



Writershop ASSP/ASDP-L in Zanzibar

Writing stories on Managing for Impact

Report of a writershop with ASSP-ASDP-L, Zanzibar,
7th-11th October 2009

**Capacity Development and Institutional Change Programme
Wageningen International, the Netherlands**

With financial support from the Regional Programme to 'Strengthen
Managing for Impact' (SMIP) in E/S Africa and 'Kennisbasis 7' from
Wageningen UR

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We hope that with this writeshop we have been able to inspire people to write compelling stories that communicate lessons learned, or messages that the programme would like to share with their stakeholders, policy makers, or other people interested in the programme and the approach it uses. With this workshop we had a particular focus on the Managing for Impact approach, which has been introduced in the programme since 2007. The stories written by participants each focused on a particular element of the approach and what change they had observed. We hope that the booklet that has been produced and possibly this workshop report also, will be useful to those who aim to get a better understanding of what managing for impact means and what changes can be brought about by integrating it into a programme.

We hope that in future more colleagues will be inspired to write compelling stories about the work of ASSP/ASDP-L and that this communication will enhance not only the learning that takes place within the programme but also outside. In the end we hope that these stories can make a difference in joining hands for those we aim to target – farmers and livestock keepers in Zanzibar and Pemba in particular. Keep up the spirit and good luck!

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1. INTRODUCTION

From 7th – 11th October 2009 a writeshop was held in Zanzibar. This workshop was organised on request of the IFAD funded programme ASSP/ASDP-L in Zanzibar. The idea was to enhance the writing skills of participants and to write stories that reflect some experiences in relation to the managing for impact (M4I) approach that was introduced to the programme 2 years ago.

The regional programme to strengthen managing for impact (SMIP) in East and Southern Africa is working with ASSP/ASDP-L as one of their action learning sites. A series of inputs have been provided to assist the programme in their efforts to manage for impact. This writeshop aimed to document some of the lessons learned in the form of written stories. The output of the writeshop is a booklet that contains all the stories from writeshop participants. These stories will be shared during a policy event that is planned to take place by the end of this year in Zanzibar. Also the stories will be used in writing a booklet on managing for impact, which is supported by Wageningen UR under the KB7 programme. Furthermore, ASSP-ASDP-L wishes to share their stories through existing websites and through other communication with the ‘outside world’.

Annex A describes the adapted writeshop programme. Changes were made during the week to suit conditions of the workshop participants. A list of writeshop participants can be found in annex B.

Below you can find a brief description of what happened each day and some of the experiences. We would particularly like to refer to the booklet with stories on M4I. A copy of this booklet can be received from ASSP/ASDP-L (assp&asdpl@zanlink.com) or Wageningen International (cecile.kusters@wur.nl) The last chapter provides some concluding remarks.

2. WEDNESDAY 7TH OCTOBER – INTRODUCTION

2.1 Welcome

The workshop was opened by Mr. Zaki Khamis Juma, Programme Coordinator of ASSP/ASDP-L Zanzibar Sub-programme. He welcomed the participants and encouraged them to actively take part in this workshop. Dr Islam, Director of Policy and Planning of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Environment was invited to give an opening speech. He stressed the importance of the writeshop and said that “writing should not be left to a few. Writing can assist us in sharing our experiences and communicating to the outside world what we are doing. Participants should take this writeshop seriously as it can help to reduce the workload of those few who can write well. Don’t feel shy of writing. Be open and start from where people are at”. He also indicated that the key output of this workshop would be a booklet with stories that would be shared at the policy event in November or December this year. Another booklet on managing for impact will also make use of some of the stories. Dr Islam: “Let us think about who we are communicating to and how to ensure that our writing reaches these people. Without this focusing, writing will be in vain”.

2.2 Introduction to each other

The participants were asked to introduce themselves in the following way:

‘Use a proverb that symbolizes what impact means to you – write it in Swahili and English, and write one key word that gives the essence of the proverb’.

Below you can find the results. It was an interesting way to get started and to focus on writing - being focused is important in writing.

