



Capacity development in the LIVES Ethiopia project

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Market-oriented development is a relatively new strategy in Ethiopia. The Livestock and Irrigation Value Chains for Ethiopian Smallholders (LIVES) project seeks to support government efforts to transform the agricultural sector. Funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, it is jointly implemented by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Ministry of Agriculture (Ethiopia) and Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research.

The LIVES capacity development pillar seeks to strengthen innovation and the learning capacity of value chain actors and service providers to develop livestock and irrigation agriculture value chains. Using participatory processes to assess knowledge and skills gaps of value chain actors and service providers, it identifies capacity development interventions. Project staff then design and implement these interventions using a range of strategies, including training, coaching and mentoring, self-learning and knowledge management activities.

The sequence and combination of learning activities depend on specific situations. The project is currently testing different capacity development approaches, such as mixed group training, couples training, training coupled with coaching and mentoring, and graduate training and research.

Training and coaching value chain actors and service providers

Innovation capacity development is crucial for value chain actors and service providers to gain knowledge and insights into the commercial system in which they engage. It also develops skills to analyse challenges and opportunities, and create market linkages. Traditionally, training is used as a capacity development activity to transfer knowledge and skills. However, there is a gap between learning skills and knowledge in a formal training environment and actually applying it in the work place. The practical workplace application of acquired skills and knowledge requires coaching and mentoring support, which facilitates training transfer by creating opportunities for practice and feedback. The effectiveness of training is enhanced by this coaching and mentoring support.

Coaching and mentoring are two other commonly used methods for transferring knowledge and skills. Coaching is well guided learning through practice, and it provides an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained in a formal workplace training session. It consists of asking open-ended questions and offering encouragement. Mentoring involves sharing one's own experiences and life learning. Unlike coaching, mentoring is more about directing or telling someone what to do, rather than creating space for individuals to discover solutions for themselves.

In Ethiopia, value chains are not yet well organized. Value chain actors need a range of market-orientated and business development skills. LIVES uses coaching and mentoring—in combination with training, demonstration and study tours—to facilitate knowledge sharing and skills transfer. Household coaching and mentoring is used to address gender gaps

in male-headed households. Household members are coached and mentored to adopt value-chain development interventions. Between April 2013 and March 2015, LIVES has trained and coached 17,202 (41% female) producers, 5,729 (78% female) input/service providers, and 717 (67% female) processing and marketing businesses.

