

Simple agroforestry manuals and a CD-ROM help non-literate farmers

RIU

Validated RNRRS Output.

A series of eight, simple agroforestry manuals, with a CD-ROM of all illustrations, was produced in The Gambia using inputs from local government, NGOs and a large number of women farmers. This responds to the need to disseminate key agricultural development information that can be understood by non-literate farmers. The publications were tested in The Gambia and Ghana. There are about 800 million illiterate adults in the world, the bulk of them in the poorest countries, with limited access to information that could help to cut poverty and boost economic growth. A training handbook on the methods used to produce this type of manual is available, and the individual manuals are already being used by national and international NGOs from Africa and Southeast Asia.

Project Ref: **FRP12:**

Topic: **1. Improving Farmers Livelihoods: Better Crops, Systems & Pest Management**

Lead Organisation: **Clarkson, R. (Independent), UK**

Source: **Forestry Research Programme**

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Description

FRP12

Research into Use

NR International
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Kent
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Geographical regions included:

[Africa](#), [Gambia](#), [Ghana](#), [Malawi](#),

Target Audiences for this content:

[Forest-dependent poor](#),

A. Description of the research output(s)

1. Title: Training manuals for non-literate farmers

Original project title: Agroforestry manuals for illiterate women farmers.

2. RNRRS Programme:

Initial research for development of this technique and dissemination of agroforestry manuals was funded under the RNRRS, Forestry Research Programme (1994-96). Subsequent research, additional field testing and dissemination of a range of manuals by project staff and African partners was co-funded by the European Commission Directorate General V111, Environment in Developing Countries (B7-6200), and DFID West and North Africa Department (1999 – 2001). Further funding for dissemination and website development was secured from the Christian Initiative Trust (2003).

3. Reference No: RNRRS, Forestry Research Programme (FRP) R6072

Institutional Partners: Institute of Ecology & Resource Management, University of Edinburgh (1996); Edinburgh Centre for Tropical Forests (additional dissemination (supplementary funding for dissemination 2001).

Project Manager: Rose Clarkson. (Independent)

4. Description of RNRRS Output

This project has developed a technique for producing simple training manuals for non-literate farmers worldwide, a set of short manuals on a range of agroforestry subjects using the methodology, and a project website with a growing on-line library of locally produced manuals on a wide range of subjects (<http://www.imdp.org.uk>).

There is a clear link between poverty and illiteracy. The highest rates of illiteracy are found in many of the world's poorest countries, particularly among women and, despite international efforts to address this problem, there are around 800 million illiterate adults in the world [1] today. Illiterate or semi-literate people have limited access to information that could otherwise contribute to poverty reduction and economic growth. Valuable communication tools do exist in places, in the form of radio, illustrated manuals with simple text, posters, and drama. However, non-literate farmers have little in the way of reference material that can help them to understand new ideas, or to reinforce what they have learnt in training programmes.

Research was undertaken (FRP/1994-6) to develop a technique of producing cheap and appropriate training manuals for non-literate farmers. The work was based in The Gambia, West Africa and involved staff from local government, NGOs and a large number of women farmers in

the region. The main output of this work was a series of eight simple agroforestry manuals with a CD-ROM of all illustrations. Subsequently, a pilot study was undertaken to test and further develop the methods (EC/DG VIII & DFID: 1999-2001) involving twelve organizations in Ghana and The Gambia.

The methodology involves an unusual blend of both basic and more advanced technology. It results in the production of simple manuals composed of sequences of visually linked pictures on a particular topic. The process requires fieldwork with the target group to develop appropriate illustration, followed by the production of line drawings, which are then transferred to computer, shaded and produced as finished manuals. Organisations interested in developing manuals using these techniques therefore require staff with various basic skills and access to a computer, scanner and printer.

The website now provides the main portal for both information on the methodology and access to a range of manuals produced by local partners (downloaded free of charge). The original agroforestry Manual Packs/CD can also be ordered on-line.

