Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
Rural Capacity Building Project (RCBP)

Farmers Advisory Service Fund Guideline

Chimdo Anchala
Research-Extension Farmer Linkage Specialist, RCBP

2008
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The author would like to thank Dr Mandefro Nigusse, Mr K. Shirotin, and Mr. Jonathan Cook for reviewing the draft of this guideline. My special thanks also go to Abebe Kirub for designing the publication.
1. BACKGROUND

Studies revealed that, Ethiopia is one of the oldest countries where agriculture has been practiced for more than 11,000 years. Likewise, Ethiopia believed to be one of the early civilizations where crops and livestock species have first been domesticated and used as a food by humankind. This long history and early civilization in agriculture provides Ethiopia a special place in the history of world agricultural development. Evidence also indicated that, Ethiopia has immense potential to be the breadbasket for the Horn of Africa and Middle East because of the available natural resources such as adequate landmass, fertile soil, sufficient rainfall, variety of suitable environments and elevations for the production of both crops and livestock’s. At present the agriculture sector employs 85 % of the country’s population, contributing about 49 % of the GDP and more than 80 % of the foreign currency earning. Because of this, agriculture is still remains as the heart of Ethiopian economy and the most important industry for Ethiopian development and beyond.

Having such potential and long history in agriculture, the growth of the agriculture in Ethiopia was hampered and production and productivity of both for crops and livestock is the least when compared with developing countries .The forest coverage, which was supposed to be about 35% in 1960s, has declined to 3.5 % in 2005. The degradation of other natural resources is also rapidly increased from time to time and this has become a threatening for the people. In general, the problems become wider than getting narrower and most small scale farmers forced to live below poverty level though recently some changes in economic development is being realized. In connection with this ,why does Ethiopia fail to feed its population in spite of the potential and why the country still remained with traditional cultivation used to coined in the minds of government, individuals, and in general citizens within and outside the country.

Rigid and centralized economic policy and development strategy of the past governments is often cited by the stakeholders as the major problems. Added to this, climatic disasters in intensity, amount, and frequency have also contributed much for the stagnant growth in agriculture and food insecurity. In general, the agriculture sector, which is an engine for the economy growth of the country, lacked attention. Lack of capacity to cope up with changing
situations through innovations is also another obstacle that has contributed for the problem.

To change this bad image of the country, in fact, the present government of Ethiopia has recently made several innovative policy reforms and organizational changes that possibly lift Ethiopia to middle level income countries through launching accelerated social and economic development strategy. For instance, the government of Ethiopia has recently launched a poverty reduction strategy known as ‘Program for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty’ (PASDEP), which is mainly emphasizes on:

- Rural development led by agricultural growth,
- Improved governance and decentralization of delivery of service, and
- Reductions of vulnerability.

Therefore, PSDEP places much greater emphasis on commercialization of agriculture, diversification of production and exports, and private sector investment in order to help farmers to move beyond subsistence farming. In general, in the current strategy and policy initiatives, the government of Ethiopia is highly initiated and committed to bring irreversible shift in our development paradigm and thereby to remove the shed of an old image of the country. Improving the agriculture sector by modernizing; commercializing, and consequently make the sector highly productive and profitable through marinating proper balance between the restoration and utilization of the natural resources are the main targets that has got greater attention.

As a result of this strategic approach, the economy of the country that was entirely based on agriculture and which was stagnant for the last 100 decades have shown growth starting from the last four years. According to the report from the federal and regional governments, agriculture is among one of the major sectors that contributed to this historical changes. This progress is achieved because of many factors of which consistent effort by government and the paradigm shift from the ‘traditional and top down nature of technology generation’ to ‘bottom up and participatory technology generation and promotion’ are assumed the major factor that had contributed to this progress.
2. JUSTIFICATION

One of the instruments that support and keep this momentum of change observed during the last five years is through the modernization of the extension service and making them more demand-driven and client-oriented. In the past, while the extension system has made significant progress in expanding its geographical coverage, it remains almost exclusively within the public domain, which is supply-driven and also based on limited technology packages, providing the farmers with limited and often inappropriate choices. On top of this, public extension by itself can no longer respond to the multifarious demands of farming systems. Therefore, harnessing synergistic effect of public and private sector extension providers like NGOs, input dealers etc is critically important.

The effectiveness and efficiency in extension service is dependant upon many factors among which making the maximum use of ALL resources available whether public or private is a major one. The major objective of the agricultural extension service should be to promote public-private partnership through sharing of resources and convergence and thereby to reach many more farmers.

