

**Mid-term Assessment of the APR Grant Programme
Procasur grant n. 1304**

***Strengthening of Knowledge Sharing and Innovations using
the Learning Routes Methodology in Asia and the Pacific***

IFAD - ROUTASIA-PROCASUR

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October 2013**

Acronyms

AIPP: Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact

AIT: Asian Institute of Technologies.

AM: Aide Memoire

APMAS: Knowledge Sharing & Networking Platform for Asian Project Management Support Programme

APR: Asia and the Pacific Division at the International Fund for Agricultural Development

AWPB: Annual Work Plan and Budget

CLAR: Local Resource Allocation Committee

CLC: Community Learning Centers

COSOP: Country Strategic Opportunities Programme

CPM: Country Programme Manager

CPO: Country Programme Officer

ESA: East and Southern Africa Division at the International Fund for Agricultural Development

ICIMOD: International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

ICO: IFAD Country Office

ICT Information and Communication Technologies

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

INAFI: International Network of Alternative Financial Institutions

IP: Innovation Plan

M&E: Monitoring and Evaluation

MCG: Management Consulting Group

LR: Learning Route

NGO: Non Governmental Organization

PROCASUR: Corporación Regional PROCASUR

TA: Technical Assistance

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Executive Summary

Context: IFAD and PROCASUR designed in September 2011 a four year programme (ROUTASIA 2012-2015) with the overall goal to increase knowledge and capacity for adopting and scaling up best practices and innovations for poverty reduction among IFAD stakeholders in the APR region. ROUTASIA uses the Learning Route methodology.

The Learning Route (LR) is a capacity building tool to promote experiential exchange and interaction, through which local people become trainers to their peers. It is tailor-made to each client, and thematically structured around specific learning objectives. The Learning Routes promote innovative activities, technologies and approaches that can be applied in rural poverty reduction. The Learning Routes enable lesson learning, advance knowledge management with concrete results, allow the efficient dissemination of information, and inspire the scaling up of the best, field-tested innovations in rural development across regions.

An Innovation Plan (IP) constitutes one of the major tools of the Learning Routes. An Innovation Plan is a structured action plan elaborated by and for LR participants based on the knowledge transferred from farmers as peers during the LR. The IP aims to change technology and environmental choices, organizational performance, socio-economic conditions and/or business approaches to rural development for poverty reduction. These changes may be kick-started by seed capital awarded by ROUTASIA. Through these changes, the IP contributes to scaling up good practices (from peers) towards sustainable results for the rural poor.

The grant programme is being implemented in two phases: Phase I (2012-2013), and subject to triggers being met at mid-term, Phase II (2014-2015). The overall programme cost amounts to USD 2,4m (IFAD USD 2,0m; PROCASUR USD 0,1m; partners USD 0,3m). A 1st tranche of USD 1,0m has been released by IFAD corresponding to Phase I under an initial grant agreement signed in October 2011.

This report documents the assessment of the performance of the grant programme at mid-term and the extent to which Phase I objectives have been met with special emphasis on the triggers indicators. The framework boundaries for the assessment are defined by the Grant Design Document and subsequent agreements pertaining to the grant (Grant Agreement, President's Report), key ROUTASIA internal documentation, and the July 2013 supervision Aide Memoire. The original ROUTASIA Logframe and indicators form the backdrop of this assessment.

ROUTASIA is coordinated by a relatively small PROCASUR coordination unit situated in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The character of the programme requires a close working relation with IFAD CPMs, its country offices and its staff, the IFAD investment projects and national and/or regional partners. Different cultural and language environments are addressed, especially in capacity building of farmers. Building partnerships with a selected number of hosts, or implementing agencies, in all concerned countries is essential. In Phase I, from 2012 to 2013, ROUTASIA has been operating in 6 countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam) with 19 IFAD funded projects.

The outputs are:

- 380 local champions trained, 90 qualified to act as peer to peer “knowledge champions”
- 8 Learning Routes (one every 3 months) implemented with 193 participants from 9 countries (50% women, 54% indigenous, 55% youth)
- 20 innovations plans (IP) designed, funded and implemented benefitting 8 500 persons.
- 8 IFAD projects in 4 countries trained and enabled in LR methodology implementation.
- 31 case studies published and disseminated e.g. through www.asia.ifad.org

Assessment: The programme 'Strengthening knowledge sharing on innovations using the learning routes methodology in Asia and the Pacific', ROUTASIA, implemented by PROCASUR, has proven to be relevant, effective and efficient. It demonstrates clear potentials for scaling up and impact.

All 3 triggers (Meeting milestone targets, acceptance of the approach and methodology by 10 IFAD projects and Programs, competency recognition of 10 national and/or regional organizations) for the release of funds for Phase II have been met before mid-term (October 2013). The major findings of the Aide Memoire (July 2013) are confirmed. The programmed indicator values for the three components of ROUTASIA Phase I (Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests; Design and implementation of Learning Routes; Knowledge dissemination and methodological adoption) have broadly been met, or even been surpassed.

The ROUTASIA programme offers ample scope for consolidation through the agreed Phase II. The programme strategy, its objectives and the 3 components remain valid. The supervision report and this assessment confirm that ROUTASIA should continue its activities as foreseen under the 4-year grant design.

