

## Strengthening Knowledge Sharing on Innovative Solutions Using the Learning Route Methodology in Asia and the Pacific – Phase 2



Members of a cooperative in Kapilvastu, Nepal. Supported by the Poverty Alleviation Fund (Government of Nepal, IFAD and the World Bank)

### GRANT RESULTS SHEET

The programme validated and scaled up the Learning Route methodology in Asia-Pacific, while systematizing and disseminating good practices and innovations

### Introduction

The programme Strengthening Knowledge Sharing on Innovative Solutions Using Learning Route (LR) Methodology<sup>1</sup> in Asia and the Pacific (ROUTASIA) is the second phase of a four-year IFAD-funded large grant to Procasur Corporation. Phase 1 (implemented in 2012-2013) focused on validating, expanding and scaling up the LR methodology successfully rolled out by Procasur first in Latin America and then in Africa. Phase 2 (2014-2016) aimed to scale processes that had proved successful in Phase 1. ROUTASIA was awarded the 2016 best grant award on knowledge sharing by IFAD.

### Goals and objectives

The overall goal of the grant was to increase knowledge and capacity for adopting and scaling up best practices and innovations for poverty reduction among IFAD stakeholders in the Asia and the Pacific region. The outcomes were: (i) local champions (LCs) act as service providers and disseminate best practices; and (ii) the LR methodology is validated and adopted by national and local organizations, including IFAD projects and beneficiaries.

### Beneficiaries

The programme beneficiaries included: organizations of the rural poor involved in implementing and developing programmes funded by IFAD

<sup>1</sup> The Learning Route (LR) draws upon local knowledge and experiences to disseminate and scale up field-tested innovations and best practices in sustainable rural development. Conceived as an innovation journey with specific learning objectives, LR encourages active knowledge exchange between learners and their hosts. The final objective is to develop the ability of communities, practitioners and decision makers to scale up solutions that work in favour of rural people's livelihoods.



## Facts at a glance

**Grant implementing agency**  
Procasur Corporation

### Theme

Knowledge management, South-South and triangular cooperation, innovation and scaling up

### Benefiting countries

Bangladesh, Cambodia, Laos, Nepal, Thailand, Philippines and Viet Nam

### Total programme cost

IFAD: US\$ 1.0 million  
PROCASUR: US\$ 740,000

### Effectiveness and duration

2014-2016

### Linkages to IFAD investment project

15 completed and ongoing projects in all target countries

and others; project staff and development practitioners; government officials and policymakers; research and educational institutions; and the private sector. ROUTASIA's approach actively involved women farmers, indigenous peoples and youth.

## Main activities

Building on Phase 1, Phase 2 focused on: (i) scaling up processes that were successful in Phase 1; (ii) testing and validating LR in the Asia-Pacific context; (iii) further mainstreaming LR in IFAD's or others' programmes; (iv) transfer of LR to local and national governmental or non-governmental institutions; (v) capacity-building of LCs to act as service providers and disseminate good practices; and (vi) documentation and dissemination of innovations.

## Main results

**LR methodology validated and mainstreamed.** IFAD in-country partners were capacitated to implement LRs, and 15 IFAD projects mainstreamed LR into their annual work plan and budget and their knowledge management strategies. In addition, 16 LRs were organized in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kenya, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam on various themes, including: natural resource management and climate change, agricultural cooperatives, social inclusion, rural finance, and public-private-producers partnerships (4Ps). Up to 20 additional LRs and other farmers-to-farmers training sessions/initiatives (F2Fs) were organized by in-country organizations, IFAD projects and governments. For example, IFAD's portfolio in Nepal as well as the Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation and Local Government Engineering Department (IFAD's long-standing partners in Bangladesh) are now implementing or replicating LRs. Similarly, in Viet Nam, all supported operations include LR as part of their capacity-building toolkit.

**LCs identified and capacitated.** In Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam, 131 LCs were trained as farmers-to-farmers trainers and service providers. The LCs are local talents recruited among, and respected by, their communities, facilitating and leading development activities at the grass-roots level. Out of the trained LCs, 40 per cent were women, another 40 per cent young people, and 90 per cent leaders of farmers organizations. At the end of the programme, 476 LCs acted as service providers in IFAD-supported projects as well as in national and local institutions, and 11,284 farmers received training from them. For example, in Viet Nam, the Sustainable Rural Development for the Poor Project trained 120 LCs and governmental agencies to provide F2F extension services. A list of capacitated LCs has been developed and is available at <http://talentosrurales.org>.

