# Assignment Results. Phase 1

# Learning module on Engendered Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

## Introduction

The learning module concentrates on Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation to promote the development of knowledge, attitudes and skills on (a) identification of project areas and objectives, (b) preparation of project proposals, (c) review of project proposals, (d) project approval and commitment of resources, (e) project implementation, monitoring and evaluation among African advocates already committed to the health and well-being of needy

The learning module provides a thorough plan to support the implementation of a six-day "hands-on" event to strengthen capacity among the workshop participants to undertake each phase of the project management cycle, which includes planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of identified RAC-related priority projects in the respective African countries. The learning module comprises 14 sessions which include instructions to guide learning facilitators to implement events to multiply learning among other professionals in the country, summary of PowerPoint presentations, brief descriptive presentations and a range of exercises designed for building teams to work together during and after the workshops. The learning module also provides instruments to collect daily feedback, to record the Participant Action Plan Approach (PAPA) and undertake the evaluation process.

It is expected that by implementing each step of all phases of the project management cycle guided by this learning module, the participants will be inspired and motivated to use it to plan and lead new events to strengthen the quality of OFSP project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in their respective countries. This will not only attract financial support to reduce child malnutrition and improve smallholder incomes, but also ensure that RAC is in the right direction towards obtaining effective results.

In preparation for this workshop, the RAC team, under the leadership of Dr. Adiel Mbabu, RAC Project Manager and Dr. Zenete Peixoto França, specialist in Learning and Capacity Building, have adapted the contents and design of IFPRI/ISNAR/ARDSF learning modules to respond to the RAC Project's needs in African countries.

## The general structure of the learning module

The module provides the learning facilitator with all the information and materials required for planning and implementing a six-day workshop. It contains suggested activities that have been field tested, with instructions for facilitators. The learning facilitator is encouraged to draw on these ideas to devise tailor-made exercises appropriate for his or her specific learning and capacity building (L&CB) situation. The learning plan section is organized in the following way:

1. Pre-workshop instructions
2. Tips for learning facilitators
3. Workshop evaluation procedure
4. Daily learning program—for each day. This section provides:

- An overview
- Schedule
- Instructions to learning facilitators
- PowerPoint presentation
- Participant handouts: summary of presentations; exercises and special exercise forms

5. PowerPoint presentations are organized by day and session and reference materials are presented at the end of the module.

## Tips to learning facilitators

Learning facilitators are responsible for creating the learning environment and maintaining the flow of the workshop. They must be aware of the participants' needs and be sensitive to their concerns. Several tips are suggested and presented in this document to help facilitators achieve a successful workshop.

## Learning Approach

This learning approach known as *Experiential Learning Theory*, used within this learning environment, was created by Kolb and Fry 1975; McCaffery 1986, and is participatory by design. It aims to raise awareness among facilitators about the participants´needs to learn. This approach encourages participation and provides opportunities for interaction during group work and, to solve problems during hands-on exercises, actions and experiences. A description of this approach is part of this learning module.

## Learning Facilitators who delivered the events in Tanzania and Nigeria.

**In Arusha, Tanzania,** the workshop was led by Dr Zenete Peixoto França of Zenete Franca & Associates (ZFA). The workshop sessions were delivered by the RAC team composed of Dr. Adiel Mbabu, Dr. Hilda Munyua, Mr. Godfrey Mulongo and Mr. Frank Ojwang, and Zenete França. The Workshop also received technical support from RAC colleague, Dr. Jonathan Mkumbira and from Helen Keller International (HKI) colleagues, Ms. Margaret Benjamin and Revelian S. Ngaiza.

**In Abuja, Nigeria,** the workshop was led by Dr Zenete Peixoto França of Zenete Franca & Associates (ZFA). The workshop sessions were delivered by the RAC team composed of Dr. Adiel Mbabu, Dr. Hilda Munyua, Mr. Godfrey Mulongo and Mr. Frank Ojwang, Zenete França and by Helen Keller International team composed of Dr. Sonii David and Adekeke Marion. The Workshop also received technical support from NRCRI/ CIP colleague, Dr. Njoku Jude and the HKI colleagues, Mary Umoh and Eno Udongo.

## List of learning module sessions and respective contents

**Pre-Workshop Assignment**

**Day One**

**Session 1. Welcome, Introduction to the Workshop and Overview of an Organization´s Planning Stages**; Participant Action Plan Approach (PAPA); Forms for Interactive Exercise 1. PowerPoint presentation

**Session 2. Overview of project management cycle.** Major OFSP project requirements: principles, vocabulary and writing to inform and writing to persuade. PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 2. Reflecting on project cycle and analysing major OFSP requirements: principles (gender mainstreaming, partnership, etc.) vocabulary and writing to persuade

**Session 3. Project identification: stakeholder analysis and analysis of problems, opportunities, objectives and strategy.** Picking the right topic. PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 3a. Stakeholder analysis (Case study); Exercise 3b. Analysis of problems, opportunities, objectives and strategies for project design; Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement and PAPA

**Day Two**

**Session 4. How to Prepare a Concept Note.** The Importance of Concept Notes; PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 4a. Building an Interdisciplinary Team to develop a Concept Note; Exercise 4b. Continuing work on the Project Concept Note; Exercise 4c. Writing Catchy Titles; White Land (case study).

**Session 5**. **Reviewing Concept Notes and Proposals;** PowerPoint presentation;

Exercise 5. Concept Note Review*;* Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement and PAPA

**Day Three**

**Session 6. Formulation of an Engendered Logical Framework;** Project Logical Framework; PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 6. Constructing an Engendered Project Logframe

**Session 7. Writing Full Proposals;** PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 7a. Transforming your Concept Note into a Full Proposal; Exercise 7b. Practicing Skills on Writing Impacts and Milestones; Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement and PAPA

**Day Four**

**Session 8. How to Prepare Proposal Budgets;** PowerPoint presentation Exercise 8. Analyzing and Improving a Proposal Budget

**Session 9. Preparing Executive Summary,** Submitting and following up on project proposals & How to maintain good donor relations; PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 9a. Preparing an executive summary; 9b. PART 1. Analysing a covering letter; 9b. PART 2. Assessing the organization´s capacity in submission and follow-up; 9c. How to maintain good donor relations; Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement and PAPA

**Day Five**

**Session 10. Project Implementation Requirements:** schedule, work plan, activities, etc. PowerPoint Presentation; Exercise 10. Identifying the implementation requirements in the case study

**Session 11. What are Monitoring and Evaluation?** The design of a Theory of Change. PowerPoint Presentation. Exercise 11. Part A. Defining M&E. Exercise 11. Part B. Developing Theory of Change (ToC); Strengths and Suggestions for Improvement and PAPA

**Day Six**

**Session 12: Developing a Plan for M&E.** Implementing an M&E system: responsibilities and processes. PowerPoint presentation; Exercise 12.Part A. Developing a Matrix Plan for M&E Exercise Part B. Mechanisms to manage information and production of reports.

**Session 13: What do We Need to Learn to Lead and Manage Project Teams?** PowerPoint Presentation; Domains of Human Learning; Effective Teamwork and Managing Teams, Time and Tasks; Leadership Skills Questionnaire; Exercise 13. Getting to Know Myself Better as a Team Leader

**Session 14: PAPA and Workshop Evaluation Exercise**

**Annexes**

**Annex A.** Mainstreaming Gender in Project Planning and Management

**Annex B.** Managing Time and Tasks

**Annex C.** The Cascading Logic

**Annex D.** Organization Learning and the Learning Organization

**Annex E.** Project Financing and Budget

## Samples of few sessions from the learning module contents, processes and other materials

This section provides the website user with samples of few sessions to demonstrate that the learning module is designed step-by-step to guide actions by the professional facilitator to make sure that the results of the learning event achieve its goals and objectives efficiently and effectively.

### 1. Pre-Workshop Assignment

It is important to emphasize that the learning module on *Engendered Orange-Fleshed Sweetpotato Project Planning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation* required the selected participants to bring to the workshop special information collected from their respective organizations to make sure that the event responded to their institutional needs.

To assist the facilitators in guiding the selected participants before the learning event, the learning module has a section entitled “PRE-WORKSHOP” which summarizes major actions to be taken by them to be prepared to lead the event successfully, in addition to guiding the participants on how to prepare the pre-workshop assignment. This information is included in the “Instructions to Facilitators” below.

This section presents a **Sample: Pre-workshop assignment guidance and exercise titled “Pick the Right Topic**, etc. which is self-explanatory.