Opportunities for further quality enhancement of relevance, efficacy and efficiency towards impact and scaling up are available within IFAD country programmes and can be pro-actively explored by ROUTASIA in cooperation with regional institutional partner for Phase II whose capacities have been enhanced. The programme offers good opportunities for development practitioners from IFAD funded projects (farmers, project staff, officials) to get experience, share knowledge and learn from other regions using innovative and motivating methodologies such as Learning Routes and innovation Plans.

Ways forward for Phase II: The recommendation for Phase II broadly coincide with those made in the July 2013 supervision and refer to:

R1. IFAD is to swiftly approve the release of the 2nd tranche of USD 1,0m for the foreseen USD 2,4m programme funding. Reimbursement for expenditures of eligible categories covering the period between Phase I and the effectiveness of Phase II is recommended.

R2. The Innovation Plans (IP) have demonstrated to be an appropriate vehicle for change in IFAD country programmes. The continued use of start-up or seed capital for IP (equal for all new IP ventures) provided by ROUTASIA and leveraged (at varying degrees) by the client or partner projects is recommended.

R3. ROUTASIA is to gradually shift from 'handholding for delivery/implementation' of LR and IP to IFAD projects, to 'Training-of-Trainers (ToT)' of regional and/or national partner organizations for scaling up and impact.

R4. M&E of impact pathways will constitute a management field to be strengthened and needs to be further operationalized. The recently introduced M&E strategy with its internally reviewed logframe and output and outcome indicators, needs to be further aligned with ROUTASIA and partner budgets.

R5. Sustainability prospects of the results of ROUTASIA can be further enhanced by: i) securing the use of the local knowledge champions, ii) mainstreaming of LR and IP into APWB of IFAD and 3rd party funded projects, iii) supporting implementers of IPs and LR to achieve multiplier effects beyond the immediate scope of initial participants and knowledge champions.

R6. Scaling up represents a big opportunity for ROUTASIA and APR, and should be a strategic choice by APR management and its CPM/CO in support of ongoing and future loan operations. It should be part of policy dialogue in the context of annual reviews of RB COSOPs and supervision/MTR of selected portfolio programmes and projects. The renewed partnership between IFAD and the Asian Development Bank as well as middle income countries would offer a suitable vehicle to disseminate knowledge and learning.

I. Introduction

1) Context

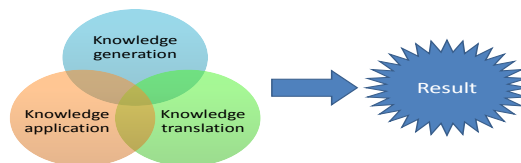
Scaling up innovations is key to successfully addressing rural poverty. Applying knowledge around suitable innovations represents a principal pathway to impact. New approaches in knowledge management and especially peer-to-peer dissemination methods have proven successful. PROCASUR ROUTASIA has reasonably demonstrated its approach delivers change.

The Learning Routes approach and corresponding methodology¹ have been recognized by IFAD as effective in managing the knowledge for change generated in the field by public and private organizations. Key areas are building the capacity of practitioners to innovate through a peer-to-peer training and mutual technical assistance system. More recently, the Learning Routes have been also employed to strengthen national capacities by the transfer of the methodology to support local actors especially rural communities or organizations and farmers (men and women) in the complex process of scaling up local innovations. PROCASUR originated the Learning Routes in the late nineties in Latin America and has expanded its Learning Routes approach to East and Southern Africa. Since 2012 PROCASUR is active in the Asia Pacific Region. A regional office has been established in Thailand, from where the IFAD Grant “Strengthening knowledge sharing on innovations using the learning routes methodology in Asia and the Pacific” (called ROUTASIA) is being coordinated by PROCASUR.

IFAD and PROCASUR designed in September 2011 on a four year programme (IFAD USD2m; PROCASUR USD 0,1m and beneficiaries USD 0,3m) with the overall goal to increase knowledge and capacity for adopting and scaling up best practices and innovations for poverty reduction among IFAD stakeholders in the APR region. The Programme uses the Learning Route methodology i) to build human capital of rural communities and small farmers’ organizations and professionals working at farm level in IFAD funded projects and partner implementing institutions, ii) to adopt and scale up good practices and innovations to increase effectiveness of development projects, and iii) to increase the availability and utilization of rural communities, farmers organizations and its members and field implementation staff as knowledge service providers.

PROCASUR applies the following knowledge model:

PROCASUR as a capacity building and knowledge management organization applies the following knowledge model.



The knowledge model is operationalised through the Learning Route methodology with its interrelated internal learning loops. These learning loops are characterized by three interrelated main thematic domains of ROUTASIA which correspond to the 3 programme components.

1. Local knowledge and skills management with
 - a) its systematization and documentation of good practices,
 - b) Training of local stakeholders and staff as knowledge service providers
2. Application of knowledge, learning approaches and its instruments by the implementation of Learning Routes
3. Knowledge dissemination, methodological transfer of learning approaches and methodological adoption.

¹ The Learning Route approach and methodology encompasses so called learning routes, the involvement of local champions and knowledge champions, participatory knowledge management tools, Innovation Plans and similar guided non tangible investments in people providing knowledge services for change.

The 4-year ROUTASIA programme is divided in 2 Phases – Phase I for 2011/2013 followed by Phase II for 2014/2015.

