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Participatory Learning for Agricultural Extension and Development in Future Myanmar

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Abstract

Myanmar is one of the least developing countries in South-East Asia and agriculture is the basic economy of the country. Agricultural extension approaches and methods have been changing in a number of developing countries in recent years to reflect a new development paradigm that emphasizes sustainability, institutional change, and a participatory learning process leading to local capacity building and empowerment. The purpose of this paper is to describe the agricultural extension approaches and methods that have been introduced and practiced by United Nations Organizations and international Non-governmental Organizations in Myanmar through decentralized participatory manner and to suggest the participatory extension approaches and methods for the future agricultural development in Myanmar. The main directions of reform in international agricultural extension approaches and methods for a new development paradigm and the potential of Participatory Extension Approaches (PEA) for moving the extension profession towards a development paradigm that embraces learning rather than teaching processes were focused. The nature of the PEA process is increasing awareness between all participants of each person's unique knowledge and contributing to “laying the playing field” between outside professionals and local expertise. Although the United Nations organizations and Non-governmental Organizations in Myanmar have been introduced and implemented some participatory extension, none of the government extension services in Myanmar practice participatory methods still now. The governmental staffs that are working in agricultural extension and development are used to centralized and top-down management in technology transfer processes and this is the serious obstacle for the sustainable agricultural development. The governmental and non-governmental staff working in agricultural extension and development should begin integrating the PEA methods and activities for the future agricultural extension and development in Myanmar.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, Myanmar, participatory learning