### 2. Sample of the two sessions extracted from the learning module. They are: session 2 (from day 1) and session 7 (from day 3)

The samples of two sessions were selected to demonstrate how the sessions of the learning module were planned to guide the learning facilitator during the implementation of the event. Note that each session brings learning objectives, procedure, and guidance to carry out the exercises and include the exercise sheets. The plan also emphasizes the phases of the experiential learning cycle to make sure that the facilitator identifies how the learning is taking place by following this theoretical tool. This plan also includes special questions for closing a learning session through which the facilitator might inspire the participants to apply the newly developed skills in their work environment.

**Session 2**. Note that, in the original (complete) learning module, this session covers Project Identification and other contents. However this section only extracted (and presents) the content related to ***Write to Persuade* along with the materials involved in it.**

**Session 7** presents the contents, texts and exercises related to Writing Full Proposals.

## PowerPoint

The learning module includes the PowerPoint presentations for 14 sessions to facilitate the implementation of the workshop. To provide the reader with a sample of these PowerPoint presentations, this document presents those related to the sample sessions 2 and 7.

# Tips for Learning Facilitators

## INTRODUCTION

As a learning facilitator, you are responsible for creating the learning environment and maintaining the flow of the workshop. You must be aware of the participants' needs and be sensitive to their concerns. Following are several tips to help you achieve a successful workshop.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Ten tips for your success as a learning facilitator:

1. Begin your working day by presenting:
   - objectives
   - schedule

   Make sure that the participants are aware of what they are expected to learn each day.
2. Manage time wisely. Time is a motivating factor in learning. If you slow down, the participants will lose interest and commitment.
3. Give brief presentations. Encourage your participants to speak up and participate actively in discussions and exercises.
4. Follow the instructions of the proposed exercises:
   - use different techniques
   - promote active participation
   - increase interest and level of motivation
5. Avoid "shortcuts" while working on topics. Keep the same level of interest while making presentations, doing exercises, and listening to reports. Remember that as a learning facilitator you are responsible for the results of the six-day workshop.
6. Do not let your interest and willingness to facilitate diminish. Show care for the participants' learning and be patient!
7. Be an attentive and good listener. The participants expect you to value their ideas and to look at them while speaking. These positive attitudes increase your credibility with the participants.
8. Praise the participants for their efforts and for good performance. This shows that you recognize their input and this consequently increases their level of motivation.
9. Make sure that the participants feel positive and that they are satisfied with the workshop. Ask for their feedback at the end of each day.
10. Be confident of your success as a learning facilitator. Go through the whole plan and be well prepared. Let them see you are competent and self-confident.

## MANAGING TEAMS OR

Many of the exercises require the participants to work together in teams or small groups and there must be a way

**GROUPS**

to share the information with the rest of the workshop participants. The most common way is to have group presentations. You are responsible for managing the group activities and ensuring active participation. The following tips will help.

**TIPS FOR FACILITATING GROUPS**

Seven tips for facilitating group exercises:

1. Be attentive to and supportive of the participants' needs in every situation.
2. Help them to understand the steps they must take to accomplish all the tasks.
3. Manage time effectively. Be sure to remind participants of the time remaining. Be firm! Keep to the schedule.
4. Show interest and be willing to assist them at all times. Circulate from group to group while they are working.
5. Follow the entire process. Remain in the classroom during all activities.
6. Provide the groups with constructive feedback.
7. Always summarize the major points made by the groups and relate them to the objectives of the session and exercise.

## *Learning Approach*

This learning module provides the facilitators with the information, specific activities, and materials they need to effectively plan and deliver a Project Planning, Implementation, M&E workshop. Because each facilitator and each project and situation is unique, planning is critical to the success of any project. This module encourages participation and provides hands-on, problem solving experiences and exercises.

This learning approach is based on experiential learning theory (Kolb and Fry 1975; McCaffery 1986) and is participatory by design. It is a learner-centered approach involving active experience followed by a process of reviewing, reflecting, and applying what has been learned through the experience.

### *The Experiential Learning Cycle*[1]

Experiential learning is a phrase often heard in the educational world. The strength of the approach is in the completeness of its cycle, which consists of four stages, each as important as the one that comes before or after. The four stages are (1) experience, (2) process, (3) generalization, and (4) application.

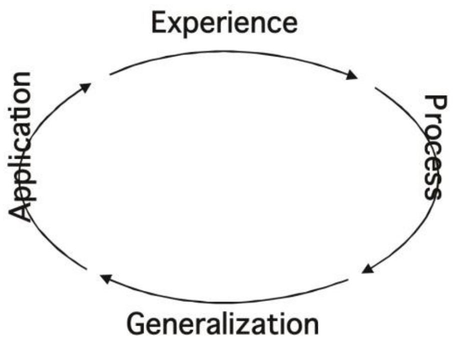



**Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle**

Source: McCaffery (1986) and adapted from Kolb and Fry (1975)

The term experiential is often misused in practice. Experiential learning processes seem to mean letting people participate in a presentation, having a question and answer session after a lecture, or a role play or case study without the subsequent steps of the model. The final stages are often left out of the design of the program. As a result, the power of experiential learning is significantly diminished or negated altogether. The stages of the experiential learning cycle are outlined in Figure 1.

**Experience.** The experience stage is the initial activity and data-producing part of the cycle. This phase is structured to enable participants in the learning activity to 'do' something.

**Process.** In this stage, participants reflect on the activity undertaken during the experience stage. They share their reactions in a structured way with each other and discuss their

[1] This section on the experiential learning cycle is adapted from USDA/OICD/ITD. (no date). Agricultural trainer development: Training of trainers. Instructors manual, and McCaffery, J.A. 1986. Interdependent effectiveness: A reconsideration of cross-cultural orientation and training *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*

intellectual and attitudinal (cognitive and affective) reactions to the activities in which they have engaged.

**Generalisation.** In the generalisation stage, participants form conclusions and generalisations that might be derived from, or stimulated by, the first two phases of the cycle. This stage is best symbolized by the questions: ‘What did you learn from all this?’ and ‘What more general meaning does this have for you?’

**Application.** Drawing upon the insights and conclusions reached during the generalisation stage and previous stages, participants can begin to incorporate what they have learned into their lives by developing plans for more effective behaviour in the future. An action plan approach will be part of this kit to facilitate the application.

### The Adult Learner

Adult learners need continual opportunities to identify their needs and recognise the relevance of their learning to their own lives (Knowles 1978). They need self-directed learning opportunities in which they can actively participate. They need to actively think, do, and reflect on experiences, discuss with others, and practice and learn new skills. The adult learner needs to continually reassess the question, ‘Where am I now and where do I want to go?’

### The Learning Facilitator

The role of a learning facilitator is to manage or guide the learning process rather than to manage the content of learning. Adult learners can share the responsibility for their learning with the facilitator. The experience of adult learners should be viewed and used as a rich resource in the learning environment and they should be encouraged to contribute to the learning environment whenever possible.

## *Participant Action Plan Approach*

An integral aspect of the workshop is the ultimate application of the skills and the participants in the work environment. The participant action plan approach (PAPA) was developed by the United States Office of Personnel Management to help participants consider specific applications of lessons learned during learning programs to their job sites. Participants commit themselves to action through a written plan developed at the end of the workshop. PAPA can help participants transfer to their jobs what they learned in the workshop, thus reaching the application stage of the experiential learning cycle.

# SAMPLE: Pre-Workshop Assignment guidance and exercise

## Pick the Right Topic, (Standardization of Vocabulary and Writing Tips)

### *(a) Instructions to Facilitators*

As a learning facilitator, you are responsible for the preparation and management of the entire program. This requires pre-workshop actions. You must discuss the pre-workshop responsibilities with the workshop's sponsoring and/or partner institutions. Some things that you must be sure to arrange are included in the list under "pre-workshop general guidance". There may be several others. Pre-planning is essential to the success of your learning and capacity building (L&CB) workshop.

### Actions Needed:

**You must:**

(a) take action *to provide the selected participants with the texts and exercises presented below under **"Pre-Workshop Assignment*** (*Handouts. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6)* to be undertaken in their own countries, in preparation of the workshop. Remember to prepare these handouts to be sent to the participants in advance. The leading project team needs to guide the participants closely. It is advisable that this guidance be undertaken through face-to-face mode. This would raise interest and awareness of participants about the importance of this assignment, which must be seen as the core of the learning process, to equip them with the competence and attitudes related to the project of their own organization. This would promote effective workshop results.