In 2012, PROCASUR-ROUTASIA received the 1st tranche of USD1 000 000 from IFAD for the implementation of its activities during the first two years (Phase I) of this grant programme. A second tranche of USD1 000 000 is foreseen² and is to be made available for Phase II subject to performance and activation of triggers. The triggers are: a) meeting milestone targets, b) acceptance of the approach and methodology by 10 IFAD projects and Programs, and c) competency recognition of 10 national and/or regional organizations. The trigger mechanism implies that once the triggers have been met, APR-IFAD releases the 2nd tranche through the current grant design or its modified version reflecting the findings of this assessment.

2) Objective of the Assessment

The objective of the assignment is to assess the performance of the grant programme till date and the extent to which project objectives have been met so far (Phase I) with special emphasis on the achievement of the trigger mechanisms. The assessment touches upon the financial performance and explores prospects of sustainability of the benefits obtained so far. Lessons learnt and valorization of the achievements in Phase I may lead to some modifications of the original approved design document for Phase II (2014-2015).

3) Methodology of the assessment

The grant assessment bears semblance to a synthesis report and is based on existing documentation complemented with stakeholder interviews and supplementary data where required. The framework boundaries for the assessment are defined by the Grant Design Document and subsequent agreements pertaining to the grant (Grant agreement, President's Report), key PROCASUR ROUTASIA internal documentation, and the Aide Memoire of this summer's supervision mission.

The original ROUTASIA Logframe and indicators form the backdrop of this assessment. As the Logframe refers to results and objectives, but not yet to the currently prescribed output-outcome result chain ('the impact pathway'), the M&E system recently developed in the context of ROUTASIA, although representing work-in-progress, offers a suitable reference framework for this assessment. This M&E system defines a set of outcome and output indicators, which are used where appropriate in this assessment. The set of case studies undertaken by PROCASUR ROUTASIA in August 2013 explore early indications of impact and are referred to in this assessment. Field visits are not part of the assessment. A draft of this assessment has been shared with PROCASUR and IFAD before submission of the final version.

4) Implementation modalities

The Programme components are 1) Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests, 2) Design and implementation of Learning Routes, and 3) Knowledge dissemination and methodological adoption. The 3 programme components, with their respective outputs and outcomes as derived from the grant results framework, have to be seen in the context of the organisational implementation modalities chosen for this grant. These 3 components equate to three sets of outcomes which corresponding outputs are delivered in a partly sequenced, partly overlapping way during the 4-year programme.

During the early stages of Phase I (2011-2012) the focus was on informing projects and fostering partnerships for subsequent delivery of carefully crafted Learning Routes, in the second part of Phase I (2012-2013) the delivery of the Learning Routes, developing and initially implementing the Innovation Plans, and the corresponding training and capacity building formed the bulk of the grant operations.

² President report on proposed grants under the regional grant window, Sept. 2011, Chapter IV, Paragr.13.

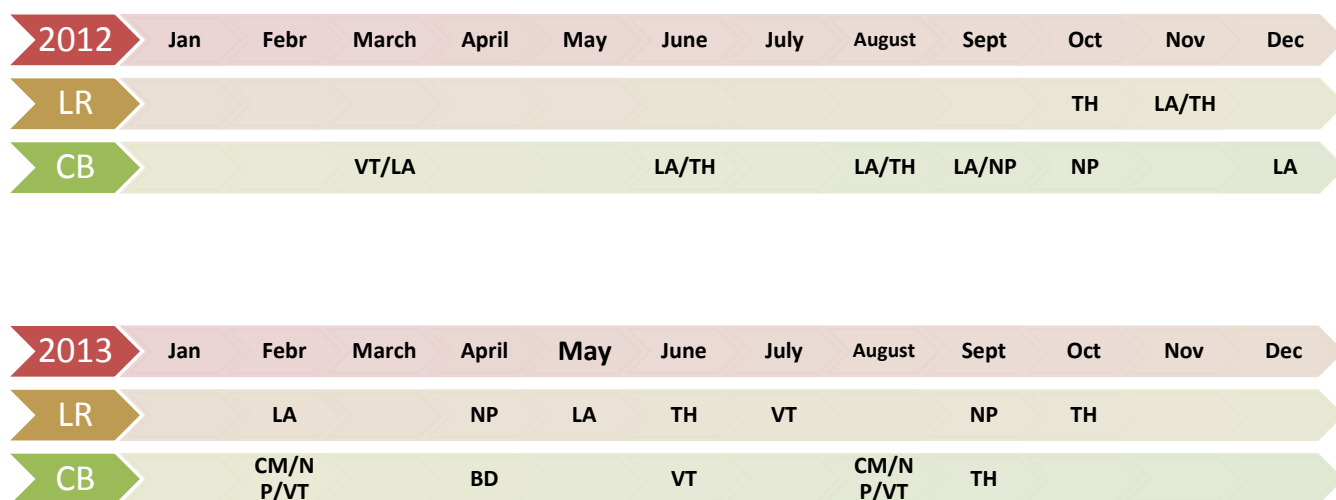
ROUTASIA is coordinated by a relatively small PROCASUR coordination unit situated in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The character of the programme requires a close working relation with IFAD CPMs, its country offices and its staff, the IFAD funded projects and national and/or regional partners which work in the field of knowledge management and are engaged in the prioritized thematic areas of ROUTASIA. Different cultural and language environments are addressed, especially in capacity building of farmers. Therefore, before conducting any Learning Routes, building partnerships with a selected number of hosts, or implementing agencies, in all concerned countries is essential. Till date, and in compliance with agreed grant stipulations for Phase I, ROUTASIA has been operating in six countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam) with 19 IFAD funded projects³. PROCASUR country focal points are operating respectively in Lao PDR, Nepal, Thailand, Bangladesh and Vietnam and support ROUTASIA in all its activities.

