

Summary of RAS responses – Round 2

We are pleased to share the summary of the second round of discussions in this group which started on May 17 and was to close on May 28. However we continued to receive responses well after that date and since this was the last round of moderated discussions, we have incorporated all the responses received till June 23, in this summary. Your team of moderators (Rupa and Martin) now needs to focus on the up coming Face to Face (F2F) event in Bolivia, therefore we are now summarizing and closing this round of moderated discussions.

The final round of e-discussions in the learning group started with the following set of questions:

1. Experience of FFS – Farmer to Farmer methods
2. How to work with moving population?
3. How to go beyond `projects' for good practices in RAS to institutionalizing them?
4. What about the gender dimensions in RAS?

We received 12 responses from 8 countries. Much of the discussion focused on sharing examples of F2F approaches and of institutionalizing them.

On Experiences of F2F Methods & Institutionalizing good approaches

[Marylaure Crettaz](#) set the ball rolling with experiences from the Andes, particularly Peru and Bolivia where SDC supported programmes have established F2F RAS systems in remote areas. They have created networks of experienced and innovative farmers (Kamayoq in Peru and Yapuchiris in Bolivia). They are traditionally respected as the best farmers and they continue to innovate in their own farms. A document on this is at the RAS group library on dgroups.

[Frank Wiederkehr](#) supplemented Marylaure's input and said the MASAL project in Peru, funded by SDC and implemented by Intercooperation, first filled an important gap by providing an incentive to the Kamayoq to share information with others through capacity building, training and a small fee for their services. Later the Kamayoqs established their own associations and started promoting their services through leaflets, web pages, local newspapers etc. They became a legal entity, independent of the project, and started charging both individual farmers but more often whole communities, for a range of services provided. This is thus an example of a "private" extension service that is deeply rooted in the Indian culture and builds on the aura of excellence Kamayoqs carry from the Inca period.

[Frank](#) also shared that there are experiences of linking crop micro insurance systems with the Yapuchiris wherein the Yapuchiri serves as a benchmark for insurance payouts by the company in the event of crop loss. This provides an impetus to other farmers to copy the good practices of Yapuchiris as also for the latter to share experience with others. <http://www.fundacion-profin.org>

[Nora Gola](#) said for historical reasons the knowledge base of farmers in horticulture is low and public extension systems are inadequate in Kosovo. In 2001 the SDC supported horticulture project (HPK) introduced new technologies to the farmers through the project staff. Over the years it trained agronomists to provide these services, supported formation of producer groups ('apple clubs' etc) and encouraged them to pay for the services of the private providers. The project now seeks to set up a private or part private Advisory Service for Horticulture Producers

(ASHP) described in detail in a note posted on dgroups. This is modeled on the Albanian experience. The project feels the need to for an `institution' that is supported by a local market for services, a supportive policy framework and some start-up funds from donors.

[Diarom Blanco Betancourt](#) shared experiences of BIOMES-Cuba which has developed experimental pasture stations funded by SDC. It is investing in regional sharing with Nicaragua for training its produces.

[Hans Schaltenbrand](#) shared many examples of FFS worldwide and says it is a simple approach based on adult education principles. Its effects can be enormous but it requires an affirmative environment in the responsible government agency that helps in the spread of this approach to remote areas where market based systems are unable to reach/ not viable. He emphasizes the need to “bridge-span” initial financial support that is needed to incentivise the services provider, to enhance their capacities, to organize them in order that they are able to market their services and provide a small incentive for the period it takes to generate a demand for services (supported by a willingness of the recipient to pay for them). His analysis is supported by the cases shared by other members.

[Dugere Zayasaikhan](#) shared experiences from the SDC funded livestock project in Mongolia which has initiated a pilot approach implemented with several partners for service delivery in the livestock sector. Despite the importance of livestock in the livelihoods of the community, there is currently no specialized body that delivers livestock extension services. Some private BDS providers are delivering fee based services that are being partly subsidized by donor agencies. The government extension agency is largely confined to the provincial level. Four key areas have been identified which are covered by different SDC funded projects. All the activities are coordinated at the national level by the Livestock Extension Group (LEG) that comprises all projects and partners. The government extension agency chairs the LEG and is directly involved in steering and coordination. Through this the project hopes that the lessons being learnt are internalized by the agency.

[Osman Haruni](#) shared experiences from Bangladesh which are somewhat on similar lines. The SDC supported SAAKTI project has established a network of 5,000 Local Service Providers (LSPs) who are skilled in various domains and are organized into 54 associations. This system is established in collaboration with government agencies. One of the experiences of the project is that embedding service delivery with inputs and contract for services for one rotation / crop seasons benefits both the provider and the recipient of the service.

[Zayasaikhan](#) also echoes the experience of SAAKTI in that the larger obstacle in Mongolia for private service providers is the capacity to make capital investments rather than the lack of willingness of farmers to pay for services.

This brings us to Hans's submission for “bridge-span” investments, not as a subsidy but as trigger for emergence of a market for services where the necessary conditions for development of a vibrant market are not yet present. The larger investment is in capacity development at various levels. As some of the experiences shared by the participants show, this can lead to both creation of a market of services; creation/ revival of local institutions that can provide services (Bolivia, Peru, Bangladesh) and adoption of some of these measures by government line departments (ETSP Vietnam).

The experiences shared also show that there are projects that have already established such systems and withdrawn while others are being implemented and still face challenges of 'institutionalizing' the good approaches.

An e-discussion such as this helps in sharing and cross fertilizing ideas from several initiatives that are designed from a common world-view but are implemented in different contexts, far removed by geography, political and administrative contexts.

On working with 'moving populations'

The Livestock project in Mongolia seeks to work through a system of model herders / farmer and is facing challenges of selection of right herders, communication skills among them and a mismatch between their capacities and expectations of the project. In a discussion that occurred towards end of the last round, [Markus Burli](#) and [Frank Hartwich](#) discuss these challenges while [Martin Fischler](#) proposed that the approach could move from supporting 'model farmers' to supporting best practices through approaches such as smart subsidies. Some such examples from CABI's work are at the following links.

- <http://www.globalplantclinic.org/>
- <http://www.cabi.org/default.aspx?site=170&page=2213>

On this question Hans felt that a moving advisory unit could also be tested out.

Gender dimensions in RAS

[Benjamin Bustamante](#) shared experiences of addressing gender dimensions in RAS in a project of Helvetas Foundation in Honduras which has incorporated a five step approach to identify gender distribution of roles and responsibilities, plan and monitor project activities to match with the gender needs. Details of the methodology are provided in Spanish at the dgroups site and a brief English summary is with his response below.

Several responses were received from colleagues from Latin America who joined us in this round of discussion. These include [Dr. Dairom Blanco Betancourt](#) and [Maria Auxiliadora Briones](#).

The full responses are pasted below.

This marks the last round of e-discussions. We will meet and take forward several of these points, as also uncovered issues such as linking research and extension systems, at the F2F event at Cochabamba between July 5 and 9, 2010. While some of you are participating in this event, we do look forward to sharing the discussions with everyone who has been a part of this e-discussion.

We thank each of you for your active participation and contributions!

With our best personal regards,

Rupa Mukerji & Martin Fischler