### Pre-Workshop Assignment Objectives:

By the end of this Pre-Workshop Assignment, you will have been able to:

- ***Pick a project topic along the value chain.***
- *Practice skills on writing a project proposal that can "win" donor funds.*
- *Define specific terms related to project management with accuracy.*
- *Use simple rules while writing your project proposal to make it clearer, attractive and convincing to the readers.*

**Special note:** ***(****This Assignment is expected to be sent to the selected participants in advance)*

### *(b) Instructions to Workshop Participants*

### KEY REQUIREMENTS

Picking a topic is the very first step in designing a project. RAC strongly recommends that you, as the workshop participant, pick the project topic/idea along the OFSP value chain, such as:

(1) Secondary seed multiplication and distribution

(2) OFSP utilization to combat Vitamin A Deficiency

(3) Market access for OFSP

(4) Value addition for OFSP

It is also strongly recommended that you, as the workshop participant, use a group – in preparation for the event – to help you select your project topic/idea which will:

- be sufficiently important to attract investment funds
- be relevant enough to be internally approved by your organization's senior management
- be useful and seen as a priority by the project beneficiaries
- be "manageable," i.e. have a reasonable chance of achieving results within a limited amount of time, with a reasonable quantity of available inputs
- have the right balance of risk and return
- attract project partners that have a comparative advantage to carry out the project

*and will thus ultimately attract donor interest and support.*

In addition, as the workshop participant, you are expected to practice skills on writing up convincing proposals. This makes it necessary to master standardized vocabulary in project management (including project planning); and learn some simple rules about writing, which will make your project proposal more attractive to the readers; mainly to the donors.

## PROCEDURE

The selected workshop participant is expected to be responsible for working on an OFSP project design, implementation and M&E after the workshop is over. The participants are invited to persuade one or two colleagues to undertake this assignment with them, in their respective organizations. This will strengthen the results of this exercise.

In summary, the selected workshop participants are expected to:

(1) read the assignment instructions to complete its four parts.

(2) read the attached texts with attention, to be able to respond to the exercise requirements.

(3) use the exercise worksheets below to record the results of this pre-workshop assignment, which will be shared with other participants during Session 3 of the workshop.

It is important to keep reminded that the Priority Project Ideas, chosen with peers along the value chain, should respond to the needs of target African families and communities to combat Vitamin A Deficiency and generate income. This workshop will primarily be focusing on these two objectives.

The workshop participants must be committed to increase investment in orange-fleshed sweetpotato to combat Vitamin A Deficiency among young children and women of reproductive age.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

Participants demonstrated competence and self-confidence in discussing openly with the workshop participants on (a) how and why they decided on specific Project Ideas; (b) the new vocabulary related to project management which they have acquired through the assignment and (c) the simple rules to write convincing proposals to donors.

# Preparatory Exercise

# Picking the Right Topic, (Standardization of Vocabulary and Writing Tips)

## PART 1: Picking the Right Topic for your Project Proposal

**Step 1. Work with few peers in your organization** (if possible provide them with copies of the texts for this assignment). Plan 1 hour to undertake this step.

1. Read Handout 3 on "Picking the right topic". Remember that RAC strongly recommends that you, as the workshop participant, ***picks the*** *project topic/idea along the value chain*, such as:

   (1) Secondary seed multiplication and distribution
   (2) OFSP utilization to combat Vitamin A Deficiency
   (3) Market access for OFSP
   (4) Value addition for OFSP

2. Imagine you are a donor. Consider the four potential project examples above for your reflection and decision.
3. You and your peers are invited to further analyze these topics in line with other projects of your organization or related organizations to ensure that the planned project builds on past investments in combating Vitamin A Deficiency and associated income generation activities.
4. You and your peers are free to create new projects ideas – along the OFSP value chain to respond to the need of combating Vitamin A Deficiency among children under five years of age and their mothers.
5. Use the Worksheets below (Handout 6) to facilitate your group work and analysis. The worksheet #1 presents the four Project Ideas above along with six criteria for you and your peers to discuss and summarize your assessment (use key words).
6. Remember that you and your peers need to be prepared to search for information – in order to respond to six criteria as follows: (1) problem that is important, (2) project topic that is of priority to target beneficiaries; (3) a manageable topic; (4) topic with the right balance of risk and return, (5) topic that is attractive to partners, (6) topic that is most likely to attract the interest of donors.
7. Worksheet #2 (Handouts 6) are an additional forms for you to create new project ideas and respond to the same criteria.

**Step 2: Selecting two most attractive topics to report the audience**

8. Use the Worksheet #3 (Handout 6) to write down the two most attractive topics and list the three criteria used to select the two topics.
9. You are requested to take the worksheets of this exercise to the Workshop Venue. You will be invited to share these results during group work in Session 3, Day 1.

## PART 2. Standardization of Vocabulary used in Project Planning (*This site does not present material for this part 2.)*

**Step 3. Reading and processing the information**

10. Read the text below on "Standardization of Vocabulary" (Handout 4) and write with your own words the following definitions; Use Worksheet Part 2 (Handout 6) to record your responses.
    (a) What is the difference between project and program?
    (b) How would you explain Project Planning process?
    (c) Describe an Annual work plan

## PART 3. Writing Tips ((*This site does not present material for this part 3.)*

**Step 4. Practicing writing skills.**

11. Read the text below on "General Writing Tips"(Handout 5) and after reflecting on "The use of definite, concrete words" (Worksheet Handout …), respond to the following:
    (d) One important recommendation which will make you a better writer from now on, and
    (e) How would you summarize your learning on the use of definite and concrete words? Justify.
12. Use Worksheet Part 3 (Handout 6) to record your responses.

## PART 4. Reporting Results and Discussion

13. Remember that, during Session 3 of the face-to-face workshop, you will be invited to share the results of this Assignment in small groups. These groups will elect a rapporteur to summarize these results on the flipchart or PowerPoint to make presentation to the workshop audience.
14. The summary will record the challenges that the group members faced in completing this Assignment, major lessons learnt and the list of Priority Project Ideas along OFSP value chain, which they were able to identify through this exercise.
15. The facilitator will reinforce the importance of this Pre-Workshop Assignment and will provide the participants with feedback on this exercise. At the end, the facilitator will close session 3 and make transition to the next session.

# PART 1. Picking the Right Topic[1]

## (text to read and reflect before undertaking the exercise)

Think back to your university days, when you needed to select a topic for your dissertation or thesis. Your professor probably spent a good deal of time providing feedback on different ideas, trying to help you to select a topic that was (a) interesting, (b) researchable, (c) not too big and not too small, and (d) significant enough to contribute to knowledge and earn you a degree.

In this session, we are going to try to give you advice on picking a research topic that can "win" donor funds.  But before we get to that, we have to think about a topic that will

- be sufficiently important to be worth doing;
- be internally approved by your  management;
- be useful and seen as a priority by target beneficiaries;
- be "manageable," i.e. have a reasonable chance of achieving results within a limited amount of time, with a reasonable quantity of available inputs;
- have the right balance of risk and return;
- attract  partners that have a comparative advantage to carry out the project; and will thus ultimately attract donor interest and support.

Picking a topic is the very first step in designing a project.  Earlier, we saw the value of designing projects in groups.  So it is strongly recommended that you use a group to help you select your research project topic.

### 1. Selecting a problem that is important

There is no point in choosing a topic of no interest to anyone but you. Your topic must be significant to you, your organization and importantly, to the potential beneficiaries. The first question a donor will ask when reading your project topic and objective is, "So what?"  This means both "what is new about what you are doing?" and "who will be better off, and in what way, as a result of what you propose to do?" You must have answers to these questions on page 1 of your project proposal if you are to have a topic worth submitting to a donor.

### 2. Selecting a topic that will be internally approved

In several previous sessions we have noted that projects need to form part of the host organization's priorities. These are determined by the organization's core business – vision, mission and strategic objectives.  Thus, if you come up with a topic you like, look through organization's strategic documents to be sure that it fits in nicely with the goals and objectives of the organization!

You will also have a supervisor, who has his or her own likes and dislikes.  You need to be sensible and practical and take this information into account when choosing your topic.

Equally, the scope of the project should match the objectives and available resources – human, financial and physical. This sounds simple and obvious, but you would be surprised how many project designers forget this!

[1] From Marian Fuchs-Carsch. Capacity building learning module on How to Write Convincing Proposals. The Hague. The Netherlands. ISNAR.1999/2000

### 3. Selecting a project topic that is a beneficiary priority

You will need to demonstrate to a donor that the beneficiaries of your project really want the research information and outputs you are seeking. To demonstrate that beneficiaries are interested, you need to talk to them. This sounds simple and obvious, but you would be surprised how many project designers forget this! The very best way to ensure that beneficiaries are interested is to include them in your design team. At a minimum, you need to ask them what they want, and document their replies, to strengthen your proposal.