Partnerships were established and concrete activities implemented with regional research institutions (e.g. AIT), knowledge networks (e.g. INAFI, Bangladesh, and AIPP, Thailand), private partner like MCG in Vietnam, IFAD grant recipients⁴ and NGOs⁵ working in the region.

ROUTASIA, as part of the worldwide operating capacity building efforts undertaken by PROCASUR, interacts with its two regional sister offices in Nairobi, Kenya and Santiago, Chile focusing on ESA and LAC, respectively.

A timeline of ROUTASIA’s main activities in its 6 partner countries is illustrated below:

Capacity Building (CB) and Learning Routes (LR) Activities in APR 2012-2013



Legend: BD: Bangladesh - CM: Cambodia - LA: Lao PDR - NP: Nepal - TH: Thailand - VT: Vietnam

³ See Appendix 3, Aide Memoire, achievements according to Logframe targets i. PADEE in Cambodia, ii. CAIM in India, iii. RLIP, iv. SNRMPEP, and v. SSSJ in Laos PDR, vi. LFLP, vii. PAF, viii. HVAP, and ix. WUPAP in Nepal, x. 3PAD Bắc Kạn, xi. DBRP Cao Bằng, xii. AFRAS Gia Lai, xiii. 3EM Đắk Nông, xiv. TNSP Tuyen Quang, xv. AFRAS Ninh Thuan, xvi. DPPR Quang Binh, xvii. IMPP Ha Tinh, and xix. IMPP Tra Tinh in Vietnam

⁴APMAS, Inclusive Businesses and Land, Gender Action Learning System, ICIMOD

⁵ BURO, GDA, RIMISP, SNV, IDE, PRISUM, PKSF

The decentralized implementation modality by an organization based and operating in ‘The South’ and which is geared to regional and national partnerships is deemed appropriate and supportive of delivering the development objectives.

II . Achievement of the Triggers

The three triggers for moving the programme forward to its full implementation are assessed in the following overview.

Trigger 1: Meeting milestone targets

The following output indicators⁶ are considered relevant and their achievement has been analyzed.

Indicators 2011 – 2015	Achievements September 2013	Assessment (October 2013)
Component 1: Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests		
50 innovative experiences identified, systematized and published	31 innovative experiences identified, systemized and published	Original target relevant, realistic and achievable in Phase II
Up to 900 “local champions” trained to provide training using the Learning Route methodology	380 person persons trained through systematization of experiences and the learning route methodology, 90 person qualified as peer-to peer “knowledge champions”	Original target too ambitious and not realistic. Drastic reduction of 2015 (overall) target to 200 peer-to-peer ‘knowledge champions’ is deemed more appropriate as aligned with refocus on ‘training of trainers’, or ‘from implementer to facilitator-enabler’ recommended for Phase II
One directory an map of national and local organizations set on-line	Not yet published, foreseen for 2014	Not immediately relevant in Phase I.
Component 2: Design and implementation of Learning Routes		
18 learning routes with 250 training days, 360 beneficiaries (50% women, indigenous, youth)	8 learning routes, 193 participants from 9 countries, (50% women, 54% indigenous, 55% youth) 67 training days, 1 learning route in preparation (Thailand)	Progress commensurate with phasing. Overall target achievable in Phase II
40 innovations plans (IP) designed, funded (awarded) and implemented benefitting 3600 persons	20 innovation plans designed and awarded, 10 not yet started and 10 in the stage of implementation, benefitting approx. 8500 persons IPs of Vietnam just awarded, Nepal II pending awards. Leverage of the prices by the projects (10500USD by PADEE and 365000 by a project in Madagascar	Delivery of the awarded in cash was delayed in Lao PDR because of administrative constraints. Successful leverage of the prices awarded. Successful replication of innovations and good practices in Cambodia and Nepal. Implementation of IPs to remain key deliverable for Phase II. Guidance and follow-up to Innovation Plans to be enhanced in Phase II
Component 3: Knowledge dissemination and methodological adoption		
Implementation manual published	The Manual for Implementing the LR is published in English. Specific tools are available in Laotian and Thai (2012), Vietnamese, Nepali and Bengalese (2013).	Fully on track. National language tools much appreciated. Other languages may follow.
3 IFAD funded projects trained and assisted in the adoption of the methodology	2 projects from Laos: SNRMPEP, RLIP; 4 projects from Nepal: HVAP, LFLP, PAF, WUPAP; 2 projects from Vietnam: IMPP, DPRPR have been assisted and enabled in the	Delivery accelerated due to pronounced demand. Progress more advanced than corresponding with phasing. This positive experience drives the re-focus on ToT approach for Phase