Taking this into account, the extension service so far provided almost exclusively by the Ethiopian government (Public domain) indicates the urgent need to diverse strategies to involve other actors in extension service provision mainly due to the fact that public extension by itself can no longer respond to the multifarious demand of the farming communities. Although, the role of the central government remain central for many reasons (quality, equity, safety/protection), it is clear that the government alone can not provide the growing demand in extension services particularly this time when every farmer, private sectors and citizens are motivated to join hands in rural development programs and demand for technology options.

Briefly, involvement of the private sector in extension service provision can assist the government in improving both the supply and demand side of the extension service by maintaining the necessary balance between technology providers and technology seekers or between demand and supply of the extension service.
3. KEY GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FASF

Currently, a new perspective in approaching and working with farmers in extension service has been initiated and being used widely in many countries. This is due to the fact that, the old extension approaches and methods are refuted by many countries because of its drawbacks and limitations. One of the major drawbacks often cited by stakeholders is that, the extension system of the past is characterized by top-down, supply-driven based on unilateral transfer of agricultural technologies from research centers to farmers by government employed extension agents. In this process, farmers were seen as recipient of the technologies and information whereas the extension agents were viewed themselves as an instructor of farmers (Chimdo 2005). In other words, farmers were regarded as passive observations of results from the research and there was no any chance that they feel a sense of ownership of the whole process of technology generation and dissemination.

Because of this, the methods and approaches used by the government in different countries rendered it inappropriate, irrelevant, and often non-responsive to farmers’ needs and the markets. Added to this, recent studies from many countries showed that the top dawn extension service is concentrated on serving relatively well-off farmers and not equally reached a large majority of poor farmers and was not responsive to market signals. The old extension service is therefore, being challenged to respond to farmers demands in terms of relevance, equity, cost effective and sustainability.

In general, the current supply mechanism for agricultural knowledge and information has not fully enabled the kind of creative and collaborative interface between extension on the one hand and farmers on the other. In sum, in the old institutional framework, farmers’ needs are not sufficiently addressed and this has called for new reform in the delivery of agricultural extension services. The reform mainly concentrated on the innovations in agricultural advisory service delivery. The innovative extension service and funding system have been implemented since the last 10 years in other Uganda, India, Kenya, and Thailand and has yielded significant output particularly in addressing demand based extension service and in transforming their economy to the better condition.
In 2007, a project known as Rural Capacity Building project (RCBP) in the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD) is being implemented to support the government on the good progress being observed in rural development. Under RCBP an attempt is made to explore options for the process of reorientation of the extension service presently underway. Accordingly, the project will support the design, launch, and implementation of an innovative fund known as the Farmers Advisory Service Fund (FASF) for the first time in the country. This innovative agricultural service delivery and funding system is generally aimed at the improvement of the agricultural extension by improving the demand side of the extension service.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE GUIDELINE

This guideline is prepared to give explanations on FASF since the concept and its applications are new for many practitioners. The guideline provide brief introduction why this innovative approach is important and suggests possible steps, methods & approaches on how one could practically implement the concept in rural development programs. It is mainly prepared for Subject Matter Specialist (SMS), Development Agents (DA) and focal persons and other development facilitators working in the project area. Similarly, it can be also used for teaching of agricultural students in both universities and ATVET colleges. The guideline provides sufficient information on FASF and updated based on the input from professionals interested in the subject matter.

5. DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS AND PURPOSE OF THE FASF

5.1 Meaning of FASF

Farmers advisory service fund (FASF) as the name indicates, is a fund available to support the delivery of extension service on priority needs jointly chosen by the farmers. This innovative and creative funding system is a new method of supporting farmers in agricultural extension service delivery intended to make the extension service more efficient and effective by shifting the service delivery from supply push to demand push. In other words, FASF
would provide farmers with necessary funds and would make them the sponsors of extension service rather than mere beneficiaries (RCBP, PIM, 2007). FASF would also empowers farmers by giving them more responsibility for their own agricultural extension program in the identification of their critical problems, planning of service delivery and in giving them a greater role in choosing, contracting and evaluating their own service providers for their agricultural activities. In summary, FASF support the development of the demand side of the agricultural extension system by mobilizing or motivating farmers to initiate demand on the type of extension service they opt for and a program of small practical oriented and focused agricultural service activities relevant to them.

5.2. Purpose of the FASF

As mentioned above, the purpose of FASF is to improve the extension service delivery by assisting the public extension services through providing demand based extension service and by letting farmers to choose the types of service they opt for from a variety of service providers and consequently improve the livelihood of farmers.

