in this specific area, causes of the problems, and potential solutions.

It is better to use simple PRA tools, and be mindful of the questions for encouraging constructive discussions among farmers.

Results of VDP working groups (PRA)

Village: Date:	Thematic area (forestry, paddy, ...)
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1st step: Assess current situation

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2nd step: Figure out the three most important problems and their causes

	Problem	Causes
First:		
Second:		
Third:		

3rd step: Find out possible solutions for the three problems

	Solution
First:	
Second:	
Third:	

4rd step: Define relevant activities to overcome the problems
(Attention: it is important to rank the priority of the activities.)

Activity	Unit	Quantity	Location	Time frame		Village contribution	External contribution	Priority (1 to 3)
				Start	Finish			