⁶ The indicators are taken from the Logical Framework of the President Report, September, 2011

	adoption of the LR methodology. In Cambodia, PROCASUR enabled PADEE to organize peer-to-peer learning exchanges (Cambodia-Thailand internship) and as part of project training activities according to the LR methodology	II thus allowing scaling up and higher outreach
15 communication products disseminated	31 case studies systematized (printed as publications), brochures (in EN, TH, LA, VT, NP languages), 1 cartoon on LR methodology (EN), 1 educational poster (EN), 1 publication of LR testimonies from VT.	Fully on track. Communication products available on websites like http://asia.procasur.org/resources/#all , User friendly overhaul of webpage pending in order to facilitate KM exchange and downloads among non-ROUTASIA web-users
3 national organizations recognized as training providers	ROUTASIA has identified and worked with regional and national organizations as service providers like the Asia Indigenous Peoples pact (AIPP), INAFI (Bangladesh), Management Consulting Company (MCG) Vietnam and AIT, Thailand	The early successes indicate a possible and desirable re-focus of ROUTASIA away from 'handholding for delivery/implementation' to ToT of regional and/or national partner organizations for Phase II

On balance, the milestone targets set for Phase I, where not overly ambitious and unrealistic, have broadly been met, or even surpassed. The outlook for Phase II in meeting the programme development objectives is highly positive especially vis-à-vis a proposed re-focus on capacitating partner organizations in the region to become 'Trainers-of-Trainers' of the LR methodology.

Trigger 2: Acceptance of the approach and methodology by 10 IFAD projects and Programs

By contributing staff time (over 40 project staff trained) and resources (co-funding capacity building with USD 105,000), 19 projects (see list in II.B, page 3) have demonstrated the acceptance of the approach and methodology. A July 2013 client survey indicated that the 13 responding projects confirm that the methodology has enhanced project performance. Five projects stated that expectations were met or even exceeded (also see III.B, page 8).

"I participated in many study tours to several countries but this is outstanding, every day is different and has a purpose. Includes reflection and action. It's a good model that goes deep in the case studies in a very participatory way, farmers, experts, staff, all can have a point in the analysis. The exchange is real." (a voice from the monkey survey)

Participants of the monkey survey observed that significant changes happened at the level of team building (77%), followed by project and their personal level. A positive experience was the adaptation of CLAR⁷ by Vietnamese stakeholders (supported by ROUTASIA) after they participated in a Learning Route in 2010. This CLAR adapted to Vietnamese conditions induced changes in policy at provincial level.

"At public and policy level the most important is that we are adapting the CLAR methodology, we have already designed our own Manual based on PROCASUR suggestions and draft manual. This is already approved by the Peoples Community Committee, Women Union and Farmer Union." (a voice of the monkey survey)

80% of the projects that participated in the monkey survey stated that the LR Programme supported the projects in their policy dialogue strategy.

⁷ Vietnamese project staff have experienced the Local Resource Allocation Committee called CLAR in a LR in Peru in 2010

“During the preparation and during the Route we involved the Union Farmer, the People Commune Committee and the cooperatives. Also we have been visited during the Route by important authorities from the ministries we work with”.

Areas for improvement have been voiced by participants whose main concern refer to design and implementation of the innovation plans. This concern has already been taken up by ROUTASIA management and constitutes a key area for enhancement under Phase II.

ROUTASIA has demonstrated its comparative advantage and value added of its approach and methodology, e.g. in Lao PDR, where it was able to mobilize mainly women farmers as local talents and knowledge champions. Here, with the support of ROUTASIA, they turned their disadvantage and exclusion, because of their high degree of illiteracy; gender and indigenous peoples background, into a virtue and value (see text in Chapter III). In Cambodia, illustrating acceptance of approach and methodology of ROUTASIA, national project staff who participated in a LR in Thailand, upon their return, mobilized additional funding and scaled up innovation plans leveraging ROUTASIA’s contribution of USD7,500 with USD105,000 –a factor of 1:14.

This trigger has been met satisfactorily, or even surpassed. Consolidation of the methodology, further adaptation of country specific requirements and monitoring of the replication of the Learning approach and tools would form a key area for Phase II.

Trigger 3: competency recognition of 10 national and/or regional organizations

A sub-set of 4 regional/national partner organizations (AIPP⁸, AIT, INAFI, MCG) and 2 projects in Vietnam and 1 in Bangladesh has documented via a letter of recognition their appreciation of the competencies of PROCASUR ROUTASIA.

The trigger is 70% achieved⁹. This is more than sufficient for this early stage of implementation

III. Assessment of outputs and outcomes according to the 3 components

As indicated under I.3, methodology of the assessment, the M&E system offers outcome and output indicators for the overall programme. In essence these refer to the 3 components and M&E fields¹⁰ of 1) Systematization and documentation of good practices; 2) Implementation of Learning Routes, and Methodological transfer; and, 3) Knowledge dissemination and methodological replication

Key outcome indicators are 1.i *Utilization of documented cases*, 1.ii *Number of trained local talents that have delivered services to LR participants and/or 3rd parties*, and 1.iii *Rate of innovations/good practices used as learning cases*; 2.i *Degree of satisfaction of participants*, and 2.ii *Number of innovation plans bringing incremental benefits* 2.iii *Adopting of knowledge being acquainted in a LR* ; and 3.i *Degree of dissemination of LR programme products* and 3.ii. *Degree of adoption of LR by 3rd parties*. These outcome indicators will be used for referral in this assessment of (early) outcomes, or indications towards their performance.