**Innovations plans (IPs) designed and implemented.** During LRs, participants prepare an IP to be validated and implemented once back in

IFAD in-country partners and projects mainstreamed Learning Routes and scaled up successful approaches including local champions and innovation plans

their communities, in order to put into practice what they have learned. Resources to implement IPs generally come from IFAD-supported projects, other public-sector initiatives, farmers organizations, and private companies. Through programme support, 86 IPs were designed around the thematic areas of the LRs, 14 were cofinanced, and 65 per cent mobilized additional resources. Some 80 per cent of the IPs are now fully or almost fully implemented, benefiting over 47,000 people. In Bangladesh, IPs helped improve the performance of several IFAD-funded projects. The Promoting Agricultural Commercialization and Enterprises project stands out for scaling up successful features of its predecessor, the Finance for Enterprise Development and Employment Creation project. Moreover, through the IP designed in 2013, a mud crab hatchery has been established, making the value chain more sustainable. In Cambodia, the Project Support Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the IFAD Country Office prepared an IP during an LR to establish community learning centres (CLCs). These are peer-to-peer platforms providing post-harvest training and market linkage services, and also entering the agricultural inputs supply market. To date, the IFAD-supported Agricultural Development and Economic Empowerment project implemented in Cambodia has trained and deployed 80 LCs, who have formed three CLCs in each of the five target provinces, reaching over 14,000 farmers. The CLCs are now being scaled up by another IFAD-supported project – the Agriculture Services Programme for Innovation, Resilience and Extension.

*“With our innovation plan, we were able to transform the Women’s Development Fund at Quang Binh into a microfinance institution. Now, the fund will become a small bank, which is managed and supervised by the State Bank of Viet Nam.”*

Tran Thi Hong Lien, Women’s Development Fund, Quang Binh (Viet Nam)

**Successful experiences systematized and disseminated.** Fifty successful experiences were identified, systematized and disseminated through LRs, F2F extension services, workshops, exhibitions and case studies. They focused on a number of thematic areas related to smallholder agriculture and rural development in various countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam), namely: climate change adaptation, natural resource management, rural microfinance, farmer organizations, value-chain development, 4Ps, indigenous peoples, women’s empowerment, and rural youth. In Nepal, ROUTASIA, in partnership with IFAD projects, systematized ten best practices. In Viet Nam, IFAD-supported projects mapped 15 outstanding experiences of working with LCs, packaged them into simplified formats for extension workers, and disseminated them.

## Lessons learned

Early involvement of IFAD projects and incorporation of grant activities under their annual work plan and budget helped in building linkages,

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adding value to investment operations, and ensuring uptake, replication and ownership of innovations.

Building bridges between traditional knowledge, research/academia and the public sector contributed to the successful adoption and impact of technologies and practices.

The monitoring and evaluation system should be part of the capacity-building efforts of in-country partner institutions. Training and capacity-building of project staff and provision of knowledge management toolkits are also critical to capturing and disseminating knowledge as well as to scaling up of innovations and best practices.

The LCs proved a successful alternative option for service provision. Recruiting women as LCs helps improve outreach of female farmers and community members. The role of LCs should be institutionalized (e.g. through certification by government bodies, universities or civil society). A gender-disaggregated directory of certified LCs should also be developed and made available to IFAD projects and other in-country partners.

Key to successful knowledge-sharing and replication of innovations and good practices are: (i) the use of local languages to produce some knowledge products; and (ii) culturally appropriate learning tools (e.g. storytelling, new ICTs).

## Knowledge generated/disseminated

Knowledge generated and systematized by ROUTASIA has been widely shared: (i) at the grass-roots level, through written, visual and oral techniques; (ii) at the operational level, through LRs, training, workshops and other learning events; (iii) at the policy level, through briefs, papers, road maps and high-level fora; and (iv) at the IFAD corporate level, through the IFADAsia Portal and IFAD Social Reporting Blog.

In addition to the best practices and innovations systematized and disseminated by ROUTASIA, the programme also produced and disseminated 19 knowledge products, including publications, newsletters and videos. Most importantly, it developed and made available a periodically updated, integrated online platform for knowledge dissemination and communication, including a regional portal ([www.asia.procasur.org](http://www.asia.procasur.org)), Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/procasur.asia](http://www.facebook.com/procasur.asia)), and a YouTube channel ([www.youtube.com/channel/UCGIFp6Ejy\\_4xa8fN09WQZGw](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGIFp6Ejy_4xa8fN09WQZGw)).