[1] UNESCO Institute of Statistics 2006

5. Type of Output

Product	Technology	Service	Process or Methodology	Policy	Other Please specify
x		x	x		

6. Application

The main commodities upon which the project focused are:

- 1) The IMDP [2] technique of producing manuals for non-literate farmers. A Training Handbook on this method is freely available for download from the project website;
- 2) A Manual Pack for non-literate or semi-literate users – with manuals on a range of subject including: Cashew Pancakes, Planting and Care of Tree Seedlings, growing seedlings in polypots (Cashew), direct seedling (Neverdie) and nursery (papaya), Live Fencing, Mango Jam, Pest Control Using Neem. The Manual Pack, plus a CD of the manuals and individual pictures can be ordered from the website. A number of these manuals can also be downloaded free of charge from the website.

Although agroforestry was chosen as a starting point for this research, the methodology is suitable for conveying a wide range of simple training subjects. Examples from the website include 'Tie dye'

or jam making. Other subjects (where manuals would have been produced if funds had been available) include improved stoves, weaning food, and measures to stop soil erosion.

[2] Illustrated Manuals for Development Projects (IMDP)

7. Production System

<i>Semi-Arid</i>	<i>High potential</i>	<i>Hillsides</i>	<i>Forest-Agriculture</i>	<i>Peri-urban</i>	<i>Land water</i>	<i>Tropical moist forest</i>	<i>Cross-cutting</i>
							x

8. Farming System

<i>Smallholder rainfed humid</i>	<i>Irrigated</i>	<i>Wetland rice based</i>	<i>Smallholder rainfed highland</i>	<i>Smallholder rainfed dry/cold</i>	<i>Dualistic</i>	<i>Coastal artisanal fishing</i>
x	x	x	x	x	x	x

9. Adding value and addressing constraints

Value could be added to the outputs by:

1. Identifying and training a few small teams of staff from key development or research organisations who have demonstrated interest in using the methodology and have clear capacity and resources for this task, e.g. NGO regional Offices.
2. Subsequently, promoting the new skills of these agencies (where they would wish it) to provide a service for others wishing to develop manuals.
3. Publishing a Methodology Handbook appropriate for a wide range of subjects within the targeted production systems
4. Improving, developing and promoting the IMDP website as a resource of freely available manuals on a wide range of subjects suitable for use agencies working with non-literate or semi-literate farmers.

The project has potential to address two problems often faced by staff within research project: a). how to disseminate information on new techniques to non-literate or semi-literate users; and b) how to ensure the method they are promoting is locally appropriate (see section F) .

Value could be added to this output by clustering with other sources that aim to **tailor** and **disseminate** information on simple new techniques to non-literate or semi-literate target groups.

Examples of RNRRS outputs that this output could be clustered:

- Promotion of crop residues for fodder (R8339, R7346, R8296) ICRASAT
- Weed management in irrigated rice (R8409, R8233, R7377) NRI
- Promotion of pest / soil management strategies... (R8449/R8212) ICIPE
- Box-baling (R6619) University of Reading
- Use of Prosopis (R7295) HDRA
- Sustainable management of Miombo woodland by local communities in Malawi (R6709) FRI Malawi

There is also good potential for linking or clustering with national or international environmental agencies.

Validation

B. Validation of the research output(s)

10. Methods of Validation

The project has demonstrated that the methodology can produce simple manuals that can be clearly understood by non-literate farmers: Women farmers in four villages in The Gambia and a large number of NGO and government staff were involved in the identification of appropriate subjects and illustration techniques for the Women's Agroforestry Manual. A total of 62 women farmers participated, from four different tribes. The completed manuals were field tested for a period of nine months by a team of extension staff and community workers from a number of different NGOs around the country. They were also sent to a large number of agencies in the Gambia and other African countries for comments and feedback. To date, over 400 Manual Packs with CD-ROM have been distributed (note: only one Manual Pack is needed per agency as this can be photocopied for distribution).