⁸ An example of such expression is contained in Annex 1

⁹ This 3rd trigger is somewhat non-appropriate for a 2-year funding period

¹⁰ The outcome and output indicators are detailed in an updated Logframe in Annex 2 to this report.

Component 1: Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests

Outcome indicators: 1.i *Utilization of documented cases*, 1.ii *Number of trained local talents that have delivered services to LR participants and/or 3rd parties*, and 1.iii *Rate of innovations/good practices used as learning cases*;

A. Systematization and documentation of good practices

During the first two years of implementation ROUTASIA identified, analyzed and documented existing knowledge on good practices and innovative solutions available at project and field level in the following thematic areas:

- ✓ Public Private Partnership, Value Chains and Farmers Access to Markets;
- ✓ Natural Resource Management, Climate Change Adaptation and Food Security;
- ✓ Inclusion of Women, Youth and Ethnic Groups in Rural Development Policies;
- ✓ Decentralization of Governance Processes: Development of Farmers Organizations, Competitive and Participative Allocation of Public Resources
- ✓ Rural Local Knowledge-based Products and Services.

The results of the monkey survey (conducted in July 2013 by PROCASUR with its partner IFAD projects and feedback from 13 project) show the methodological process of systematisation improved or significantly improved project performance by creating e.g. a “better disposition of project staff to work together with the beneficiaries and listen more to them” or by enhancing “self-confidence in knowledge management skills in preparing good quality case studies”.¹¹

Such performance enhancing effects may be illustrated by the cases¹² of PAF, Nepal, where the project team, following full immersion in the LR methodology, used it to inform on the systematization of their experiences to their Indonesian colleagues from a Worldbank-financed organization when on a visit to Bijwa, a PAF beneficiary community. Mr. Sanjay, the PAF Regional Director is quoted: *“Whenever we visited the community now, we get something more there; thanks to the Learning Route [methodology] we see what is the improvement this people has achieved over time. When we go through the past, present and future of the community [use of mental maps depicting the situation of the community in the past, present and vision of the future] we become aware of the great job we have done together. People has changed socially, economically, they are more empowered now. They improved a lot”*.

The thematic areas reflect the interest of IFAD funded projects and country offices. Local Knowledge has been generated by a participatory systematization exercise, which actively involves communities and/or farmers’ organizations and cooperatives, national implementing partners of IFAD, private sector partners and civil society. PROCASUR has systematised 31 experiences and good practices, achieving 60% of the overall programme design target.

The systematisation and documentation of good practices is implemented with participatory research techniques hitherto mostly unknown to the learning participants. This represents a valuable achievement and merits to be consolidated and expanded in Phase II.

B. Training of local champions and knowledge champions

The process of systematised capture and documentation of good practices is a key learning processes in order to capitalise on existing local knowledge and to promote its adaptation and use. Within this framework, a unique methodological training has been implemented to reinforce the capacities and skills of so called “local champions” (IFAD project staff and local leaders or outstanding farmers self-selected by

¹¹ Statements of the monkey survey, July 2013

¹² See PROCASUR impact study, August 2013, case studies 4/4 Kapilvastu, and 2/4, Rayale, Nepal, respectively.

their respective community/organization). They were enabled to systematically structure good practices and lessons learned about a particular successful experience and to transfer their knowledge during peer-to-peer learning exchanges, such as Learning Routes.

During 2012 and 2013, PROCASUR has trained and mobilised 380 local champions (50% women, 54% indigenous and 55% youth) through the systematization of successful experiences and good practices. From this initial batch, 92 people (approx. 40% women) received specialised training and have up-graded their competencies for knowledge documentation and exchange. They all turned into ‘knowledge champions’. This training was delivered to representatives of their community and/or community groups as well as to project staff, staff of implementing partners and local governments (especially KM officers, M&E staff, and field specialists) who support the community/organization(s) in promoting and exposing their learning experience.

ROUTASIA put special attention on transferring the methodological approach and training to farmer champion. 40 representatives, members of community or farmer groups (72% women) were qualified as “knowledge champions” or knowledge service providers in this advanced training. All knowledge champions were “hosts” of learning experiences during several Learning Routes. Eight participants (8%) came from local government or PROCASUR partner organizations.

Box 1. ¹³Methodological transfer from farmer to farmer, the case of Nepal

Karpura and Subhawati lead the Pragatishil Agriculture Cooperative of Bijuwa, in the district of Kapilvastu, while Chhammi coordinates one of the 11 groups that compose the Devitar Leasehold Forest User Groups cluster in Shaktikhor, Chitwan district. They are indigenous, *Dalit*, farmers, and all outstanding women in their own communities. Their determination, tireless work and gained self-confidence have been source of motivation for other women to join interest’s groups and start out speaking about their rights.

In October 2012, Karpura, Subhawati and Chhammi took part into the training on systematization organized by PROCASUR in their respective villages (that become then host cases for 2 Learning Routes). In February 2013, PROCASUR invited them to join the systematization process in the village of Rayale, Kavre district, as part of the Training Team. Their role has been key to facilitate the transmission of the new concepts to community members and to guide the development of collective exercises, such as map drawing and focus groups’ interviews with women. “*Before we didn’t feel comfortable attending any type of meeting but now we want to take leadership for any activity*” reported a member of the women’s group. Similarly to the case of Nepal, in Lao PDR the systematization process undertaken with 3 farmers’ groups in Attapeu province also counted with the participation of local champions previously trained.