5.3. Objectives of the FASF

- To increase responsiveness of the extension service to demands emanating from local, agro-ecological conditions and market opportunities and,
- To further decentralize the responsibility for extension program decision from the wereda level (public domain) to farmer groups organized at PA/FTC level, and
- To increase participation of farmers (male and female) in identifying their critical problems, prioritize needs and to choose service providers to solve the identified problems
- To empower resource poor farmers so that they will influence and obtain the type and quality of service they need and make their voice heard in decision-making process.

5.4 Types of Activities Eligible for the Fund

As indicated above, types of activities or advisory service to be supported by the fund is entirely depends on the farmers group’s practical problems and priority needs in each region. Therefore, any rural intervention programs pertinent to the priority needs of the specific groups who are organized in respective regions and those programs/activities that could contribute to solve critical problems of the groups and those that fulfill the objectives of the
RCBP are illegible for the fund. From this viewpoints, FASF support for instance group of farmers:

- Who would like to get advices on technical and economic management of crops, livestock's and natural resources,
- Who are engaged in pastoral and agro-pastoral farming activities such as livestock production (dairy, goat, sheep, poultry, bee keeping, etc),
- Who would like to participate in water shed management (water and soil conservation, agro forestry, nutrient restoration etc),
- Who would like to participate in the multiplication and distribution of improved planting materials (seeds of major crops & improved breeds, improved forage seeds, propagation of improved fruit),
- Who would like to participate on value added activities and post harvest handling (processing, grading, packing, marketing),
- Who would like to engage in organic farming and other related activities that generally enhance income and consequently empower the groups for self-help development, and
- Individual small-holders who would like to participate in irrigated agriculture and want to produce high value / cash generating crops such as for instance, vegetables, coffee, spices, silk, strawberries etc are among some of the major ones to be mentioned as an example

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF FASF

According to the project appraisal document, FASF is to be implemented in 100 FTCs located in 21 weredas (on average, 5 FTC per wereda) in each of the country's regional states except for Somali and Harari as it is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. No of wereda and FTC selected for the implementation of the FASF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regions</th>
<th>No weredas</th>
<th>No FTC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oromiya</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Amhara</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SNNP</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tigray</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Afar</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>B.shangul</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Gambella</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Harari</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>total</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 21 Weredas and 100 FTCs that will be piloting the fund will be selected by regional project steering committee in consultation with technical committees in each wereda. Prior to the implementation of the project, baseline data will be collected from the selected FTCs and this data is helpful to assess the impact to be obtained from the project. FTCs eligible to participate in the program would be selected based on the following major criteria:

- Agro-ecology representation,
- Farming system representation,
- Availability of infrastructures: Power, telephone connectivity, rural finance institution, and
- Proximity to Wereda capital.

The FTC compound will be used for participatory technology demonstration and farmers mainly, in groups but in exceptional cases also individually will be shown technology options to choose the best practice that suit to their conditions. In doing so, good practice that will bring visible impact that could be registered from the above selected weredas and FTCs will be further scaled up to other Weredas and FTCs that could not get the chance in the first round. Likewise, those Weredas & FRG groups organized around the selected FTCs and those that brought significant impact from the use of FASF will be further motivated through awards and training opportunities for DAs and model farmers. The award and reporting of the best result would be made through organizing workshops, seminars and publishing in journal articles.

7. INITIATION OF THE PROGRAM

The following steps are critically important for the initiation and implementation of the FASF. These steps are not rigid ones and flexible depending on the existing conditions and level of farmers understanding. Thus, one or more steps can be conducted simultaneously depending on the simplicity and complexity of each step.

STEP-1 organizing orientation program

This innovative program is initiated by organizing orientation programs and introducing to stakeholder and partners (farmers and farmers groups, PA leaders, SMSs, DAs, and service providing groups). Orientation program is
aimed at defining what FASF is meant including its basic concepts, objectives and guiding principles to forge their appreciation of the concepts and initiate them to organize themselves into strong and viable working groups. Disclosing FASF can be to large groups or small groups (Fig.1&2) depending on awareness and willingness of farmers.

Likewise, additional participatory discussion forums and training workshops need to be also organized for service providers to make sure that they are showing an interest in such approaches or to raise their awareness and consequently encourage their participation. For example organizing training on how to enhance participation and empowerment, training to harness public and private sector integration and collaboration in extension, training to enhance partnership in responding to demand and supply of extension service, training on linkage mechanisms and strategy among all relevant actors and sectors are critically important.
Who will organize the orientation program?
The orientation program at national and regional level is to be organized by the PMU in consultation with focal persons in each project regions. Likewise, the orientation program at zonal, district and PA level are to be organized by the respective focal persons in consultation with their regional bureau of agriculture and rural development offices.