Table 1. Proverbs that relate to impact

| Proverbs that relate to impact | Key word |
|--|----------------|
| 1. “No easy way in life” | Way |
| 2. “No easy way in life” | Achievement |
| 3. “Little by little fill up the measure” | Struggling |
| 4. “A penny saved is a penny earned” | Saving |
| 5. “Slow but sure” | Ensure |
| 6. “Where there is a will there is a way” | Determination |
| 7. “The torment of the grave is known by the corpse” | Responsibility |
| 8. “Many small things can be heavier than one big thing” | Consideration |
| 9. “Teach a man so that he can fish at all times” | Sustainability |
| 10. “He who wants what is under the table must bend” | Bend |
| 11. “Nobody is perfect. You cannot know every thing. So don’t always seek and try to find more from others.” | Imperfect |
| 12. “If you keep waiting you will get good things” | Patience |
| 13. “Nothing goes wrong when many are present” | Sharing |
| 14. “Nothing, Nothing is where you get something” | Something |
| 15. “A thing which you know is a dark night” | Understanding |
| 16. “If you don’t plant on a well prepared seedbed you will be faced later with a weeding problem.” | Effectiveness |

2.3 Introduction to writeshop programme and approach; agreeing on topics for stories

A PowerPoint (annex C) was used to introduce participants to the writeshop programme (annex A) and to the approach. The idea of a writeshop has been developed by the International Institute for Rural Reconstruction. A writeshop is meant to produce a written document with a range of different stakeholders in a short period of time. We indicated that we aimed to produce a booklet with stories that is fully edited one week after this writeshop.

Then we discussed how one could get started, and particularly explained the brainstorming technique for generating topics for the stories. First, participants were requested to think for themselves about possible topics for the stories to be written. These stories were to be linked to the changes that people had experiences in relation to the introduction of managing for impact to the programme. After individual thinking, participants discussed this in small groups. After lunch we discussed the topics in a plenary session and agreed on the topics to be written. All topics were linked to one of the key elements of the managing for impact model: strategic planning, ensuring effective operations, (participatory) monitoring and evaluation, learning environment, and capacities and conditions to support all these. Most people took up 1 topic for writing a compelling story about changes related to managing for impact. A few people (3) agreed to write 2 stories. The results can be found in the table 2 below. Initially participants found it difficult to relate their topics for stories to this model. Note: One of the main interventions with ASSP/ASDP-L has been the new participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) system. As some started working with farmer field schools about a year ago, they mixed the introduction of FFS with the introduction of the PM&E system. It took the facilitators some time to get people to think at this level and come up with examples.

Table 2. Topics chosen to write a story about in relation to managing for impact

| Managing for impact – element/pillar | Topic for a story to be written | To be written by |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| Strategic planning | Referring more frequently to the AWPB | Zaki? Not done |
| Effective operations | Capacity to respond to farmers' issues has improved due to improved M&E but some capacities are beyond their sphere of control / PME has increased the programme's capacity to respond to farmers' issues but there is more to be done | Elias |
| | Awareness on roles of different stakeholders has increased their responsibilities | Hamad |
| | Better planning leads to better budgeting and more effective operations | Abdi |
| | Operations are now better linked to goals and objectives | Zaki? Saleh? Not done |
| (Participatory) Monitoring and Evaluation | It is now easier to get information of farmers through the participatory M&E system | Andreas |
| | Getting adoption-related information is more systematized | Zainab |
| | Information on farmyard manure increases adoption | Seif |
| | Participatory M&E helped farmers to improve their decision making (on their farming). | Ali |
| | Participatory M&E helped farmers to choose new cassava varieties | Salum |
| | Monitoring and evaluation helps farmers to improve their yield using organic farm fertilizer | Mchanga |
| | PM&E helps to assess and address chick mortality | Khatib |
| | M&E not only for accountability but also for management | Zaki? Not |

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Managing for impact – element/pillar | Topic for a story to be written | To be written by |
| | | done |
| | Quarterly monitoring leads to better understanding of farmers' contribution (by the programme) | Seif |
| Learning environment | Improved working relationships due to the learning from others / Improved relationships with other programmes under MALE | Lada |
| | Improved linkage between extensionists and farmers, due to improved flow of information | Faida |
| | PM&E has enable farmers to share their success stories | Hamza |
| Capacities and conditions | M&E system helped farmers to better analyse their situation, but still some external conditions affect their decision making | Is'hak |
| | Incentives are critical in effective M&E system | Lada |
| | Due to participation, stakeholders can now challenge the project (e.g. in terms of adapting monitoring tools) | Saleh |
| | Responsiveness to information from the PM&E system | Andreas |

Some of these topics were adapted as we went along to avoid too much overlap. New topics were also added. For a final overview please see the booklet with stories.

2.4 Introduction to writing a compelling story; developing a lead

After agreeing on who would write what stories, we had a presentation (annex D) as input into writing, including how to write a lead. A lead is critical in drawing the attention of readers. Participants were then asked to each write a lead on their story. The next morning these leads would be shared and commented on by their colleagues and workshop facilitators.



3. THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER – LEADS, PLANNING AND WRITING YOUR STORY

3.1 Reviewing leads

We took nearly the whole morning to review the leads that participants had written. Each lead was presented on screen and then discussed for feedback. Below you can find some examples.