### 4. Selecting a manageable topic

Once you have a topic that will be internally popular and that your target group really wants, you need to be sure that the project is the right size, scale and type. Here are some questions you will need to debate in your design group:

- Project duration: How long will this project take? Can it show results (outputs certainly, and preferably impacts also) within a typical project lifetime (i.e. two to four years)? If it is going to take longer, can it be phased so that outputs and impacts can be demonstrated in a first phase of between two to four years? Bear in mind that building on previous investments in the same area of focus could save time and resources in delivering expected outputs and achieving desired outcomes.
- Project size: Is this project going to be cheap or expensive relative to other projects in my organization? Does it seem that it will need a very large budget, more than a donor may be willing to pay? How many partners will be needed to implement the project?
- Project sites: How many places will you need to involve in the project? Before going to a multi-site project, should you consider a pilot project in just one, or perhaps two sites? Are the sites you need easy to reach, or expensive to reach? Is there any likelihood of civil unrest in any of your target sites?
- Other practical considerations: Here are some sample questions. Does the project depend on good rains? If so, how likely are the rains to fail? What will you do if the rains fail in any of the years of the project? Do you need the permission or involvement of local officials? Have you consulted them about doing the project in their areas? Are they included in the design team? Are they going to want a piece of the action—i.e., will they need to be included in the project budget as a partner?

The purpose here is to select a project topic that has a reasonable chance of achieving its objectives and contributing towards its goal in a limited amount of time, with a reasonable quantity of available inputs.

### 5. Selecting a topic that is attractive to partners

Not all projects need partners. However, considering what it takes to deliver results at people level, it is likely that different disciplines and even different organizations may be needed to meet expected results. For example, to ensure widespread use of OFSP to combat VAD, there may be need for an organization to multiply and distribute planting materials (OFSP vines); or need for an organization to train communities on diverse uses of OFSP to combat VAD; and need for an organization to facilitate access to markets for those who produce more than they can consume at home. You may strengthen your chances of winning a grant by including such partners in your project.

Think twice before deciding to go it alone!

If you do select a topic that will involve collaborative implementation, remember the principles outlined in Session 7. Treat your partner with respect—do not attempt to dictate what the partner should do. The golden rule applies—*do to others as you would wish for them to do to you*. Involve your partner in every aspect of the project design, including selection of the topic. If the partner is distant, use e-mail or fax or phone to get full inputs before making any decisions.

Sometimes you will have your topic selected and then seek partner interest. This is fine, but be prepared for rejections if the partner has had no say in selecting the topic.

Remember, too, that in your proposal you are going to have to *prove to the donor that you (and your partners) have a comparative advantage* over others in the field to do the proposed work.

One advantage you have is that you thought of the topic first. But that will probably not be enough. You will need to show that you have the right staff with the right experience and qualifications and that you have access to the stakeholders who are going to either play a role in the project or be affected by it. You need to be able to prove that you have assembled a design and implementation team that is ideal for doing the job.

### 6. Selecting a topic with the right balance of risk and return

Donors (like other investors) look at projects in terms of risk and return. Ideally they are looking for low risks and high returns.

When you choose how to invest your savings (if you are lucky enough to have any), your first thought would be how to find a safe investment option. A safe investment is one with very little or no risk of losing your principal, i.e. the amount you put in. In the US, you can put up to $100,000 in any registered bank, and the government will pay you that money back in case the bank collapses. This is therefore a no-risk investment, unless you are worried about the US government itself collapsing. However, many Americans do not put their money in the bank because the rate of return is very low. Interest rates in the US nowadays are about 2% - 3%, which is about the rate of inflation. You cannot get rich by keeping your money in the bank. So many Americans (and many other people around the world) invest in the US stock market, which on average yields between 6% - 10%. In these heady days, some people make much, much more. You have probably heard about people who have become millionaires by “playing” the stock markets of the world. However, these people take big risks. Stocks come down as well as go up. In the long run they always go up—at least they have so far—but most people want to take their savings out in the short or medium run.

The wise investor is looking for the right balance of risk and return. He looks for an investment opportunity that combines low risk with the prospect of a reasonably high return in the short or medium term.

A donor selecting among projects uses the same logic. The donor will ask two questions: How likely is this project to succeed (i.e. achieve its objectives)? If it does succeed, what sort of impact is it likely to have? If the likelihood of success is high, i.e. the risk of failure is low, and the chance that impact will be significantly high, the donor will think the project is a likely winner.

# PART 1. Worksheet #1. Pick the Right Topic

## Which ones are potential topics for your organization? Analyze all, and select two priority topics. Use Worksheet #3 to record them

| **Potential project topics** | **Topic Criteria: Selecting** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1. Problem that is important | 2. Project topic that is beneficiary priority | 3. A manageable topic | 4. Topic with the right balance of risk and return |
| 1. Secondary seed multiplication and distribution | | | | |
| 2. OFSP utilization to combat Vitamin A Deficiency | | | | |
| 3. Market Access for OFSP | | | | |
| 4. Value addition for OFSP | | | | |

# PART 1. Worksheet #1 (Cont´d). Pick the Right Topic

| **Potential project topics** | **Topic Criteria: Selecting** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5. Topic that is attractive to partners, why? | 6. Topic that is most likely to attract the interest of donors, why? | 7. Topic that will be internally approved, why? | |
| 1. Secondary seed multiplication and distribution | | | | |
| 2. OFSP utilization to combat Vitamin A Deficiency | | | | |
| 3. Market Access for OFSP | | | | |
| 4. Value addition for OFSP | | | | |

# PART 1. Worksheet #2 Other topics along the value chain. Title and analyze them

| **Potential project topics** | **Topic Criteria: Selecting** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1. Problem that is important | 2. Project topic that is beneficiary priority | 3. A manageable topic | 4. Topic with the right balance of risk and return |
| 1 | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |

# PART 1. Worksheet #2 Other topics along the value chain. Title and analyze them

| **Potential project topics** | **Topic Criteria: Selecting** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 5. Topic that is attractive to partners, why? | 6. Topic that is most likely to attract the interest of donors, why? | 7. Topic that will be internally approved, why? | |
| 1. | | | | |
| 2. | | | | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |

| PART 1. Worksheet #3. Two priority topics | |
|---|---|
| **Two topics will be the most likely to attract the interest of donors** | **Three (or more) criteria used to select the two topics** |
| 1.<br><br><br><br>2. | |

# Excerpts extracted from the learning module Session 2

## Dia Um

## Session 2…...writing to persuade

**Instructions to Facilitators**

**SESSION 2**

**10:15-12:00. Presentation and Exercise**

**OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to do the following:

1. Identify major OFSP project requirements: principles including writing to persuade.

Use PowerPoint to present the session's objectives.

**PROCEDURE**

Learning strategies or facilitation techniques: presentation, work in pairs.

**PRESENTATION**

*(experience)* Distribute handouts for this session 2, before starting your presentation. Give a brief presentation on the issues listed for this session. You will find the information in Handout 1.2.1, 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 very useful. Use the PowerPoint presentation to facilitate understanding of the concepts. Ask if clarifications are needed. (30 minutes)

**EXERCISE 2**

**Reflecting on writing to persuade.** (1 hour 15 minutes)

*(experience)* Invite a volunteer to read loudly Exercise 2. Go over the instructions with the participants step by step. Ask if any clarifications are needed.

Phase 1. Work in pairs (40 minutes)

(*experience)* Ask each participant to pair up with a neighbor. Assign letters A, B, C, and D to each pair and repeat this exercise until all pairs receive letters.

*(experience, process)* The pairs reflect and discuss before responding to the exercise question. As they work, circulate to check progress. Clarify any concerns they may have while working. Be sure to remind them of the time remaining in the exercise.

*(experience)* Invite the pairs to use the Exercise 2 Worksheet to record the results of this exercise and prepare the summary of these results on a flipchart or on PowerPoint to present to the audience during the phase 2 of this exercise.

Phase 2. Reporting and discussion (60 minutes)

1. *(experience, process)* The pairs present their results to the other participants.
2. *(experience, process)* You will invite other pairs who have different responses to share and discuss results.

Analyze the responses with them.

3. *(generalize)* Ask for and provide feedback on the content of the presentations. Ask the participants questions such as, “How did you feel doing this exercise?” and “What did you learn?” in order to stimulate discussion of the process.

**CLOSURE**

**Closure** (5 minutes)

1. *(application)* Ask the participants to tell one of their neighbor two things they might do differently as a result of what they have learned. Ask volunteers to give examples.
2. Make a transition to the next session.

# Writing to Inform, Writing to Persuade[2]

## (Summary of Presentation)

### Writing to inform

There are many reasons why we write things. As students, scientists, and researchers, you most often will write to inform. All of you have experience of writing exam papers, term papers, course papers, and theses.

Your purpose is to inform, but your goal is to pass the course, get the good grade, or get the degree. Then again you may be in the business of writing papers for publication in refereed journals. Once more, you are writing to inform people about your ideas; here your goal may be to share what you know in the hope of attracting comments and support, or it may be to become famous, get tenure at a university, or add to your curriculum vitae.