STEP-2. Establishing Different Working Groups

Right after the identification of problems, farmers in the project area need to be organized into small but viable and strong groups that are capable to demand services and influence the decision-making process and policy formulation towards their needs and problems. Farmers groups that already exist can be used or a new group could be established based on the needs and assessment of problems identified during the PRA session. In case, new group is to be formed, priority should be given to self-formed groups since this have a greater chance for group stability and sustainability.

During group formation special attention should also be given to gender balance /representation and interest of farmers to work on a problem that group is formed to solve. Likewise, proximity, similarity in agro ecology, farming system and social issues such as culture and norms are among the basic domains to be considered during group formation.

Does FASF accessible only to group of farmers?

Farmers with variety of background can be a member of the group if they have a common problems/ needs and can understand each other in the implementation process of FASF and its utilization. In most case, FASF will give priority for farmers who are organized in groups. But, in a few exceptional cases, individuals may also access the fund where the benefit to be obtained would then be accessible to others in the area. Different groups for FASF can establish Inter Group Associations (IGA) as it is illustrated in Fig4.
DAs, SMS, researchers, politicians, NGO rural development facilitators, instructors and other representatives from supporting (funding) organizations can be a supporter of the groups. However, they are not expected to play leading role in any meeting of the groups and in maneuvering the decision of the FASF groups. Rather they are expected to play role in facilitating on how farmers can organize themselves in one group and could get the advisory service via using the fund. In any case, membership must be based on the interest of farmers.

Following the formation of the groups, each group is expected to elect their group leaders and contact person for communication. In principles, the leaders who represent group members need to be democratically elected by the constituents. In leadership elections, the external supporters/facilitators are not advised to involve themselves except facilitating and supporting the election process.
STEP 3. Identification of Needs and Problems

Lack of making critical assessment on farmers' problems and priority needs before attempting to provide extension services is often cited by many stakeholders as one of the critical problems. According to the views of the stakeholders, this is one of the main reasons why most technologies and extension services are not adopted and implemented as per the recommendations since both the advice and transfer of the technologies are not based on the needs and preferences of the clients. Therefore, it is crucial to identify needs and priority problems of the groups' right after the orientation workshop is organized and consensus is reached with groups.

Farmers' problems and needs can be identified using different participatory tools and approaches. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is one of the methods selected for such practice. PRA is generally helpful to make situations and opportunity analysis where the existing scenarios of the given community are critically assessed by the groups and solutions are identified in common. Likewise, PRA is a very relevant method to identify the type of extension service farmers are demanding or the type of extension service they opt for from a variety of service providers after critically assessing their critical problems.

Therefore, in collaboration with the focal persons in each region, SMSs and DAs working around a project area in a selected FTC could organize the PRA session. All stakeholders who are directly involved in the project activity are expected to attend the PRA meetings. During PRA session, different PRA tools such as transect walk, resource mapping, seasonal calendar, ranking of problems/constraints and opportunities, etc can be used and the use of one tool over the other is entirely dependent on the type of problems that need to be addressed. Seasonal calendar and resource mapping are particularly important to help farmers to recall all activities throughout the year. If SMSs and DAs working in different regions lack adequate knowledge and practical
application on PRA; it is also advisable to contact people for instance research extension specialist of the RCBP and other professionals from research centers who have practical knowledge on the subject matter before attempting for the application. In the future, short guideline on PRA method and approaches will be developed and training sessions will be conducted to familiarize each PRA tools to DAs, SMSs and other development facilitators. In general, participatory approaches:

- Encourage participant to take responsibility,
- Respect village/farmers diversity,
- Promote participation for all,
- Reconcile different interests,
- Listen to the group or the community,
- Involve multidisciplinary teams,
- Examine situations from different point of views, and
- Adapt to local situations.

