



Project Report RDT Phase II
(01.11.2007 to 31.12.2008)



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BHUTAN



Royal Government of Bhutan
Ministry of Agriculture

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1. Background

The concern for the rising youth unemployment and associated urban challenges as opposed to labor and skills shortages in rural areas; the vast opportunities present in farming and increased policy appreciation and encouragement for alternative income-generation opportunities; the recognition of the need to combine physical accessibility to markets (farm roads, suspension bridges) with relevant market-oriented training; and the need for enhanced community leadership and participation in own development were important aspects in the country context that resulted in the phase I (2003-2007) of the Rural Development Training (RDT) project.

The focus of Phase I was mainly on establishing the training center and launching its programs. The first phase saw considerable demand for the market-oriented farm business training in areas with high economic potential, and the rural development support service training for community leaders. In order to ensure a decentralized approach towards project execution, training programs were offered in decentralized locations with preparations for at least part of the training being decentralized to local accredited trainers in the future. While a training institution providing a decentralized and flexible training program to the modern day farmer was the basis for the start of Phase I, the establishment of the RDT centre and its programs has brought out the significance of the role that the center can play in rural development.

The sector objectives of the Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) sector in the 10th five year plan are geared towards reducing rural poverty. A key strategy identified to meet these objectives is the need for building human capacities for self-initiated and self-managed income generating activities. An important part of this strategy relies on the RDT center wherein it has been given the main mandate of fulfilling the requirements for training in specifically market-orientated production and processing for existing and prospective farmers, and formation and management of farmers' groups. With this recognition and responsibilities, and the prospects it could provide to youths within a context of "limited scope for formal tertiary education, rising youth unemployment and the need to provide access to opportunities for rural enterprise development and self-employment"¹, phase II of the project was formulated.

The phase II (01.11.2007 to 31.12.2008) of the RDT project was aimed at: extending the reach of the center through increasing awareness and interest among communities for the training programs; ensuring the relevance of the training programs to the needs of the target groups through regular feedback collection and self assessments; and firmly establishing it as an institutionalized and decentralized rural development training center. The overall strategy of the center continues to be: "RDTC will focus on the empowerment of farmers through the provision of information, knowledge and skills, giving special attention to providing equal opportunities to women farmers"².

By the start of phase II, the RDT center was established as a non-departmental agency under the Ministry of Agriculture, with all personnel and recurring expenses institutionalized within the government system. It had in place a core team of training instructors led by a Director (also project manager for the project), and three main training programs.

The long-term goal of the center is:

"To contribute towards enhanced knowledge and skills for economically and environmentally sustainable local enterprise development."

The total financial contribution to phase II was CHF 301,213.06 (SDC/Helvetas) and Nu. 5,937,260 from the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB).

¹ RDT self-evaluation report, 2006

² 10th FYP document, Volume II

2. Phase II Overall Goal and Outcomes

Goal of phase II

“RDT has established itself as a key-institution for training needs in rural areas.”

Outcomes

Outcome 1: Enhanced production and productivity of farm enterprises through skills-based Farm Business Training.

Outcome 2: Improved skills for community and association management (Community and Association Leaders' Training).

Outcome 3: Increased opportunities in agriculture for self-employment and livelihood prospects for youth (agriculture awareness and apprenticeship training).

Outcome 4: Enhanced quality, effectiveness and sustainability of training services.

3. Achievements

The center offers three main programs – Farm Business Training, Community Leaders' Training, and the Apprenticeship Training Program. Since the start of the center, over 600 participants have attended the various training programs. In addition, the center continues to receive proposals from other projects and agencies for training of their staff.



Prioritizing food production, the RDTC way



**The rural development training centre:
Towards uplifting farmers**

at RDTC, where farmers are learning the importance of keeping breeds, feeding, hygienic rearing, methods of milking and management aspects. Sixteen other farmers are training in vegetable production.

12 May, 2008 - When Pasang Wangmo dropped out of class 10, she stayed home to help the family manage its small dairy farm of three jersey cows and a few other local cattle in Kabjisa, Punakha.

As a daily routine, she fed the herd, milked them and sold the products at a local market. Three weeks ago, the 19-year-old went to Zhemgang to attend a course at the rural development training centre (RDTC).

The three-month course is not over yet, but Pasang Wangmo has a new perspective on her daily routine. "I know now what to feed, how to rear, which breed to keep, and to manage a dairy farm," she said.

Pasang is among the 10 dairy farming trainees

Although the center primarily seeks “empowerment of farming communities through conducting skills based training in specific crop and animal production technologies, farm management and record keeping.....”³, it supports and facilitate training of extension agents in close collaboration with the College of Natural Resources.

