

„Reaching the Millions“ – Regional F2F in Hanoi, Vietnam

By Felix Fellmann and Rahel Meier

Under the title “Reaching the millions!” an A+FS Network Workshop on Rural Advisory Services (RAS) has taken place in Vietnam from 2nd to 7th of March 2015. 61 RAS experts from South- and South-East Asia met to share experiences, reflect, learn and network.



Participants of the “Reaching the Millions” event, held in Hanoi, Vietnam in March 2015

The workshop’s objective was to jointly elaborate context specific as well as general evidence-based recommendations of innovative RAS designs that are useful for new initiatives to reach large populations. The mix of the participants from SDC, NGOs, Government, Donors (Syngenta Foundation, Agridea, FAO, Worldbank), Networks (GFRAS, AESA, APIRAS), Research and Civil society created a lively and productive workshop atmosphere. 30% of the participants were women in leading functions in their organizations.

In order to reach the millions we learned

during the workshop that one has to be clear what scope is assigned to RAS. Should RAS fulfil both private as well as public interests, reaching millions will be difficult. Should RAS focus mainly on productivity and a reduced agenda of environment and social equity issues, millions can be reached more easily. During the different field trips the participants had the chance to meet and discuss with farmers, farmer cooperatives, veterinarian service providers, commune extensionists, private company representatives and authorities of the district and national level.



Meeting with farmers in Hoa Binh

The participants left the workshop with a deepened understanding of the major innovations in RAS that were successfully applied in different settings of South and South-East Asia and with a strengthened professional network across the various RAS actors. “Reaching the Millions” led to the “**Hanoi Statement on Rural Advisory Service Systems**”, a set of principles that were observed as relevant for success in RAS interventions in South- and East Asia. The Hanoi Statement is the synthesis of the discussions, intensive group work as well as prioritization exercises, which took place during the event. The starting point for these discussions were the results of seven studies on RAS projects and country RAS systems in Asia as well as the experience of the 61 RAS experts.

The Hanoi Statement as well as all workshop documents, presentations and pictures from the F2F are available on the F2F blog <https://f2f2015.wordpress.com/documents/>

Next steps:

- The Hanoi statement will serve as a basis for the development of a **SDC RAS policy paper as well as a check-list for operational purpose**.
- Further, the **capitalisation studies and a summary report** will be published soon on the SDC homepage and on the "[Reaching the Millions](#)" blog.
- All the material will be further treated to be published in **the magazine "Rural21"**.
- There will be a **follow up event/workshop** at the [GFRAS Annual Meeting](#)

You are invited to share, translate and most importantly use the statement as for your convenience!

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