**STEP-4. Problem Analysis and Ranking**

Farming system is complex in nature and because of this; during the identification of problems, farmers can list many problems they encountered or will encounter in their farming activities. However, at a condition when resource and technical expertise are a limiting factor, it is impossible to address all problems identified by farmers at a time. On top of this, some of the problems listed by farmers may be outside of the project objectives and beyond term of references. Therefore, following the identification of the problems, farmers are advised to rank the problems they think major important to them in relation to the project objectives and areas of intervention. Ranking usually reveals differences in priorities, and help to understand criterion used. While undertaking any ranking exercise, the facilitators are expected to know the following:

- Let people/ group do it their own way,
- Use people own unit of measurement,
- Jot down the criteria used in ranking problems, and
- Write down the causes of the problems as illustrated in the following table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>ranking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. An example of the identification of problems and their prioritization
Table 3. An example of the analysis for the selected problems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Selected problems</th>
<th>Cause of the problems</th>
<th>Possible technical option</th>
<th>Condition required for the option</th>
<th>Source for the option</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**STEP-5 Making Inventory of Service Providers**

In view of the RCBP, the analysis of service providers is critically important. As indicated above, the sources for service provider could be from public organizations (research centers, universities, colleges and extension), none public organization (Farmers and farmers cooperatives/unions engaged in delivery of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, improved breeds, AI service), NGOs, private sectors, (individuals or group of consultant service engaged on techniques and skill training of crops and livestock, participatory training, planning, and communication skill. Whatever the case may be, during the identification of service providers the following issues need to be critically assessed as a critical requirement:

- Who is providing service?
- What services are being provided?
- What mode of service are being used (with fee, free of charge, cost sharing etc)?
- What are the tangible outputs so far achieved/registered by service providers?
- What are the major strengths of the service providers?
- What are the weaknesses of the service providers?
- How can we use the service in relation to the project objectives and overall goals?
- How can we link the service with service seeking groups?
- To what extent the service is sustainable/available to a given area, and
- Accountability mechanism to FASF farmers/service seekers.

In case, the extension service and service providers that farmers are looking for is not available within the region, shopping the service from other sister regions and beyond is recommended. In connection with this, it is important to note that once farmers are identified their problems and the type of extension services they opt for, farmers must not only limited to FASF and they could also seek solution from other sources.
STEP-6. Linking Service Seeking Groups with Service Providers

Organizing farmers groups based on their needs and identification of service providers is not an end unless unreserved effort is also equally made in creating the necessary connections and ties among service seekers and service providers. As it is demonstrated above in Fig. 5 Service providers will be selected by service demanding farmers groups based on the criteria mentioned above under step 3 and 5. DAs and other development facilitators are expected to play a linking role among different working groups with different service providers and supporting organization. Likewise, they are also expected to observe the types of services they provided and tangible output realized from each service providers. Those service providers who fulfill the requirement of farmers groups and who are obliged to fulfill groups’ needs and interest will be selected from list of service providers and thereafter, all necessary agreements and communications need to be established. Farmer groups, have the right to either terminate the agreement or ask through legal entity if the service provided from service provider is not to the satisfaction of farmers groups or not as per what is indicated in the contractual agreement.
STEP-7 Participatory Planning and Implementation

Once, the type of services and source of service delivery are identified and made available, it is advisable to make participatory planning and implementation schedule for each activities of the group. In the traditional methods of extension, stakeholders particularly those groups that are expected to use the end product of the technologies are not encouraged to participate in planning of project activities and often forced to implement what is planned by others with the notion of 'I know best for you'. This has resulted in failure of project activities and keeping farmers far distant from research. As opposed to conventional approach, in RCBP farmers or group of farmers must be involved in the process of FASF activity and must take roles to play in all stages of project development out of which planning is the most important one.

Thus, during the planning process, farmers organized in one group with similar objectives to be attained must participate in the discussion without any discrimination. Each member must air out what he/she feels in terms of activity planning and preferences. Each member must also clearly indicate what types of activity would be most important for the group as well as for individual members without hesitation as it is illustrated in FIG 6.

During planning sessions, it is also very essential to share roles and responsibilities expected from each stakeholder and evaluation of the project activities need to be based on the shared tasks and responsibilities given for each stakeholder. During planning session, usually it is advisable to plan on what you have rather that attempting to plan on what you do not have or what you expected to have in the future. Similarly, each activity that is planned must be implemented as per the time frame. Failure to implement according to what is planned and agreed by the group members could result in poor performance and consequently poor outcome. Group members and facilitators are responsible for any failure and deviation from the initial planning.
Step-8. Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (PM&E))

Participatory M&E is critical to assess the performance of the extension service required by the group and general activities of the service providers. In the first place, the groups need to make self-evaluation to evaluate the performance each group members in a group and their leader’s as well as that of the researchers and DAs. In the second place, the members in a group must invite other evaluators from the externals. The Evaluation by the externals could reveal the important shortcoming and future challenges that need to get awareness by groups and community leaders.