Image: from left to right, Karpura, Subhawati and Chhammi in Rayale, Nepal

A total of 44 IFAD supported project staff from 9 projects in Lao PDR (RLIP, SNRMPEP), Nepal (HVAP, LFLP, PAF, SEED and WUPAP) and Vietnam (DPPR and IMPP) participated in this specialized in-the field training.

The implementation of Learning Routes implies that knowledge, which has been generated and documented during the systematization exercise, is transmitted by these qualified “knowledge champions”. Hence these ‘knowledge champions’ are key to the consolidation and scaling up of results.

The transfer of knowledge from peer-to-peer has been recognized as an asset to facilitate the incorporation of new concepts and methods in the rural milieu. In this sense, the composition of mixed working-team (as project staff and farmers) has been considered a priority for all systematization processes undertaken so far. The mixed teams thus address aspects of knowledge management which are often overlooked by

¹³ PROCASUR, G.Pedone, October 2013

external experts, This practice has demonstrated to be successful to improve communication and collaboration between project staff and stakeholders, to benefit best from different competencies, knowledge and abilities and to improve team-working skills, supporting the creation of enabling environments for knowledge sharing at project level. A major change in attitude of project staff and farmers is oftentimes needed and can be brought about through the use of the ROUTASIA methodology.

A participatory assessment of the experiences of farmer groups as knowledge champions and hosts of a learning case was carried out during the Pro-Poor Public and Private Partnership Learning Route II In Laos PDR. The knowledge champions felt comfortable in explaining their experiences in their own indigenous language, but as the other visiting participants were speaking yet another indigenous language this barrier was a major constraints to transmit their knowledge and vice versa. Participatory techniques facilitated by ROUTASIA helped to overcome these constraints. The “host knowledge champions’ not only ‘gave’ knowledge, they also received and appreciated feedback how to improve their business models from the participants of the Learning routes. All hosts invested the compensation as knowledge provider in the improvement of their respective businesses.

Ethnic affiliation and linguistic affinity of the “knowledge champions” with the participating community members contributed significantly to the understanding and trust especially where the social fabric is mostly made up of ethnic groups, as in Lao PDR or Nepal. Moreover, the positive discrimination of women (indigenous, farmers) within the training team proved to be particularly productive to encourage women’s participation at community level.¹⁴

The composition of mixed training teams (project staff and farmer members of community groups) to be trained in systemizing good practices and as knowledge service providers (the knowledge champions) has created a different working relationship. Merging different competencies, knowledge and abilities between project staff and farmers has led to a symbiosis for knowledge sharing at project level, often spanning inalienable cultural barriers, which is deemed unique in APR. Involving smallholder farmers as core actors in a knowledge sharing process is a new and innovative valuable approach compared to traditional knowledge management methodologies.

Outstanding farmers that have mastered and honed their competencies following one or more methodological trainings have been successively contracted by PROCASUR as trainers to facilitate the knowledge transfer to their peers – other farmers or people interested. These “knowledge champions “ mostly facilitate the peer-to-peer learning exchange as “host case” (‘reference case’) during the Learning Route. Therefore training to these hosts as knowledge service providers in the framework of peer-to-peer learning exchanges is essential.

The utilization of the knowledge harvested and the participation of local champions exceeds the original expectations. Written case studies enabled local support not only to Learning Routes but also to IFAD supervision missions, COSOP and Projects Designs. 40 local champions have delivered services to LR participants and/or 3rd parties. The use of local champions and 90 properly trained and motivated knowledge champions as well as the growing tendency to use learning cases, all represent a highly appropriate, effective and pertinent way to enhance self-esteem among participants and peers, and enhances overall project performance. Inclusion and equity may be favorably affected. Phase II should seek to consolidate these aspects and re-enforce the ToT approach strengthening the knowledge champion methodology and outreach. An indicative outreach number of knowledge champions could be around 200, doubling the current outreach of about 90 knowledge champions.

¹⁴ PROCASUR, G.Pedone, October 2013

Box 2.¹⁵ Switching towards a proactive attitude in the delivery of knowledge services, voices from Vietnam

In 2012 and 2013, PROCASUR has trained more than 40 local leaders, mostly farmers, in the provision of knowledge services. All of them have delivered technical and capacity-building services during the implementation of systematization processes or/and peer-to-peer learning exchanges (Learning Routes) organized by PROCASUR and/or to third parties, as in the case of Ms Phan Thi Thuy.