Box 1. Example 1 of leads reviewed

Title: Critical Reflection has improved the way we conduct our meetings

Lead by: Andreas

Data collected through the process of monitoring and evaluation can be as dumb as a dead body if they can't be used to provide required and usable information. Critical reflection involves thorough discussions of the information resulting from data analysis and plays an important role in providing the right direction for discussions before decision making or any conclusions. Since the ASSP/ASDP-L programme started to apply critical reflection, the way meetings are conducted has improved and contributed positively to proper decision making on various issues.

Feedback:

- Straight forward lead
- Easy to read

Box 2. Example 2 of leads reviewed

Title: Participatory monitoring and evaluation helped farmers to improve their decision making

Lead by: Ali

You think that exporting mangoes is just a question filling container with fruits and shipping it to Europe? Then think again a mango is a very delicate fruit. If mangoes must arrive in European supermarket in a perfect condition with a shelf life of at least two weeks. Before FFS farmers were not participating in activities on good farming, so this caused them to make wrong decisions on their farming. After introducing FFS farmers were trained and covered all sessions so they changed and used new technology. Examples of new technology received are: good way of land preparation, the picking out of good seeds, disease identification, planting by by spacing, and how to prepare organic manure and how to use it. Due to these changes the yield increased more than before due to adoption of new technology. Trained farmers were able to compare their harvesting before and after FFS so they were able to make decisions. Also they were able to convince other farmers to follow or to use new technology by showing them real situation of their production. So other farmers decided to use new technology. This is how participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) helped farmers to improve their decision making.

Feedback:

Is this the full story?

How does the first sentence link to the rest? Why are we talking about mangoes? Are they a big part of your project? If not, use a different lead. E.g. painting the scene of current problem

Title does not reflect story – improved decision making through FFS? What is the role of M&E?

Box 3. Example 3 of leads reviewed

Title: Improved linkages between extensionists and farmers due to good information flow

Lead by: Faida

How will it be if I ask you to travel from Unguja island to Pemba without even a canoe? I think your journey will end at Nungwi village because there is no possible connection to get to your destination. The bridge connecting farmers' island with researchers and other extension workers was not only narrow but also old. Very few people from either side were able to cross it. The improved technologies established by extension workers ended in their books or offices. And on the other hand, farmers' problems and their indigenous technologies remained on their farm with no consideration for a long period of time.

Feedback:

Good lead

Quickly show how it links to good information flow – what is needed?

How has monitoring and evaluation helped in this? M&E helps to display farmer's indigenous practices, but it is not really captured in the M&E. Make the link more with learning

Maybe suggest this can be integrated in the M&E system? This is open enough to be changed.

After reviewing the leads we asked participants to share their lessons on writing leads:

Link your lead with the title

Be specific

Simple language

Be brief

Know your story – have the end in mind – end the story with the lessons learned

Make it attractive to the reader: painting a scene/pictures, straight forward lead with clear information

3.2 Planning your story

Participants were then requested to plan their story. E.g. what information goes into my story? Where do I get my information from? See annexes E (adapted) and F for the format that participants could use to help them in planning their story.

3.3 Effective writing – a review of key principles

A presentation was given on effective writing (see annex G). There are 7 key principles that are important for people to remember: See box 4 below.

Box 4. 7 rules of highly effective writers

1. Keep it short and simple
2. Keep verbs active
3. Keep things together that go together
4. Keep parallel things parallel
5. Use clear verbs not foggy nouns
6. Make links for your readers
7. Emphasize what's important

Participants then individually worked on an exercise to practice some of these skills. See also annex H.

3.4 Writing your story

With the previous input on effective writing and the planning of their story, participants then continued working on their story for the rest of the day. The next morning they were to present their stories for review.



4. FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER - WRITING AND REVIEWING

The writeshop started with a presentation on writing for impact. Please see annex I. The focus was on keeping the flow in a story, in paragraphs and in sentences. We learned that paragraphs need to have a beginning, a middle and an end. Paragraphs also need to be linked from one to the next. In relation to sentences we learned for example that it is important to keep your ideas moving and to keep your reader with you. This is called passing on the baton.

Figure 1. Passing on the baton in your story



The rest of the day was used for writing, reviewing and rewriting. Participants were all very serious in this. Hard work!

5. SATURDAY 10TH OCTOBER – FINAL REVIEW AND REWRITING

This day we used to do the final reviews (some of them the 3rd or 4th or 5th review) of the stories and to rewrite the stories based on the feedback from facilitators. At the end of the day all stories were ready for presentation the next day and for the final editing to be done in the Netherlands.