To ensure this, each group members should have a say in all group process and operations. Information obtained through self-evaluation illustrates the effectiveness and contribution of each member in a group. The evaluation exercise can prove a crucial extension activity not only to identify strengths or weakness and achievements of the group, but also to recognize the difficulties encountered in the day-to-day activities.

In M&E, group members could be able to discuss the constraints encountered for instance, low participation of some members in attending field activities and general problems related to group function and performance. Based on this information, members evaluate their overall success in meeting the objectives and goals. In general group evaluation has to concentrate on discussion of the what each member and the group collectively envisage for the future, in terms of the group potential role in searching the demanded extension service and in selecting the extension providers for their problems. The evaluation report developed each time has to be communicated to group members during regular meeting or special meeting programs organized for the purpose.

8. DEFINING ROLES AND DUTIES

Defining roles and duties expected from each partners is also critically important. As explained under step 7 above, evaluations need to be based on the shared tasks and responsibilities. Every member in a group including researchers, DAs and others will be accountable for any problems and deviations from the actual plan in relation to the shared tasks and duties. To
this effect, it is advised to agree beforehand what activities are expected to be done and who will do what in a group. Keeping this memorandum of understanding in the record of the group is usually advisable and worthwhile. As an example, the following diagram will helpful to illustrate roles and responsibilities expected from different practitioners who are implementing the FASF. In most cases, the wereda BoARD is expected to play the coordination and facilitation role. Similarly, DAs and PA leaders are also expected to play both the facilitation and implementation role of the project as per the plan. Likewise, farmers and farmers groups are expected to apply the advices and consequently implement project activities as per what is planned and agreed by the group members.
Empowerment & Improved livelihood

Figure 9. Roles and responsibilities of different actors in FASF
9. FUNDING & FUNDING PROCEDURES

The project is expected to release about birr 40,000 annually for each selected FTCs as an incremental budget to the government. Thus, any proposal beyond birr 40,000 including operational cost will not be accepted by the project. Budget will be transferred from the federal PMU to the project regions annually for the purpose and disbursed from the regions to participating weredas and consequently to FTCs where project activities are practically implemented. The FTCs would use the money to purchase the service from the service providers’ as per the plan from the participants FTCs. The fund will generally be administered by the wereda focal persons and head of the bureaus. The day-to-day follow-ups and managements of the fund should be given as much as possible to weredas and FTCs managing boards. Utilization of the fund for other purpose that are not planned by the groups or for other activities outside the objectives of the project will not be accepted. In case, subcontract of consultants is required for the service, the wereda bureau of agriculture is expected to follow public bidding system to determine which organization, individual, and groups would provide good service fairly and economically.

10. RECORD KEEPING

In general, record keeping and reporting are critically needed and these are among one the missing elements in other projects. Because of this, it is often difficult to get information by project auditors when touring to project sites for monitoring and evaluation propose. Therefore, in RCBP record keeping is considered as one of the key criterions to be fulfilled and to be checked during evaluations. Thus, all RCBP activities and results are to be properly recorded and documented. To this effect, separate filling system for FASF activities for each FTCs needs to be opened and all information must be recorded and documented based on the format earlier distributed from the federal PMU for this purpose. Those, FTCs that are benefiting from the FASF, but do not have a proper recording system will be penalized.
11. REPORTING

Recipients of the fund must report to the Wereda BoARD as it has been agreed earlier of this year. Accordingly, all physical or technical activities are to be reported on quarterly basis while financial activities are to be done on monthly bases. The final report is expected to be submitted at the end of each year. The report must describe the progress of the activities, output achieved and problems encountered by describing actions that are need to be taken by partners in accordance with the shared tasks and responsibilities. Therefore, those regions that do not send the report as per the reporting schedule from the PMU will not get the next fund from the project.

12. MANAGENT OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Farmer groups need to be managed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their entire innovation process. Starting from the time of the group formation, deliberate effort need to be made to develop necessary rules and regulation as to how the group should be managed and monitored during its lifetime. Equity, openness, and fair management are among the key points to be considered while working in small groups such as FRGs and FREGs. In addition, all complicated problems, worries and enquires of the group should be managed wisely, critically and rationally as soon as possible. This of course, requires strong leadership and commitment. Strong leadership is especially crucial in forming and maintaining a cohesive farmers group with consistent and innovative objectives.

Fig. 10. FASF members electing leaders
13. SHARING OF RESULTS WITH OTHERS

As indicated under 2.5 above, good practice and lessons learnt from Weredas and FTCs must be shared with other Weredas and FTCs and this could be done through organizing different workshops, seminars and organizing result exchange forums. Likewise, poor results that may occur in a selected Wereda and FTCs should be also be presented on such forums as it can be a point of learning.