In all these instances, you have a purpose—to inform, and a goal—to pass your course or to achieve distinctions, etc.

This is true about all forms of writing.

Writing a report to a donor who has supported your research is a good example of writing to inform. Later we will be learning about how to write a good report. In this session we are going to learn more about how to write to persuade.

### Writing to persuade

You probably have less experience in writing to persuade.

Think about love letters, which many of you may have written, at least in your head. Your purpose here may also be to inform—to let your loved one know how you feel. But you have other motives too. These may involve persuasion. Your goal may be to win the love of your loved one—spiritual, emotional, or physical, or all three. You may also be writing to express your feelings—to try to make meaningful some strong emotions. Your goal here may be to relieve stress or otherwise feel more in control of your feelings.

Advertising people write to persuade. Their goal is to make you buy a certain product. Politicians, whose goal is to make you vote for them, also write and talk to persuade.

It is the sort of writing you need to do if you want to get funding for your work. It is the sort of writing you do when you write research proposals.

In addition to thinking about your reader, you need to keep in mind the guidelines for good writing outlined in session 8. Then you have to think about persuasive writing.

As we noted, the classic use of persuasive writing is in advertising. There the purpose is clear; the writer wants you to buy something. The ad says: “Persil washes whiter.” This message assumes that you want your wash as white as possible, and that the information that Persil washes whiter will persuade you to buy it instead of another brand. Advertisers, of course, use images as well as words, knowing that a picture is worth at least a thousand words. So Michael Jordan sells Nike shoes, and the Marlboro man, macho, strong, outdoorsy, persuades some people to buy and smoke Marlboro cigarettes.

[2] *Extracted from Marian Fuchs-Carsch in ISNAR Learning Module “How to Write a Convincing Proposal” The Hague, The Netherlands. 2002*

You are not in the advertising business. You are in research for development business. But you do need to write to persuade because you need to persuade people to give you money to do your work. To do this you do not write reports, you write proposals.

Although it is obvious, it needs to be clearly understood:

> **The purpose of a research for development proposal is to get money.**
>
> **You write a proposal to persuade someone or some organization to give you money to implement the project**.

You are not writing to inform, but to persuade. And this requires you to have a different approach to what and how you write.

## A. The Single Most Important Thing about Writing to Persuade

What do you think this is?

Remember that the single most important thing in writing is to think about your reader. In writing to inform, you are thinking how best to convey information to that reader. In writing to persuade, you are thinking how best to get your reader to do what you want him or her to do—give you money.

The readers of your project proposal will give you money if, and only if, it is in their own interest to do so. They have choices about how to spend their money. You need to persuade them that what you propose to do will in some ways please them more than any alternative.

So, the single most important thing about writing to persuade is that you need to appeal to the self-interest of your readers.

To do this, a crucial first step is to identify the self-interest of your target audience.

Here is what an experienced American journalist, George Allen, who writes in the New York Times and Washington Post, had to say on this subject.

> "The simple presentation of facts will rarely persuade an audience. They may find the facts interesting, but they will rarely be moved to change their attitudes or to act in ways the communicator would like them to. …
>
> "To give an audience information that is new or that challenges existing beliefs presents problems to any communicator. We are all grounded in the familiar and what has been proven to work. Therefore, the first reaction to the presentation of new information to a lay audience often is resistance. The vast majority of the world's people are intellectually lazy. With the exception of a few who enjoy thinking, nearly all of us, if we have a choice, would prefer not to think about new things.
>
> "The only way to overcome the resistance is to engage the self-interest of the audience.
>
> "Self-interest is at the center of what makes us tick. It is what, at the deepest level, motivates us to most of our actions. If you are to persuade your audience, you need to know enough, to learn enough about them to discover their self-interest, their needs, their fears, their motivations.
>
> "How many of us can pass a mirror without glancing at our reflection? Not many, because the mirror enables us to see the most important human being in the world—ourselves. Unless your audience can "see themselves" in the mirror of

your communications, they will have less interest in assimilating your message, may not even try.

"Unless the message is addressed to a specific audience, and is tailored to engage the self-interest of that audience, it is merely a shot fired in the air with no particular destination. Most of the messages …(contained in proposals)… are sent out c/o General Delivery."

Notice that George Allen is repeating what was said earlier about the importance of knowing as much as possible about your reader.

When you write a concept note or proposal you are trying to persuade your audience—a donor agency—to give you money to implement project. You want them to give their money to you rather than to anyone else. To achieve this, you must engage their interest—and their interest will have to do with the priorities of their agency, as well as with their own personal likes and dislikes. The more you know about the donor, the more you can tailor your proposal to that particular individual or organization. You need to be learning more; your Donor Intelligence Unit can help. You can help yourself by meeting donors and researching them on the Internet.

### B. The Second-most Important Thing about Writing to Persuade

When you write to inform, it is very important to get your facts right, to calmly and logically lay out the issues, to be sure that your meaning is crystal clear. This is not so important when writing to persuade. In writing to persuade you may wish to highlight some facts, and downplay others. You may even want to exaggerate—just a little. You are allowed to take some liberties like this in persuasive writing, because your objective is to move people, to get them to take a new position, or do something new—in the case of proposals, to give you money. What this means is that when writing to persuade you write with emotion. In a proposal, unlike a journal article, you want your passion for your subject to shine through your words.

***The second-most important thing about writing to persuade is to write with <u>passion</u>.*** You think your work is exciting, don't you? You think your project can make a real difference for poor farmers, don't you? What you do is really important, isn't it? Your answers should be yes—and your enthusiasm, excitement, and passion should be behind what you write.

You will notice later that when writing a concept note to donors, you have an important heading under which you will have an opportunity to write with passion.

That heading is, "The problem and why it is urgent." The word "urgent" is an emotional word. You would use it sparingly, if at all, in a journal article. But it belongs firmly in a proposal. For if your problem is not urgent, why should a donor fund it? There are so many urgent problems in the world that need funding, a donor is not going to choose your work if it is of only medium importance, if it does not really matter if the work does not get done until next year, or the year after.

So you need to explain to your audience what is immediate, urgent, vital, essential, new, desperately needed about the problem your project is going to address.

Here are some tips on writing with passion:

1. You need to use strong, emotion-laden words like **urgent, vital, essential, new**. You need to avoid weasel words and phrases much beloved by cautious scientists, like *possibly*, *under certain circumstances*, *ceteris paribus*.

2. Short sentences convey urgency. Long sentences, with lots of subordinate clauses, like this one, tend to go on and on and on, and put the reader to sleep.
3. An arresting word or phrase can wake up a reader to the importance of what you are saying. You might try a timely metaphor: “It would be irresponsible in the extreme to assume that this potentially catastrophic problem will somehow disappear like the Millennium Bug.” “The new devil weevil attacking millet in West Africa has the power to kill as many children as have died in the Bosnia and Kosovo wars—only the weevil will kill more slowly first through increased malnutrition, then through famine.”
4. Get your message across as quickly as possible, and in as few words as possible. A short, punchy paragraph will have more power to move your audience than a longer piece, no matter how well written or strongly felt.

### Active and Passive Sentences

An *active sentence* is one in which a subject takes direct action. The following are examples of active sentences:

- The technician planted the experimental plots.
- The dog walked on the road.
- The animals gained 0.25 kg daily.

A *passive sentence* is one in which a subject is acted upon. The following are examples of passive sentences:

- The experimental plots were planted by the technician.
- The road was walked on by the dog.
- Counts on plants were taken 50 days after planting (DAP).

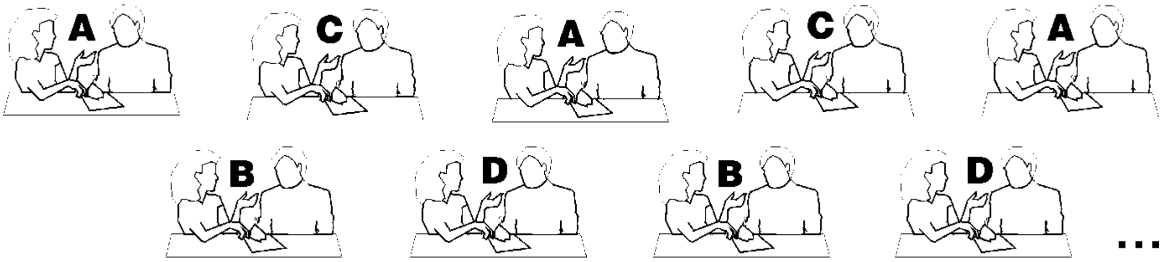
Recall the writing tips:

- Use the active voice as much as possible.
- Put statements in positive form.
- Use definite, specific, and concrete language
- Omit needless words.
- Avoid a succession of loose sentences.
- Keep related words together.

