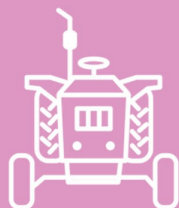


NO. 2

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Supporting Smallholder
Farmers in Asia and Pacific
Islands Region through
Strengthened Agricultural
Advisory Services
(SAAS Project)

BEST PRACTICE NOTES



CHARMP2: SCHOOL-ON-AIR

By Janice B. Agrifino and Crislyn B. Orcales Information Officers B,
DA-CHARM2 Scale-Up Project Baguio City, 2600, Philippines

5 Key Points

1. Challenges and constraints

- Technical difficulties
- Weak signal frequency
- Lack of SOA expert broadcasters

2. Objective

The SOA provides distance education through the use of radio by offering courses aligned with the project's advocacies.

3. Methodology

- Participatory Module Development Process
- Formal SOA enrolment
- Launching cum Orientation
- SOA Broadcast Airing
- SOA On-site Practicum
- SOA graduation
- Evaluation

4. Highlight of result

1,363 farmer-students or 79.66% of the total enrollees successfully completed the program.

5. Highlight recommendation

- All the stakeholders must be involved in the whole process of the program.
- It should be tailor-fit to the needs and preferences of the target beneficiaries.

Introduction

- The lack of accessibility in the Cordillera region due to its poor road and communication network has largely contributed to the lack of agricultural know-how and underdevelopment of farmers and their communities.
- In response to this, the CHARMP2 or the second Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project School-on-Air (SOA) program was implemented to help uplift farmers living in far-flung communities with little to no access to education.
- The CHARMP2 SOA program aimed to provide accessible education and agricultural knowledge for marginalized farmers in the Cordillera highlands while also offering courses such as root and tuber crops, traditional rice varieties, sugarcane, livestock and poultry, organic highland vegetable, coffee, and natural resource management that supported the project's advocacies.
- Farming communities in Abra, Benguet, Kalinga, and Mountain Province were chosen for this project. Specifically, 120 farmers per province who are members of project-assisted people's organizations were enrolled in the SOA program to allow for a better learning environment and a close monitoring of their progress.
- A total of 1,363 farmer-students (79.66%) successfully completed the SOA program out of the 1,711 total farmer-enrollees.
- The SOA program was also accessible to anyone who could be reached by the radio frequency. They were also encouraged to participate by sending feedback through mobile messaging.
- Overall, the success of the program was largely attributed to its highly-participative nature. Because the stakeholders were involved from the beginning until the end of the program, their needs and concerns were resolved. They were also empowered and educated which made the program sustainable.

Methodology

1. Participatory Module Development Process

A series of module write-shops were conducted with the staff, local government units (LGUs), academe, and radio representatives. The modules were then published with supplemental information and education communication materials.

2. Formal SOA Enrolment

The selection of enrollees followed two criteria: 1) those who can be reached by the radio frequency and 2) those who are members of project-assisted farmer groups. The slots were fairly distributed among different barangays (villages) with no discrimination against gender nor age.

3. Launching cum Orientation of program stakeholders

The launching cum orientation was held per province to serve as a platform for consultation and clarification of concerns to resolve any issues before the implementation process.

4. SOA Broadcast Airing

Partnering with local radio stations and LGUs, the SOA program aired one lesson equivalent to 30 minutes every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The stakeholders preferred the noon or evening time slot.

5. SOA On-site Practicum

The farmer-students were tasked to demonstrate practical skills that they have learned from the SOA. In determining their level of knowledge and skills acquisition, they were asked to use raw materials found in their community.

6. SOA Graduation

The graduation ceremony recognized the farmer-students who successfully completed the SOA program. It also served as a platform for the LGUs to continuously support the graduates for their livelihoods.

7. Evaluation

- a. Evaluation forms and practicum were used to evaluate the farmer-students.
- b. Implementers monitored the participation of the farmer-students and resolved any concerns throughout the program.
- c. An external service provider conducted a regionwide study of the SOA to identify its success variables and to provide recommendations for improvement.

Key Findings

- The SOA program covered topics on production, processing and marketing, and natural resource management. These were essential in developing and improving the farmers' livelihoods.
- An estimated 40,000 coffee farmers have benefited from the SOA program along with the 1,363 farmer-students (79.66% of total enrollees) who have successfully completed the SOA program.
- Moreover, the radio platform allowed the farmer-students to tend to their daily chores and livelihood responsibilities while learning from the program.
- The result of the overall study of the SOA showed that many farmers, even those who are indirect beneficiaries of the program, acquired knowledge, skills, and even self-confidence that improved their livelihood practices.
- Furthermore, the relationship among the stakeholders was strengthened, knowledge exchange was encouraged, and values were reinforced because of the SOA program.

Recommendations and Conclusions

- The SOA program proved that a participatory approach was essential in providing need-based and relevant education to marginalized farmers.
- Thus, an implementation and monitoring design tailor-fit to its stakeholders are recommended for a successful program.
- The active engagement of the LGUs and partner radio stations also contributed to the success of the program. For instance, the radio frequency of the partner radio station in Abra would increase their frequency from 1,000 megahertz to 1,500 megahertz during the program to further reach out to its audience.
- The efforts of the LGU officials are also important as they closely monitored the progress of the farmer-students despite their busy schedule.
- A launching cum orientation where the leveling off of expectations, roles, and functions, is also important in ensuring a smooth implementation of the program.

CONTACT DETAILS

ASIA-PACIFIC ISLANDS RURAL ADVISORY SERVICES NETWORK
c/o College of Public Affairs and Development, University of the Philippines Los Baños
Domingo Lantican Avenue, College 4031 Laguna, Philippines
Phone: (+63-49) 536-0319 | Email: apirasnet2017@gmail.com | Website: www.saas.apiras.net