The project has demonstrated that environmental agencies in a number of African countries can develop the skills to produce their own manuals: A total of 58 participants (12 groups) from various Government departments and NGOs in Ghana and Gambia received training between 1999-2000 and most groups successfully developed their own manuals using the project techniques. Following the training, each group began work on their manual and one year later completed evaluation forms on this experience. A selection of respondent's comments is shown on the website <http://www.imdp.org.uk/news/documents/evaluation.pdf> .

The project has demonstrated wider interest in developing manuals using the methodology: Since the establishment of the website the manuals and the methodology have been more widely available. The site

emphasises the suitability of the manual technique for conveying a wide range of simple training processes. Consequently, there has been a small but growing interest from organizations around the world who have either ordered Packs of manuals, downloaded material from the website. Many groups have providing positive feedback on the quality and potential value of the material. A recent FRP project (ZF0205) with ICUC used the technique for developing manuals on baobab processing (feedback on uptake has been requested but not yet provided)

The project has not yet demonstrated that the manuals can contribute to poverty reduction: Feedback on the longer-term use of the manuals has been generally poor. A number of groups have responded to requests for more information on this, and have indicated that a number of manuals are in use and proving to be very valuable for communicating training messages to rural communities. However, no formal assessment has been done to capture either the extent of use or value of the manuals.

11. Location and timing of validation processes

The original FRP project (R6072) focused on the production and validation of manuals for non-literate women farmers in **The Gambia** (1994-6).

Subsequent work focused on training and tailoring the methodology to meet the needs of various NGOs and government departments in **Gambia and Ghana** (1998-02).

The recent FRP project *ZF0205* (2005) conducted by ICUC, Southampton University found that it was possible to train staff from for various NGOs in **Ghana & Malawi** to produce appropriate manuals for non-literate rural people on simple food processing techniques. It has not been possible to obtain detailed feedback on the outcomes of this project but it appears that groups involved in the project in Ghana struggles to produce manuals due largely to lack of resources and logistical problems.

Other validation of the methodology comes from the positive feedback received from a small number of NGOs in other **African counties, India, and S.E. Asia** who have used the on-line manuals and methodology Handbook or ordered the Manual Packs. However, this is invariably very vague and only states that the manuals are useful for their field work and that they would like to produce more manuals on other subjects.

Current Situation

C. *Current situation*

12. Current use of the outputs

There is very little information currently available on where and how the manuals are being used. Manuals conveying simple training exercises relating to various natural resources appear to be used on a rather **small scale** by field staff and rural farmers in a **wide range of counties** and for a number of different clients. The main interest, so far, has been from international and national environmental agencies (regional offices). For example, single Manual Packs have been ordered

by: VSO, US Peace Corps, TreeAid, People's Movement for Human Rights Education (PDHRE), - New York, Uganda Development Services, Rewarding Upland Poor for Environmental Services (RUPES) ICRAF – SE Asia, Rural Extension with Africa's poor (REAP) Kenya.

Information on their use has not been forthcoming.

13. Location of use

Judging from the requests for manual packs and information, current interest in the use and development of manuals centres on **Africa** (mainly **Sahelian Africa**). However, there is also a small amount of interest shown by various countries in **SE Asia**.

14. Scale of use

As noted above, there is currently little evidence of the scale of use although this is likely to be very small.

15. Institutional and policy support structure for outputs

So far, there has been very little in the way of institutional structures to support and disseminate the manuals methodology. In terms of support and capacity strengthening, one way forward would be to demonstrate the benefits of producing and using the manuals with a large, well-resourced agency, e.g. Hannah Jaenicke, ICUC, Sri Lanka, recently indicated interest in looking into the development of these manuals to support a number of projects currently in the pipeline. If the manuals prove to be valuable to such an organisation, positive publicity and credibility are likely to follow.

Current Promotion

D. Current promotion/uptake pathways

16. Promotion

Promotion of the IMDP manual technique and the manuals so far produced by the FRP project and local agencies is currently only through the website.

17. Barriers to adoption of the outputs

There is very little evidence of adoption of these manuals so far. The fact there that there has been very positive feedback from rural farmers who have seen and in some cases, used, the manuals,

suggest that the main problems lie with the production and dissemination of manuals.