# Exercise 2. Reflecting on …. writing to persuade.

# (Work in pairs)

1. Form a pair with your neighbor.




**Phase 1. Work in pairs** (45 minutes)

2. The facilitator assigns letters A, B, C, and D to the pairs, repeatedly, until all pairs have letters.
3. Each pair will respond to questions assigned below in the worksheet to present to the audience in phase 2. Note that each pair will deal only with the questions assigned to them.
4. Each pair is expected to discuss the contents presented by facilitator and browse the texts (summary of presentations) presented in this session. Use flipcharts <u>or</u> PowerPoint to write and present the results of the pair work.

**Phase 2. Reporting and discussion** (2 hours)

5. The facilitator invites rapporteurs from the A, B, C, and D pairs to present the results to the audience.
6. The facilitator invites other pairs who had different responses to share and discuss their results.
7. The facilitator will assist the participants to analyze the responses, and at the end will ask for feedback on this exercise.

# Exercise 2. Worksheet

## Pair A:

The sample sentence below was extracted and adapted from a project proposal as an example to write to persuade using emotive words. Then

(a) read the sentence,

(b) identify and underline the emotive words

> "The effect of the unavailability of ready market and storage limitation that cultivators, mostly in Northern Ghana, face is catastrophic. Despite sweetpotato value for its short growing period of 90 to 120 days, very high nutritional content and its pleasant sweetness, Ghanaians have failed to influence their poor needy population to accept a minimal integration into their average diet!

(c) re-write the sentence to inform

(d) write one major lesson learned from this exercise.

# Exercise 2. Worksheet (Cont´d)

### Pair B

The sample sentence below is fictitious and was created to illustrate an example to write to persuade using emotive words. Then

(a) read the sentence,

(b) identify and underline the emotive words:

> “In many societies, sweetpotato growers are the poorest of the poor—the landless who must live and make their meager livelihood on the small, dry and unproductive land. Today, humble sweetpotato grower families are even worse off than before. Commercial growers, blind to all but immediate profits, are leaving virtually nothing for the small growers. Even more alarming, there is no hope to produce sweetpotato to combat vitamin A deficiency among young children and women of reproductive age for the future.

(c) re-write the sentence to inform

(d) write one major lesson learned from this exercise

# Exercise 2. Worksheet (Cont´d)

## Pair C

The sample sentence below is fictitious and was created to illustrate an example to write to persuade using emotive words. Then

(a) read the sentence,

(b) identify and underline the emotive words

> "Resource-poor land users who grow OFSP are commonly both the victims and cause of unsustainable land management; more attention must be given to the roots of their problems if irreversible soil degradation is to be avoided"

(c) re-write the sentence to inform

(d) write one major lesson learned from this exercise

# Exercise 2. Worksheet (Cont´d)

**Pair D:**

The sample sentence below was extracted and adapted from a project proposal as an example to write to persuade using emotive words. Then

(a) read the sentence,

(b) identify and underline the emotive words

> "Reaching Agents of Change (RAC) Project works with local organizations in five underprivileged countries to prevent suffering and hunger and reduce deaths among children and women of reproductive age. By active promotion to strengthen competent advocacy and appropriate technical capacity for successful nutrition investments RAC strongly recommends the utilization of OFSP as a very important food security crop."

(c) re-write the sentence to inform

(d) write one major lesson learned from this exercise.

**DAY THREE**

**Instructions to Facilitators**

**SESSION 7**

**11:45 – 13:00 Presentation and exercise**
**13:00 – 14:00 Lunch**
**14:00 – 15:30 Writing full proposal**
**15:30 – 15:45 Coffee/Tea Break**
**15:45 – 16:45 Session 7 (Cont´d)**
**16:45 – 17:00 Feedback of the day and PAPA**

**PROCEDURE**

Learning strategies or facilitation techniques: interdisciplinary team work, plenary discussion

**OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to:

- Explain when to proceed to a full proposal.
- Identify a possible basic proposal format for organization.
- Discuss the qualities of a convincing proposal.
- Discuss the nine steps involved in writing a proposal.
- Identify ways of reviewing and improving key sections, such as the objectives and activities sections.
- Discuss the concepts of impact evaluation and milestones.
- Identify milestones for a specific project.

Use the PowerPoint to present the session objectives. Distribute Handouts 3.7.1 and 3.7.2 before you begin your presentation.

**PRESENTATION**

*(experience)* Give a brief presentation on the key steps for writing proposals. Use PowerPoint to support the presentation. At the end of the presentation ask if clarification is needed. (15 minutes).

**EXERCISE 7a**

**Transforming your Concept Note into a Full Proposal. Practicing skills on writing objectives, activities and work plan** (3 hour 30 minutes).

***Note.*** *This session is composed of Exercises 7a and 7b. The Exercise 7b is divided into* ***Part A and Part B****.*

**Phase 1. Interdisciplinary team work** (60 minutes)

*(experience)* Invite participants to go over Exercise 7a, and make sure they understand its steps. Also ask them to form the interdisciplinary teams and elect a rapporteur.

*(experience, process)* Ask the participants to follow the guidance of Exercise 7a. They should read steps 1-3 of

Handout 3.7.2 regarding **objective, outputs, activities and work plan,** discuss these issues with their team members and decide how you could refine these components of the Concept Notes to make them more effective as part of a **full project proposal**. Remind them to use Handouts 3.7.6 and 3.7.7 during this exercise.

*(process, generalization)*Ask the rapporteurs to compile the groups' responses on flipcharts or on PowerPoint to present to the audience.

**Phase 2. Presentation and discussion** (30 minutes)

*(process, generalization)*Ask the rapporteurs to present the team results and promote discussion .At the end ask a few volunteers to summarize the lessons learned during this exercise, provide feedback and make transition to the next exercise.

***Part A & Part B.* Practicing skills on writing impacts and milestones** (2 hours -including Reporting phase)

**EXERCISE 7b**

***Part A: Writing impacts*** (45 minutes)

**Phase 1. Interdisciplinary team work.**

*(experience)* Invite participants to go over the Exercise 7b, and make sure they understand its steps. Also ask them to continue forming the same interdisciplinary teams and elect a rapporteur.

*(experience, process)* Ask the participants to read the information of step 4 of Handout 3.7.2 regarding **beneficiaries and impacts ,** discuss these issues with their team members and decide how they could refine these components of their Concept Note to make them more effective as part of a **full project proposal**.

Make sure they use Worksheet, Handout 3.7.6 to record their responses to prepare the first Draft Proposal to take home.
*(process, generalization)*Ask the rapporteurs to compile the groups' responses on flipcharts or PowerPoint to present to the audience.

**EXERCISE 7b**

***Part B: Writing milestones*** (45 minutes)

**Phase 1. Interdisciplinary team work**

*(experience, process)* Invite the teams to read the information and examples on writing milestones provided in Handout 3.7.5 then, analyze, discuss and compare with some experience in the past regarding this before

undertaking their task.

*(process, generalization)* Encourage the teams to prepare **milestones for their project proposal**. Remember that the teams will have to make some big assumptions in designing the milestones *because the project proposals are not fully thought through.*

*(generalization)* The rapporteurs compile the groups' inputs on Worksheet 3.7.6 and write the results on the flipchart or PowerPoint to present to the audience.

**Phase 2. Presentation and discussion** (25 minutes)

*(generalization)* Ask the rapporteurs to present the results of the teams' discussions to the audience. Each rapporteur has five minutes to report. Then encourage brief discussion.

*(generalization)* At the end, the facilitator asks volunteers to provide feedback, summarizes a few lessons learned and comments on the contents and provides feedback to this exercise.

**CLOSURE**

**Closure** (5 minutes)
*(application)* Ask the participants, "What might you do differently in your job as a result of what you have learned?" Ask volunteers to give examples.
Make a transition to the next session.

# Writing Full Proposals[3]
## (Summary of Presentation)

### When to Proceed to a Proposal
Preparing a concept note takes a fraction of the time needed to prepare a good proposal. Proceed to the development of a full-blown proposal if a) you have internal support, b) enthusiastic partners and beneficiaries, and c) some indication of funding agency support. Without these elements, you may have to abandon your project idea, or redesign.

### Preparing the Full Proposal
Once your institute, partners and funders have indicated some interest in a project idea, further elaboration of the idea will be needed. If the project has multiple partners, ensure that the proposal is prepared in a collegial and collaborative fashion by involving representatives from all groups in all design decisions. Once finished, the proposal should be discussed at a proposal review meeting.

### Qualities of a Convincing Proposal
All good proposals convey that:

- Something important needs doing right away.
- If we implement it, many currently underprivileged people will be much better off; if we do not, these people are going to suffer.
- We have a sensible and cost-effective way of doing this project; we (with our partners) are staffed, equipped, and eager to do the job.
- All we need is your support.