14 GROUP IDENTIFICATION

Right after the formation of the group it is advisable to give group identification such as giving names. For example, types of activities that the FASF group would like to participate, with which organization or which project support the group, group category by sex, education and socio-economic status etc must be known to all relevant stakeholders and community leaders for legality purpose. In some farmer group, members name their group after their village while in some groups they name it after the activities they want to engage in. For example, Vegetable growing groups, Tef growing group, Maize farmers research group etc and some other name it like ‘Unity For Growth and the like. Such information needs to be recorded and kept in the record of each FASF group and whenever there is a change of names and group activities; it must be also documented in the record of the group.

15. PREPARING GROUP CONSTITUTIONS

Preparing binding rules and constitutions are critically needed when working in groups. It is just meant for the benefits of the members. Therefore, starting from the time of group formation, deliberate effort need to be made to develop necessary and binding rules and Constitutions on how the group should be managed and monitored during its life time. A constitution is a writing agreements made by the members in a group (FAO, group promoters handbook, 2000) and only be changed by the groups.
The constitution must clearly indicate what is expected from the member as a group and as an individual, how the group as well as individuals in a group need to be governed and act according to the rules developed by the group. Group constitution must clearly show what they are doing in the group. What will be the measures to be taken in case members in groups are not acting according to their responsibilities and duties? It has to define the right and obligations of members and group leaders. Rules and constitutions of the group usually develop systematically and expanded as new issues are arise.

16. OTHER RELEVANT ACTIVITIES

16.1 Invitation to Proposal Development

Invitations for proposals that support the demand side of the agricultural extension service in selected FTCs are highly encouraged. Hence DAs at selected FTCs are expected to give awareness of the funds and how to apply for the funds including providing guidelines and procedures pertinent to the successful and effective implementation of the FASF.

This can be facilitated by announcing either during farmers’ regular meeting sessions or through provision of brochures, leaflets and the guideline. In most case, announcing proposals during regular meeting and discussion sessions are
preferable. In general, in the invitation, the following points need to be clarified:

- The meaning and objectives of the FASF
- The scope of the fund
- Eligibility of the fund
- Areas of application
- Criterion for obtaining the funds
- Selection of procedures
- Duration of the contract including maximum time allowance
- Timetable

The regional focal persons shall provide fund application forms and required guidelines to the selected weredas for distribution to the FTCs. The applicant farmers groups who are organized around the selected FTC shall submit their proposals to the wereda BoARD in three copies. Detail of the application must be made on the forms provided by the regional focal person and should be strictly in accordance with the guidelines to be provided. Applicant shall be prepared in Amharic and/or the regional official language and typed. The Wereda BoA accepts applications only after invitation announcement have been made and certain criterions are fulfilled.

16.2 Proposal Formulation and Submission

Proposals that support farmers groups can be developed in two ways. One way is that farmers who are organized in the same group could select few group representatives from the group members who have a capacity to develop proposals and generate relevant ideas for the group. Proposals developed through this method need to be brought back to all groups members for additional comment and improvement before submitting to the Wereda BoARD.

The other way to develop a proposal is that, farmers can also contract professionals who could develop proposals on behalf of the group. This method is only advised when there are no group members who can read, write, and consequently develop the required proposal. In this case, since the service for developing proposals will be paid by the farmers, care has to be taken during preparation for TOR i.e. in clarifying the problem and interest of farmers and in stating clear mandate and obligation to be respected by both parties. The cost for the technical assistance will be paid only when the project developed by the consultant is based on farmers’ interest and has approval
developed by the consultant is based on farmers’ interest and has approval from the group members. In general, whether the proposal is to be developed by the group members themselves or by the contractor; applicant farmers groups for FASF will be required to submit a detail project proposal along with a completed application form.

Timing of the proposal submission could be based on the preparation /readiness of each farmers groups and farming system. However, it is advisable to stick to ARTP guidelines and national research system in which the project preparation and submission is usually from September to December in each year.