Phase II coincided with the planning stage and the start of the 10th FYP (2008-2013). Therefore, activities under this phase were planned to contribute towards five-year objectives. The overall quantitative achievements in the first half year (phase I of RDT project) of the 10th FYP were as follows:

Training Programs:

Courses	Participants		Total	% Of 10th FYP target
	Females	Males		
Community Leaders' Training	17	75	92	9%
Record Keeping and Book Keeping Zhemgang	13	37	50	
Facilitation and Conflict Management ToT for extension agents	1	24	25	
Leadership & Planning	3	14	17	
Farm Business Training	42	44	86	17%
Poultry	7	9	16	
Vegetable Production	23	28	51	
Dairy Production	12	7	19	
School Agriculture Program	11	39	50	7%
1st batch	0	9	9	
2nd batch	11	30	41	
TOTAL	70	158	228	10%

3.1 Farm Business Training (Outcome 1)

Farm Business Training (FBT) consists of a variety of independent training modules (2 weeks to 2 months duration). They provide the participants with technical knowledge on vegetable and animal production and management in areas with potential for income generation (e.g. poultry, piggery, vegetable production, nursery). At the same time, the modules incorporate business planning skills, including a separate module on business development (includes courses on business, marketing and financial planning). Phase I and part of phase II developed and improved the syllabus and course structures of the FBT.

³ 10th five year plan, Volume II

During phase II, 70 young farmers (35 females and 35 males) were trained in vegetable and dairy production. To ensure the relevance of the modules, there are two levels of assessments done - needs assessment is a regular feature at the end of every training programme; and needs assessment through Dzongkhag extensionists is an annual feature for planning the annual training calendar. The feedbacks received through these assessments are used to update modules and/or to focus on specific topics over others.



3.2 Community Leaders' Training (Outcome 2)

The Community Leaders' Training (CLT) consists of various short modules (e.g. leadership, records and accounts, meetings management) tailored to the needs of association leaders and heads of farmer groups, with the aim to strengthen the functioning of such groups in the rural areas.

CLT continues to be very popular with farmer groups and donor agencies (for support of group leaders). During phase II, 54 (9 females and 45 males) farmer group leaders from various groups in different dzongkhags (districts) were trained in group management skills. All the trainings were conducted at decentralized locations in the form of mobile training units. This was a concept developed and built during phase I and II of the project in which a group of accredited (by RDTC) trainers would be identified and trained as trainers (ToTs). To assist in the decentralized training programme to meet the increasing demand for the community leaders training, 25 extension agents were trained.

Needs assessment is an integral part of the training evaluation and dzongkhags extensionists are consulted on the training needs of the farmer groups in their gewogs (blocks) and dzongkhags. Some of the modules were improved based on feedback from participants (e.g. two additional modules – conflict management and meeting management – added).

3.3 Youth Agriculture Awareness Training (Outcome 3)

The Youth Agriculture Awareness Training was originally conceived as a 15 month training course consisting of both practical learning (during 7 months farm attachment with 'master farmers') and theory (8 months). It sought to provide a sound technical and practical knowledge on farming and targets young people (16 - 25 years of age) with a minimum educational background of class VIII (later class X).

However, the response for this training was minimal, and therefore a in-school youth agriculture programme was introduced. This programme is in place and two batches (50 students – 11 females and 39 males) of school youth have attended the programme during the summer and winter breaks.

3.4 Training Quality, Services and Sustainability (Outcome 4)

- The quality of training programs and continuous assessment system has been strengthened. A training program calendar has been developed and is regularly distributed to relevant agencies and stakeholders to better plan the training programs.
- In house meetings and workshops were conducted to improve the training systems. Continuous feed backs are collected from the training participants and other stakeholders like dzongkhag extensionists and school teachers.
- RDTC has developed a comprehensive master plan for the 10th FYP to efficiently deliver the training programmes and meeting the demands of the farmers and school children. In line with the master plan, one Administration Assistant (training in strategic HR management and office administration) and three instructors were sent for skills enhancement training (milk and milk products development, fruit trees and nursery management, and post harvest technology of fruits and vegetables). Three instructors attended training workshops on teaching training methodology through CIEA funding. Instructors are continuously up-dating their teaching learning materials to best deliver the trainings.
- The overall training facilities (academic building, hostels, and farm compound) are in place with inputs from phase I of the project. Under phase II, an information centre with facilities for library resources and internet access has been completed. This will provide good opportunity for the trainees and students to access both library information and on-line information. Access road improvement from the highway to the RDT center gate has been carried out.
- Farm equipments for the center were procured to better facilitate the training - a tractor, solar fencing, slurry pump and mixer, milking machine, and a bus.

An important output under outcome 4 (enhanced quality, effectiveness and sustainability of training services) was to develop a strategy that would help the RDT Center become a partly self-financing institution. Guidelines for cost recovery of the training facilities has been developed and applied. Guidelines for offering training for third parties has also been developed and applied. The RDT farm also generates income from the farm products which is used to manage the farm on a cost recovery basis.