### Proposal Formats
Your organization will need a basic proposal format for internal projects and for when the donor does not provide a preferred format. The following is a basic format you might find useful.

**Basic Proposal Format**

**I.** **Summary** (What is this proposal all about?)
**II.** **Background** (Why should this proposal be implemented?)
**III.** **Objective** (What do you hope to achieve?)
**IV.** **Outputs** (What will the project deliver?)
**V.** **Activities** (What will you do?)
**VI.** **Work Plan** (How will you achieve your objectives?)
**VII.** **Impacts** (What outputs will the project deliver and who will be better-off at the end of the project, and why?)

**VIII.** **Monitoring and Evaluation** (How can you test if the project is working?)

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[3] From Marian Fuchs-Carsch. Capacity building learning module on How to Write Convincing Proposals. The Hague. The Netherlands. ISNAR.1999/2000

**IX. Budget** (How much will it cost?)

This is the order in which you would send the proposal. But when writing a proposal, the following order is recommended.

## Proposal Preparation Order

Prepare proposals in the following order:

1. Objective
2. Activities
3. Work plan
4. Outputs and impacts
5. Budget
6. Background
7. Evaluation and milestones
8. Summary
9. Review and editing
10. Cover letter

## Concept Note to a Proposal

A good concept note is *the ideal basis* for preparing a convincing proposal. However, some sections need to be considerably expanded. Essentially, you are now providing additional details to persuade your institute, partners and funding agencies that you know what you want to do—that you can hit the ground running as soon as you receive their support, including funds.

You also have the opportunity to rethink different aspects of the project (e.g. sites, scope of activities, inclusion of different elements), and to strengthen linkages with partners. You can also update your design to take into account changing internal and external realities—it will have taken some time from having the first project idea to proceed to the proposal stage.

## Proposal Step 1: Objective

*Review the objective as expressed in the concept note*. Does it still express what you hope to achieve? Have suggestions in the concept review given you ideas on how to improve the objective? Is the objective easily measurable? If not, can you reformulate it to make future evaluation easier?

Try to set aside at least an hour to brainstorm for one final time the substance and wording of the proposal objective.

## Proposal Step 2: Outputs

Review what you have already written in the concept note, and seek to strengthen this section; remember that outputs are what sell the project to the donor.

You need to organize your outputs by categories. One approach is to show the outputs for each group of people involved in the sector in which you are working. Another is to show outputs by site, or by project component. Whichever way they are presented, outputs should be seen to be adequate to achieve relevant objectives. A logical results framework will help to bring clarity on this.

## Proposal Step 3: Activities

You will need to expand the activities session of the concept note considerably. For all the major elements of the project spell out exactly **who** will do **what, when,** and **where?** Remember to use the active voice and to write short, clear sentences. Such sentences convey the urgency of the problem and hence your passionate desire to start work right away.

You should review what you have already done, and seek improvements. Here are two examples to show you how.

Example 1: "Then we plan to introduce the pesticide on half the fields."

> What is wrong with this active sentence? Answer: You should never use "we" in a proposal, because it is so vague. Who is 'we'? Which particular person? A group of NARS staff? Farmers? Project Partners? Always be specific about who is doing the action. Also, the we-form is rather too informal for most full proposals. Additionally, "then" is rather vague when specifying time.
>
> An improved version would be: "The NARS agronomist and the 15 women farmers participating in the project will introduce the pesticide on half the fields during the first month of the project."

Example 2. "Sixteen workshops will be held, four each in Eastern Highlands, East New Britain, Milne Bay and Morobe Provinces."

> What's wrong? Answer: This sentence uses the passive ("will be held"), which is vague. Who will do the action? There is also nothing on the timing of the activity.
>
> An improved version would be: "The project manager, together with provincial station leaders from Eastern Highlands, East New Britain, Milne Bay and Morobe Provinces, will prepare and implement four workshops in each of the provinces; one each in years 1 and 2, and two in year 3 of the project."

## Proposal Step 4: Work Plan

You will need to spend considerable time preparing this section, since it has only been lightly sketched in the concept note. In this section you are explaining what combination of inputs will be needed, when, and in what quantities, to achieve the desired outputs.

You will need a section on project management arrangements, which explains which party will do what, when, and where. Be sure to include the roles and responsibilities of all project personnel, including, as appropriate, NARS staff, people from NGOs, government agencies, farmers' groups, universities, etc.

Ideally this section should be prepared with partners, and should answer questions like: Who will lead the project? What other positions will be involved? From which organizations will the positions be filled? Will there be project meetings? When? Who will attend? How will beneficiaries be involved?

You will also need to list your inputs and level of effort, perhaps in a short table. Here's a small example:

## Personnel inputs

| | |
|---|---|
| Dept. of Horticulture agronomist | 6 person-months/year – total 18 person months. |
| Dept of Horticulture fruit specialist | 2 p.m. in years 2 and 3 – total 4 person months . |
| University of Goroka research assistant | 9 person months/year – total 27 person months |
| Project secretary/Logistics assistant | Full time – total 36 person months |

You will need to include a time plan showing when activities will be undertaken. The best way is to use a flow chart or other graphic device.

In this section you should also include a brief reporting plan, explaining how often you will report back to the donor. If the donor or your institute management has not specified the reporting requirements, suggest an annual report, and a final report.

Depending on your project you may also need to write sections to cover:

- Site selection
- Learning and capacity building plans
- Workshop plans
- Computer purchase plans, etc.

Use graphs, charts, boxes, and maps to the fullest extent. The more details you provide, the more the donor or your management will feel you have thought the project through, are competent to implement it, and are indeed ready and eager to begin, needing only the funding to get going.

## Proposal Step 5: Impacts

Review what you have already written in the concept note, and seek to strengthen this section; remember that outputs and especially impact are what sell the project to the donor.

You may wish to invite a complete outsider or group of outsiders to help you brainstorm once more on all the likely outcomes of your project, if it is implemented. Really stretch your imagination! Then write it all down in clear, simple language.

You need to organize your impacts by categories. One approach is to show the effects on each group of people involved in the sector in which you are working. Another is to show impacts by site, or by project component. These impacts should echo project objective and goal. A logical results framework will help to bring clarity on this.

## Proposal Step 6: Budget

Here a lot more work will need to be done, and you may need to get the help of the finance office. You will also need to be sure that you and your partners are happy with the proposed allocation of funds.

*Preparing the budget section of proposals is probably the single most important task in moving from the concept note to the proposal stage.*

Your finance office should be able to help you with budget *guidelines* to ensure that everyone who designs projects is following the same assumptions and charge rates for inputs.

In your budgeting, be realistic, but not greedy. Session 9 provides information on how to prepare a good proposal budget.

### Back-up Budgets

In complex projects involving multiple partners, you may also need *back-up budgets* such as:

- budgets by partners
- budgets by site or country
- budgets by activities

Unless project partners have considerable experience in collaborating on projects, it is always advisable to have separate budgets for each partner, agreed and approved by each organization, before the proposal is submitted to the donor or institute management.

### Proposal Step 7: Background

In the concept note you will have written only on "The problem and why it is urgent," and "What has already been done." In the full proposal, you have the opportunity to add any sections you think will strengthen your appeal to the donor or your management for funds. Two that would be useful are:

- What are your comparative advantages and special qualifications for implementing the project?
- What do the partners bring to the project?

Use a soft approach—do not oversell or over-praise yourselves!

In terms of presentation, this section comes early in the proposal—if you write too much, you may turn your reader off. So keep this section as short, sharp, and readable as possible. Two to three pages in a short proposal, three to five in a major proposal are good limits. For many donors, everything else should go in an annex, or be left out altogether.

Use sub-headings to break up the material.

### Proposal Step 8: Monitoring, Evaluation and Milestones

In this section you describe how the project's managers will monitor the project to ensure that it is working as planned and is likely to achieve the desired outputs and impacts. Include a brief description here of how projects are usually monitored and evaluated in your organization.

An evaluation device donors look for nowadays is the use of *milestones*, key project achievements that allow you, your partners, and donors to ensure that progress is being made towards attaining outputs and impacts at regular intervals in the project's life.

A milestone may be thought of as an intermediate output; something you expect to achieve at a certain moment during the life of the project.

You should specify "milestones" for all projects over 18 months in duration. The ideal milestone is something worthwhile and tangible. A good milestone early in the project helps to keep donors, beneficiaries, and project staff enthusiastic and on track. Explain that you will consider project redesign if milestones are not regularly achieved.

If in doubt, design specific milestones for the end of each year of the project. The final year milestones are the project outputs.