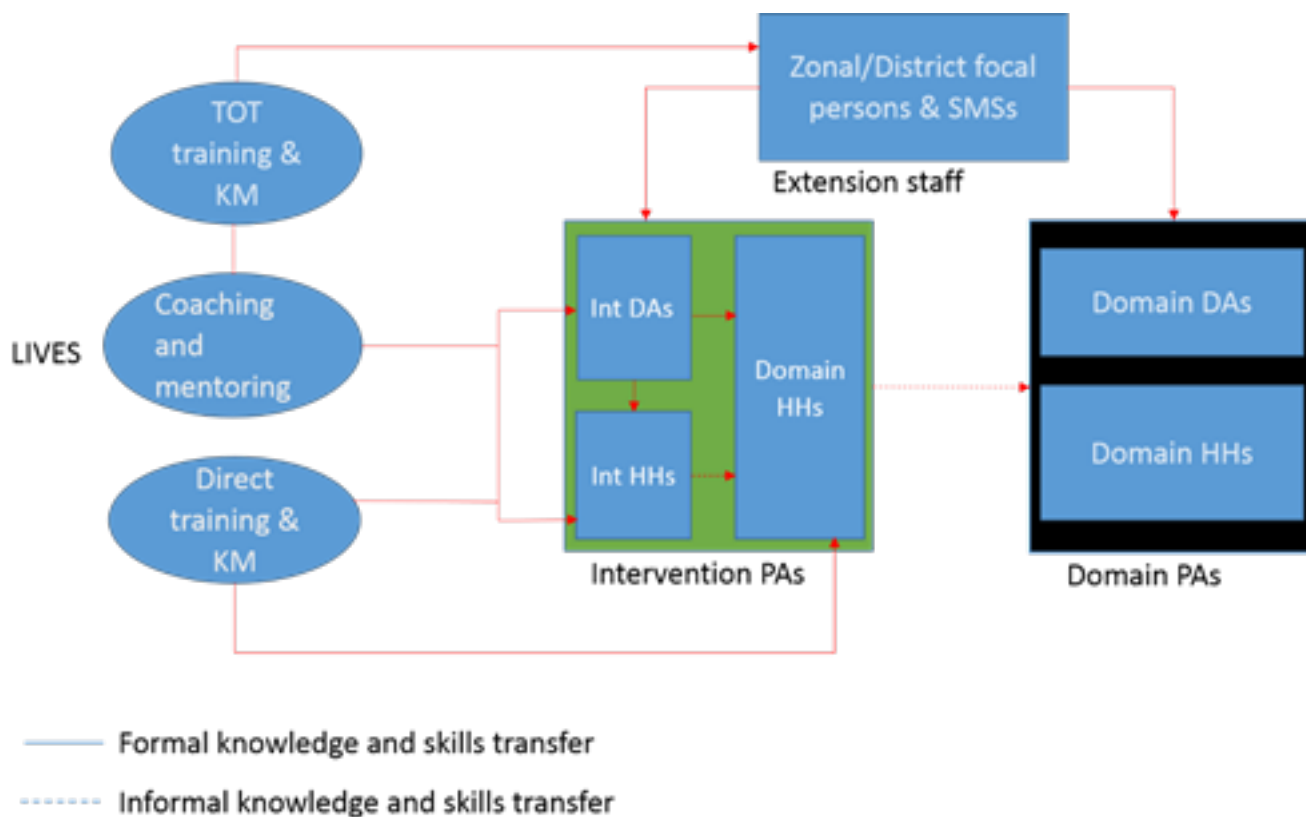


Figure 1. LIVES capacity development scaling out strategy

Coaching and mentoring cannot be provided to all producers as not all of them adopt a market-orientated approach to production. Therefore, LIVES identified a few market-orientated input and output producers who had the skills, an entrepreneurial mind-set and resources, and showcased them as demonstration households. The project forms extension circles of trained and coached producers designed to facilitate the spontaneous dissemination and scaling out of knowledge and skills within and beyond project districts and peasant associations. In addition to training and coaching, LIVES develops learning materials to support self-learning of market-orientated producers and service providers.

Capacity development of public sector staff

Strengthening research and development partners through graduate training and research is a significant capacity development intervention of the LIVES project. Institutionalization of a value chain development approach within the public sector requires a critical mass of trained individuals who will champion implementation and scaling out.

The need for training public sector research and extension staff was identified during the project’s implementation planning phase. Engaged with partners in a participatory consultative process, LIVES sought to identify pertinent research problems and make graduate research useful to address livestock and irrigation value chains development challenges. Staff also developed selection criteria and approval procedures for graduate fellows in consultation with the national project steering committee.

LIVES regional and zonal coordinators worked with partners to publicize the purpose, and terms and conditions, of the graduate fellowship program. Partners committed themselves to maintaining a balance of genders and commodities in the selection of candidates. Successful candidates were then required to work in project zones and districts to address the relevant research problems that had been identified during stakeholder-consultation and research-planning workshops.

LIVES supports value chain-based graduate training and research of about 200 public sector staff. As part of this, graduate fellows are offered opportunities to interact with partners as well as community members for experiential learning. The project encourages graduate fellows to take part in project activities, such as training activities,

commodity platform meetings and stakeholder workshops where they can gain awareness of local development needs, challenges and innovations. LIVES also organizes graduate seminars at regional, zonal and district levels to allow project partners to provide feedback on graduate research proposals and thesis results as well as ensure the relevance of graduate research to address local development challenges.

The LIVES project uses a co-supervisory and mentorship approach to provide graduate fellows with quality learning and research experience. Graduate fellows are jointly supervised by university and ILRI/IWMI supervisors. Key informant interviews with graduate fellows revealed that the joint supervisory and mentorship approach allows them to get intellectual stimulation and support from different perspectives. This approach also allows LIVES to interact with university supervisors and influence the research agenda of graduate fellows, as well as ensure graduate research relevant and grounded in local development contexts.

As a result of the various capacity development and knowledge management activities, intervention households have adopted a number of improved livestock and irrigation value chain practices, which has had a strong demonstration effect on other producers. A number of input/service providers—such as grafted seedling producers, feed suppliers and pump repair and maintenance service providers—have started to provide inputs/services to intervention and domain households. Study tours and training events have enabled public extension services to scale out value chain development interventions within and beyond the project intervention peasant associations and districts.

The graduate fellowship program has been instrumental in a number of ways. It has developed institutional capacity to support scaling out of project approaches, helped document the effect of project interventions and refined intervention strategies. Graduate research is an integral component of project implementation, as it documents results as project implementation unfolds and then refines intervention strategies and approaches accordingly.



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Capacity development is a prominent feature of ILRI's strategy. This refers to the intentional and purpose-driven efforts to increase stakeholder capacity to undertake and use research to generate development outcomes and scale up in a sustainable manner. ILRI Capacity Development Briefs highlight the depth and breadth of these ILRI and partner activities, and are circulated to contribute to improved practices and better lives through livestock. The briefs are purposively kept short and provide 'snapshots' of the topics they cover.

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