During phase II, a net sum of Nu. 300,000 (approx. 8500 CHF) has been generated as a revenue from providing training. An overview of the charges for facilities and resource persons from the RDT center for a farmers' training course is as follows:

Average training cost:

Cost Details	Rate (in Nu)	Unit	Remarks
DSA for Resource person	500	per day	For training outside RDTC
DSA for driver	300	per day	For training outside RDTC
Transport charge	14	per km	For training outside RDTC
Resource persons' fees	500	per day	
Stationary	50	per person	
Classroom	500	per day	
Dining Hall	500	per day	
LCD	500	per day	
OHP	200	per day	
Overhead (Phones, Electricity, Faxes)	3000	per course	
Hostel rent	50	per person per night	For training outside RDTC, dependent on hire rates
Working lunch and refreshment	70	per person per day	
Reception/closing of the course	150	per person	Optional
Payment for the cook	150	per day	

On average, for a two week RDTC-based course for 10 participants, the center charges Nu. 34,500 (approx. 980 CHF) for utilities, resource persons, working lunches and lodge.

4. Expenditure

Expenditure for RDT Phase II (SDC/Helvetas contribution only)

Head	Budget		Expenditure in Nu.		Total	Expenditure
	CHF	Nu	2007	2008	2007/2008 Nu.	in Zurich CHF
CONSULTANCY COSTS	51,000	1,530,000	0	242,794	242,794	27,214
HRD	34,600	0	0	1,443,001	1,443,001	6,218
In-Country			0	41,000	41,000	0
Ex-Country			0	1,402,001	1,402,001	6,218
INFRASTRUCTURE	68,000	2,040,000	0	5,487,536	5,487,536	0
EQUIPMENT	149,000	4,470,000	1,439,100	1,098,474	2,537,574	12,455
OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE	7,400	222,000	0	373,558	373,558	6,152
EVALUATION	25,000	750,000	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	335,000	10,050,000	1,439,100	8,645,362	10,084,462	52,039
CHF			44,315	204,859	249,174	

Total Expenses for RDT Ph II

CHF 301,213.05

5. Lessons Learnt

- There is a need to provide more practical training opportunities. Therefore, the center will expand the farm and also improve it to demonstrate better farming methods through the development of a technology park (in collaboration with research centers and ICIMOD).
- Follow-up of trainees is crucial but difficult. Therefore, collaboration with extensionists and relevant dzongkhag RNR staff is important for follow-up, post-training technical support and to ensure the relevance of the courses. A strategy to engage extensionists and dzongkhag RNR staff is to seek their inputs in identifying trainees, relevant courses, and also their feedback after the training and during curriculum review processes.
- It was a sustainable move for the RGoB to bear all the recurring costs, including financing the core activity of the center – training. This will be continued and is expected to institutionalize the regular flow of funds for the center beyond the 10th FYP.
- Certain important aspects like access to credit are beyond the control of RDTTC. It is therefore important to link with relevant agencies (credit services; marketing services). While there is no formal post-training linkages where RDT trainees are referred to, the center has been actively establishing partnerships in joint ventures (a recent example was a cross-sectoral training supported by the Helvetas Rural Livelihood Project with technical assistance provided by the RDT center, the agricultural marketing services/Ministry of Agriculture, Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Food Corporation of Bhutan).

6. Future plans

An evaluation of phase II was not carried out separately. The preparations for phase III required the project team to assess the achievements and lessons learnt of phase II, and accordingly plan within the framework of the 10th FYP.

In the shorter term, the following will be done:

- The on-going training programs will continue to be provided while continuously ensuring their relevance (needs assessment, up-gradation and adaptation)
- Certain economically viable products and/or specific challenges (recent examples in the context of Bhutan include: sub-tropical fruit production with emphasis on citrus, fodder production to supplement concentrated feed) will be identified and training in these aspects will be emphasised.
- Follow-up services to trained participants will be emphasised (with a target of reaching at least half of these trained)
- Collaboration with the College of Natural Resources (which provides degree awarding training for extensionists) in developing business plan and farm economics facilitation modules will be continued

- In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, market information will be regularly collected and disseminated among participants at the end of every training
- Encourage the trend of an increasing number of organisations to use the services of the RDT centre (physical and human resources) for training.

It is not realistic to expect that the RDT centre would be responsible for all RNR farmers' training. However, the centre provides many opportunities which will be put to use by the Ministry of Agriculture and several other stakeholders who have expressed interest:

- a centre dedicated to rural development training (did not exist so far), with an organised system of training (needs assessment, catalogue of training contents, curriculum, feedback collection)
- emergence of new needs that the centre is prepared for but was not capitalised upon earlier (e.g. GNHC showing interest in using the services of the centre for training local government personnel)
- greater training accessibility for farmers (not dependent on whether a project exists in a community/district)
- platform for networking with the range of stakeholders involved in rural development training