## Proposal Step 9: Summary

This section tells what the proposal is all about. It is a vital selling tool for the project, since it comes first in presentation and may be the only part that some people read.

- Always write this section last!
- Take great care with the wording.
- Refer to all other sections of the proposal.
- Be very brief. Two pages is the absolute maximum—one page is better.
- Highlight any known donor interests.
- Write simply and in a straightforward way.

## Sample Summary

If you use the following outline, and fill in the blanks, you will have a good proposal summary.

This proposal requests ...(donor) to provide $ ... to institution and …(partners) to ... (project objectives summarized) in ...(country, site). The proposed project will take ... years and involve ... person years or months of the institutions and ... (partners) time.

The need for this project is pressing; (tell why in one or two sentences). The interested parties (name them) are anxious to achieve the desired outputs and impacts as soon as possible; ... (tell what the various partners will do in the project in one or two sentences).

The project will benefit ... (tell who) by .. (tell what.) As a result, impact on.. (Tell which goal)... is expected in ... (site? nation? region? sector?) by….(date -- tell how soon after the project is over).

This project builds on previous work by your organization and others that ... (tell what has already been done). You and your partners are ideally suited to conduct the follow-on activities because ... (tell why.)

## Proposal Step 10: Review and Editing

- Before sending the proposal on for a formal proposal review, sleep over the proposal.
- Re-read it critically.
- Share it with someone who has never read it before.
- Read to eliminate errors, repetitions, and inconsistencies.
- Edit to substantially *shorten* the proposal, making it crisp, clear, punchy, appealing.
- Do not omit this step!
- Do not expect someone else to do this for you—learn to do it for yourself!

## Proposal Step 11. How to Prepare a Good Covering Letter

Here are some tips about writing a good covering letter:

- As with all letters, write with the reader in mind.
- Refer to your Institute and or funder’s interests and related projects. If possible, show how the proposed project builds on work that has produced positive results.
- Highlight the importance and urgency of the problem.
- Explain how eager the institute personnel, the partners, and the beneficiaries are to have the project start soon.
- Conclude with a follow-up comment (*hook*) that opens the door for you to call to find out what is happening. Example: “If we have not heard from you by next month, we propose to contact you by phone to get your impressions and suggestions on how the proposal could be improved.”

# Exercise 7a. Transforming your Concept Note into a Full Proposal: Practicing skills on writing objectives, activities and work plan

## (Interdisciplinary teamwork)

*A good concept note is the ideal basis for preparing a convincing proposal. The aim of this exercise is to invite the teams to" exercise" transforming the Concept Notes into a Full Proposal taking into account the Ten Steps presented in the Handout 3.7.2*

1. Form the same interdisciplinary teams and elect a rapporteur. The teams will have

a *total of 1 hour 30 minutes* to work on this exercise

**Phase 1. Interdisciplinary teamwork** (45 minutes)

2. Read the explanation of steps 1-4 of Handout 3.7.2 regarding **objectives; outputs; activities and work plan.** Discuss these issues with your team members and decide how you could refine these components of your Concept Note to make them more effective as part of a **full project proposal**.

3. Use the Worksheet, Handout 3.7.6 to record your responses, preparing your first draft proposal to take home.

4. This session also includes a Handout 3.7.7 titled " Personal Notes or To do list" for you to take note (or make a list) of any kind of information and other issues related to this exercise that you need to look for when you go back to your organization. Remember that this exercise brought them to your attention.

5. Remember that this exercise is the beginning of many others which you will carry out in the near future to make your organization more efficient and effective to achieve the goal, purpose and program objectives.

6. The rapporteurs compile the groups' responses on flipcharts or PowerPoint to present to the audience.

**Phase 2. Presentation and discussion** (30 minutes)

7. The facilitator invites the rapporteurs to present the team results and promotes discussion

8. At the end, the facilitator asks a few volunteers to summarize the lessons learned during this exercise, asks and provides feedback and closes the session.

# Exercise 7b. Practicing Skills on Writing Impacts and Milestones

## (Interdisciplinary teamwork)

*This exercise is composed of two parts: in part A you will work on proposal step 4 – outputs and impacts and in part B you will work on proposal step 7— milestones. Your team has 2 hours to complete this Exercise 7b.*

**Part A. Working on proposal step 4 – on Impacts**. (45 minutes)

1. Form the same interdisciplinary team and elect a rapporteur.

**Phase 1. Interdisciplinary teamwork**

2. Read the explanation of step 5 of Handout 3.7.2 regarding **impacts.** Discuss these issues with your team members and decide how you could refine these components of your Concept Note to make them more effective as part of a **full project proposal**.
3. Use the Worksheet, Handout 3.7.6, to record your responses, preparing your first draft proposal to take home.
4. The rapporteurs compile the groups' inputs on worksheets and write the results on the flipchart or PowerPoint to present to the audience later.
5. The facilitator asks participants to proceed to Part B.

**Part B. Working on proposal step 7— writing milestones** (45 minutes).

6. The teams read the information and examples on writing milestones provided by the Handout 3.7.5 and then analyze, discuss and compare this with some experience in the past before preparing milestones for their project proposal.
7. The teams, then **prepare milestones for their project proposal**. Remember that the teams will have to make some big assumptions in designing the milestones because the project proposals are not fully thought through.
8. The rapporteurs compile the groups' inputs on worksheets and write the results on flipchart or PowerPoint to present to the audience.

**Phase 2. Presentation and discussion** (30 minutes)

9. The rapporteurs present the results of the teams' discussions to the audience. Each rapporteur has five minutes to report. Then the facilitator encourages a brief discussion.

10. At the end, the facilitator asks volunteers to provide feedback, summarizes a few lessons learned and comments on the contents and provides feedback to this exercise.

# Writing Milestones [4]

# (Examples to support Part B of Exercise 7b)

Remember that all projects longer than about 18 months need to have milestones built into their design. *Milestones are mid-project achievements for which you will be aiming as you implement your project*.

Here are some examples.

In a three-year Learning and Capacity Building (L&CB) project, you might aim to have built the capacity of at least 100 participants every six months. Your milestones might therefore be:

| Date | Minimum Milestone |
|---|---|
| End of Year 1 | 200 with capacity built |
| End of Year 2 | 400 with capacity built |
| End of Year 3 | 600 with capacity built |

If only 130 people have had capacity built by the end of the year 1, you will need to explain to your donor and management why you have not achieved the proposal target. There may be very good reasons for this, and you may well not be to blame. But missing a milestone always needs to be explained in the interest of long-term donor and client relations. It also means you may need to catch up in the following period by taking on more participants than originally planned.

In a two-year, multi-country project designed to identify, analyze and share the results of successful strategies used by livestock farmers in PNG, you might use the following milestones to help you monitor progress and ensure you can finish in time.

| Date | Minimum Milestone |
|---|---|
| End of Month 6 | one team of researchers subcontracted in each of seven countries, all beginning to work, some already producing draft reports. |
| End of Month 12 | four final reports and three draft reports received, with a minimum of 20 case studies each. |
| End of Month 18 | – two workshops held to discuss results and share case studies<br>_ all reports received, approved and submitted to the publisher.<br>_ arrangements for end-of-project conference finished, invitations<br>_ issued. |
| End of project | – seven reports published in French and English, available at the<br>_ final conference.<br>_ conference held for 300 participants from seven countries, |

[4] From Marian Fuchs-Carsch. Capacity building learning module on How to Write Convincing Proposals. The Hague. The Netherlands. ISNAR.1999/2000

| | |
|---|---|
| | (predominantly livestock farmers with some 30 specially invited donor, NGO and government observers). |

With these examples to guide you, prepare milestones for the project proposal your team has been working on. Because the project outline is very incipient, you will have to make some big assumptions in designing your milestones.

## FORM
## Writing a First Draft of your Full Proposal

## (To take back as an example of your learning process)

**1. Project title**

**2. Background** (Why should this proposal be implemented?)

**2, Objective** (What do you hope to achieve?)

**3. Outputs** (What outputs will the project deliver?)

**4. Activities** (What will you do?)

**5. Work Plan** (How will you achieve your objectives?)

**6. Impacts** (Who will be better-off at the end of the project, and why?)

**7. Monitoring and Evaluation** (How can you test if the project is working?)

**8. Budget** (How much will it cost?) ***Note that you will learn to develop Budget during session 8 of this workshop.***

## PERSONAL NOTES or

## "TO DO" LIST

1. Remember that you have this handout to **LIST** information (data), or issues, or actions you need to search for or attend to after you return to your organization.

2. The reason for this handout is to give you a chance to jot down notes – which will remind you that you could not complete this exercise because this exercise demands more data, approaches, etc. than you could have with you during this event. This means that you need to do more work and use more time to write a convincing proposal.