6. SUNDAY 11TH OCTOBER – PRESENTATING OUR STORIES: LESSONS LEARNED ON M4I IN THE PROGRAMME

6.1 Reading our stories; key lessons learned on M4I

On Sunday morning we put a printed copy of each story on the wall. Participants were requested to look at each story and see what lesson they could draw from all these stories. In a plenary, we discussed the lessons and which of these we could take forward to the policy event.

A key lesson was around **responsiveness**: due to information that is coming up at all levels, including farmers, facilitators, district and management level. Many issues are being brought up, from technical issues that farmers face in producing their crops or with their livestock (e.g. chicks death), to more core issues like water shortage that affects farmers' vegetable and banana production. Some of these issues can not be addressed within the programme; the issues may also be influenced by **external factors**. For example, the strategic plan of the irrigation department may not adequately address water shortage problems that farmers face in a particular district. Or maybe some policies around water may be inadequate. Here it is important to form **partnerships** with other stakeholders and to improve our linkages (e.g. with research institutes, policy makers, other stakeholders) in order to address the problems which cannot be solved by farmers and facilitators or even management alone.

Capacity of the programme to respond to issues that come up is related to receiving **good quality data in time**. Although this situation has improved, it is still a critical factor that affects being able to respond quickly to issues. Linked to this is the issue of **timely feedback**. If feedback on how issues are being addressed is not given in good time, we may lower the motivation of people to contribute to the PM&E process. Another important issue is that the need for quick responsiveness which also has an impact on our **management style** – as managers, but also as district officers, facilitators or farmers. This change in management style requires a **change in attitude** as people will need to be open to critical feedback, open to learning, open to participation, and flexible in their responses. Analytical abilities and flexibility are also important in this sense.

Many people mentioned various advantages of PM&E, as PM&E was one of the key elements of the M4I approach being introduced to ASSP/ASDP-L. An issue that came up frequently was that **PM&E helps both farmers and management to solve problems**. Here we realized that linking to research is important to keep on adapting to farmers' specific problems related to farming and livestock keeping. Also **drawing out farmers' stories**, particularly with **sensitive issues**, has become easier now. Also we learned that PM&E helps to **draw out farmers' expertise**. Furthermore, it **increases transparency** and helps us in being more **focused in our analysis**.

In terms of planning, there are also lessons to be learned. PM&E feeds into planning and can help us to question our assumptions about how we think change happens, not only at programme or strategic level but also at farmers' level. PM&E has helped us to revisit and revise our **theories of change**. Again this is related to responsiveness – how quickly do we respond when we see things are not working? Another lesson was that planning has helped stakeholders to take up their responsibilities in the programme.

Participants also considered **incentives** for farmers and facilitators in PM&E activities important. Thinking through what motivates people to engage in PM&E is important. Whilst the programme has addressed some of the underlying issues, there are still some other issues in relation to incentives that need to be addressed.

Another issue that came up is the importance of **critical reflection** and that now people are able to **'speak and do'**, meaning linking actions to our analysis.

We agreed that the key issues to be take to the policy event included: **responsiveness, incentives and partnerships.**

6.2 Evaluation

We finished the writeshop with an evaluation in the style of the writeshop. Participants were asked to describe a short story on their experiences in relation to the writeshop. Their responses can be found in annex J. We also asked each participant to share their highlight of the writeshop (verbally). Generally people were very positive about the writeshop and indicated that they now had knowledge, skills and confidence to write!



7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This writeshop was organised to generate stories on the experiences of ASSP/ASDP-L in relation to managing for impact. These stories have been organised into a booklet that can be used at a policy event in Zanzibar by the end of this year, in a booklet that Wageningen International is writing on managing for impact, and for general communication of ASSP/ASDP-L with their stakeholders and the outside world.

Participants found this writeshop a challenging experience, as writing compelling stories, in more journalistic style, is not part of their working culture. However, writing stories is essential for us to learn more about how we are doing and where we can make improvements. It can help us to get a better picture of the challenges that we face and how to address them. Managing for impact is being applied in the programme. We hope that this workshop has helped not only to improve the writing skills of people but also to help document stories around how managing for impact works for the programme as well as sharing other important lessons. The learning we take from these stories can be applied at programme level, but they also include important messages for policy makers to help us to create the capacities and conditions that need to be in place to be effective in our efforts to achieve impact. At SMIP, the regional programme to strengthen managing for impact, we are grateful for all the efforts that ASSP/ASDP-L is putting into making this approach work for them. We have learned a lot from your stories and will integrate your lessons in adapting the approach. We hope that you keep up this spirit so that ultimately farmers and livestock keepers in Zanzibar have better lives!

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ANNEXES

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- Annex B: List of writeshop participants
- Annex C: Presentation: Introduction to writeshop
- Annex D: Presentation: Telling your story – how do you get started?
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