The proposal is not expected to be something like a scientific proposal. It must be simple two or three pages and even not typed if there is lack of typist and typing machine. What is rather important is that, the proposal should be a practical one and of potential value to farmers organized in groups for the utilization of the FASF. To ensure this, it is the responsibility and mandate of the DA and the Wereda team. The proposal will include the following points among others:

- Title of the proposed project/activity,
- List of applicants, their description, and their signatures
- Name of PAs, Weredas, zone and region with full address including telephone number and postal address (if any),
- Date of application,
- One page summary that clearly describe the objective, activity purpose, output and goal,
- Type of activities (crop, livestock, honey production etc),
- Source for extension service for both demand and supply side (Government, private sectors, cooperatives, unions etc). If service providers are needed, detail name and description of the service providers such as TOR and other detail agreement need to be developed and signed by the two parties,
- Activity plan and breakdown of budget required for implementing activities, purchasing of farm implements, purchasing of service, travel cost and indirect cost should be supported with procurement plan, and
- Duration of the project

16.3. Applicant's Eligibility

As a main criterion applicant for the FASF are eligible if he/she fulfill the following requirements:
• In most cases, applicants’ farmer groups must first organize themselves into Farmers working groups of not less than 10 members per group,
• Members of the farmers group should be known as by the community as competent, hard working, reliable, honest and self initiated group,
• The group must be composed of both men and women unless homogenous group such as women or men groups are desired. According to the RCBP, in all activities, 30% women involvement is critically needed,
• The groups must have participated on the orientation of the FASF and ASDF and agreed on the rules and regulations,
• The groups need to select their own chairman, co-chairmen, secretary and executive management bodies who can at least read and write (if possible), and
• The groups are willing to communicate and to share information with other interested parties or groups.

16.4 Evaluation of the Proposals
Upon receipt, the wereda technical committee will check the proposal complies with the guidelines, budget ceiling, and the technical merits of the project. A representative of the group may be required to make a presentation (if possible) to the review committee. The reviewers will look into, among other:

• Clarity of statements of objectives, methods & approaches and anticipated outcome and general visibility of the project,
• Relationship between the estimated cost and anticipated outcome,
• The qualification and capacity of the executive committee and personnel to manage the project,
• The existence of favorable community and commodity support for the project,
• The availability of service providers in relation to the activities to be implemented,
• The potential contribution of the proposed project for improving the livelihood of participant farmers as related to food security and income generation,
• The contribution of the project in terms of developing long-term solutions to attain food security in a community,
• The possibility of the project for self sustaining once, the project fund ends, and
• The extent of gender equality and HIV/AIDS integration in the project.
16.5 Submission of the Project Proposal

Farmers are expected to submit their proposal before the deadline. Each year Farmer groups will be informed the deadline for the submission of the proposal from the federal PMU and regional focal persons. Usually the submission of the proposal is expected to follow the budgeting system of the country or must follow the national project formulation and submission as mentioned above. The developed proposed are expected to be submitted to focal persons in each Wereda. When submitting the proposals the wereda as well as the regional focal persons have to make sure that all group leaders signed on the project document.

16.6 Saving From What Has Gained

The habit of saving must be encouraged by the group members both on individual bases as well as in groups. Saving is all about preparing for butter future, but it is also about growth (FAO, resource book for group promoter, 2000). Saving can be both in kind and in cash. Saving in kind includes grains obtained because of innovations while saving in cash is depositing of the local currency from the sale of products or byproduct that the groups are engaged in. Facilitators of the FRG must clearly inform the members about the importance of saving. For example saving:

- Reduce group dependence on outsiders,
- It increases self-reliance and empower for self-help development, and
- It service as life insurance for the groups at a time of risks.

Fig.12. Interested FASF members stated saving
16.7 Gender Consideration

In principle, making enough rooms for active participation and activities for both women and men is important in any development programs. In view of the RCBP, gender issues are considered as one of the major project activities and any project interventions that do not address gender issues by at least 30% will not accepted. Therefore, it is very essential to consider gender while organizing FASF groups and designing any rural activities.

Actually it is good to organize both men and women in one group if they are within the same socio-economic status and understand each other. In fact, having both men and women in each group has so many advantages since women are usually good in bringing new ideas to the group and feeling more responsibility in their activities than what men do. Nevertheless, it is also equally important to organize female farmers in one group because of the following reasons:

- There are causes where some village wants to treat male and female group separately because of some traditions and cultural issues,
- It may be difficult to attend frequent meetings by male farmers,
- Women farmers have different needs, perceptions and ideas,
- Women farmers may not talk more openly in informal gathering and in front of male farmers.

Therefore, the choice to either to organize women group as separate group or to organize together with men actually based on the culture and interest of the community as well as interest of the groups. Hence, the facilitators are advised not to involve on such decisions as it has so many implications on your activity and performance.

References

Chimdo et al (2005): Enhancing innovation through farmers research group; Proceeding of the farmers research group workshop, 20-21, October, 21004, MARC, Melkassa.