- Production of appropriate manuals is generally not a short or easy task. It requires a range of skills (extension, basic illustration, basic computing). It also requires time for fieldwork (preparation and testing the finished product).
- The resources required for this task (e.g. computers, artists, extension staff) are not always available, particularly within government and the smaller local NGO agencies concerned with natural resource management. When present, they are often in heavy demand and this invariably means limited access time and/or that the resources are in poor condition.
- The manuals are only suitable for conveying simple technical subjects (and not all subjects are suitable). They cannot be used for conveying more abstract concepts or training exercises that require a complicated sequence of actions.
- The manuals are not as attractive as the usual extension manuals with text. Most illustrated manual for development show 'scenes', sometimes in colour. They generally show people in a particular 'setting' and in the process of carrying out an action (i.e. they convey an action frozen in time). In contrast, the IMDP manuals use sequences of black and white pictures to convey actions in close-up view that enables the user to better understand the action. They are more functional but less attractive.

18. Changes needed to remove/reduce barriers

- Target training and development of manuals to larger, well resources agencies that can produce, disseminate and assess uptake & impact of the manuals (either directly to the end users or to smaller agencies directly involved in field work with end-users).
- Focus on production of IMDP manuals where they will form an integral part of a larger programme of measures to reach and improve conditions for the poor (with monitoring & evaluation as key components).
- Further develop and promote the website.
- Revise the IMDP methodology and produce a published version of the Handbook. The current methods are overly complicated and unclear in places.
- Investigate measures for quality assurance and better marketing, particularly intellectual property rights, trademark, etc.

19. Lessons learnt

- The original project aimed to develop manuals that could be produced and used by small local environmental agencies with the basic technical resources. Training was targeted at this level rather than more highly resource organisations, mainly to ensure that potential difficulties were identified and addressed. On reflection, it would have been better to target a range of different sized/resourced organisations.
- There is a perceived need to clarify and simplify various aspects of the methodology.

- There is a need for quality assurance and better marketing of the IMDP methodology.
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Impacts On Poverty

E. Impacts on poverty to date

20/21. Impact Studies & benefits to the poor

There have been no impact studies on poverty in relation to this output and therefore no measurable evidence of benefits to the poor.

Environmental Impact

H. Environmental Impacts

24. Direct and Indirect Benefits

The development of these manuals can:

- Provide rural people with an additional source of information on new techniques in a form that they can take home and consider, try out in their own time and discuss with others.
- Provide field staff with an additional resource to supplement their training programmes. Material that is produced cheaply (A4 sheets of simple black & white pictures) and therefore can be handed out to the clients.
- Provide a useful tool for a) ensuring that a proposed intervention is locally appropriate, b) identifying which of a group of possible skills training exercises are the most interesting and appropriate to the target group; c) building good relations between field staff and local groups.

The first stage of the process involves a participatory exercise with field staff and target group exploring the exact actions involved in the task and together produce a series of draft sketches (called Task Mapping). This is an excellent way of creating a 'level playing field' between participants (with clients producing the materials, demonstrating the actions, creating and commenting on illustrations) that helps staff and farmers to develop a better understanding of how the task would be carried out locally.

25. Potential adverse impacts

If due care is taken to produce the manuals according to the methodology, and if the end result is

thoroughly tested with the intended target group, there should be no adverse effects or negative impacts associated with use of the manuals. However, if the manuals are carelessly produced and not tested they could be misunderstood by the target group. This would have potential for adverse environmental impacts or, may even cause harm to the user. Much more likely would be the loss of co-operation with the target group. Therefore, **there is a need to ensure high quality training on how to produce and test manuals to ensure they convey the desired message to the target group.**

26. Value of outputs for increasing self reliance, and capacity to deal with climate change and natural disaster

As these are very simple manuals, any training they cover will be for very small, positive change. Although there is little evidence of impact to date, manuals could be produced on a wide range of subjects that contribute to these targets, e.g. bund stabilisation, fruit tree planning / management /harvesting, and small-scale food processing methods for women.