She is the chairwoman of the Phuong Bamboo Production Cooperative in Quang Binh province, Vietnam. In June 2013 Ms Thuy took part of the systematization process that involved the experience of her Cooperative. One month later, she joined the Learning Route that was carried out in Quang Binh and Ha Tinh provinces. Asked on the potential benefits that the whole methodological training process might have brought to her and to the Cooperative she leads, she replies: *“Frankly, I did not understand what this was all about, at first. However, from exercises, I get to know and understand the tool by taking part to group discussion as well as from field visits. By fully participate in the process, I learned that we should build on our strengths, reduce or minimize our weaknesses, seize our opportunities as they arise, and know about external threats, which are something out of control. After the systematization, I have tried to put into practice some of the recommendations provided by the other team members. Together with the other women, we started looking into opportunities, to be more receptive to potential chances and to be more proactive. During the past two months, I have heard about a project regarding the provision of training on bamboo handicrafts to people with disabilities. This was a project developed by a local NGO at country level. Generally we wait for the local government to contact us to provide training to other women at district level. When we train people at local level, we receive a reimbursement for food and travel arrangements, but we are not paid; since we benefited from training services offered by the government for free, we also don’t charge for them. This time was different. We decided to change our attitude and propose our training services to the NGO. They accepted to contract us and we will be paid for that”.*



Image: Phan Thi Thuy, Quang Binh, Vietnam

Component 2: Design and implementation of Learning Routes

Indicator 2.i : degree of satisfaction of participants

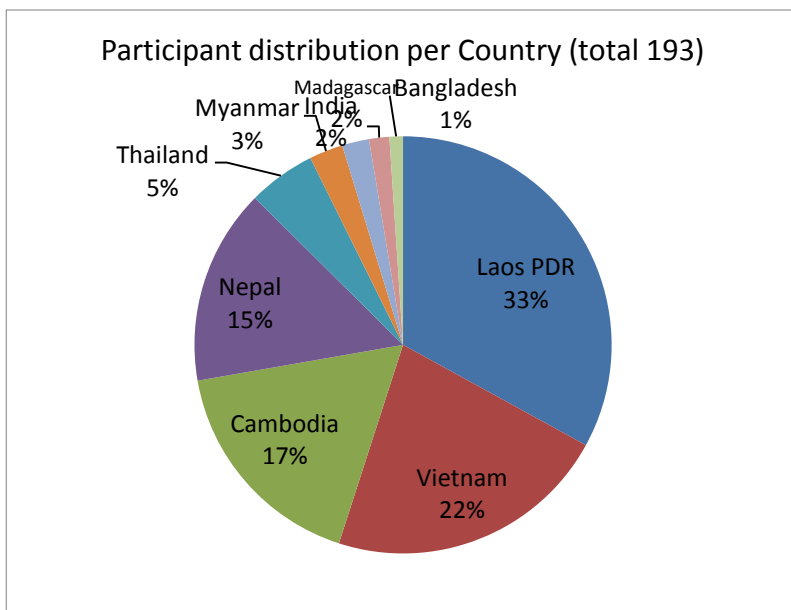
ROUTASIA has organized and implemented eight (8) Learning Routes¹⁶ in the APR region with 193 participants (50% women, 54% indigenous people and 55% youth) originated from 9 APR countries and 14 participants from Africa¹⁷. At the time of the report writing, ROUTASIA implemented a LR in Thailand with international participants from Africa, Latin America and Asia. Additionally, as a consequence of the Learning Route PPP in Thailand (2012), 19 participants (16 farmers) of the PADEE project Cambodia participated in Learning Internship in a Thai CLC (Community Learning Centre) in June 2013.

The distribution of the participants/country in all 8 LR is visualized in the graphic below:

¹⁵ PROCASUR, G.Pedone, October 2013

¹⁶ i. Thailand experience in Public-Private-Partnership, ii. Managing Forests, Sustaining Lives, Improving Livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples and Ethnic Groups in the Mekong Region, iii. Pro-Rural Poor Public and Private Partnership in Lao PDR, Learning from best practices and successful strategies in Attapeu Province, iv. Women Empowerment, New Businesses and Sustainable Natural Resource Management in Nepal, v. Pro-Rural Poor Public and Private Partnership in Lao PDR, best practices and successful strategies seen through women’s eyes, vi. Thailand- Cambodia Organic Clinic Farm Internship, vii. Strengthening Farmers Organizations, Developing Sustainable Business Models and Public Private Partnership in Agriculture in Vietnam, viii. Women Empowerment, new business and sustainable natural resource management in Nepal-II

¹⁷ Madagascar, Kenya, Somalia



One of the two indicators of the success of the Learning Route and its methodological approach is the ‘degree of satisfaction of participants’ (Indicator 2.i). The results of the participant evaluation¹⁸ of the Learning Route are quite promising and show, that in general, the participants were quite satisfied with the Learning Route and its methodology.

The following table (derived from evaluation sheets) provides an overview of evaluation results by the participants of the 8 Learning Routes:

Themes	Partially achieved/satisfactory	Achieved/satisfactory	Fully achieved/fully satisfactory
Achievement of objectives of the LR	3%	26%	71%
Performance of the coordination and the organizer team in facilitating learning and communication	2%	19%	79%
Contribution of the case studies to achieve the specific learning objectives, the methodology to facilitate the learning process and usefulness of the practical way of learning	2%	23%	75%
Appropriateness of the activities carried out during the Learning Route (e.g. Experience fair/Case Study Analysis/Innovation Plans)	2%	15%	83%
Average	2%	21%	77%

One of the critical points mentioned in the evaluation sheets referred to the preparation, the understanding of the objective and formulation of the innovation plan. Some of the participants did not feel comfortable and lacked of knowledge to design an innovation plan. Some of the participants informed that the Learning Route did not provide sufficient space and time to support them in the preparation of the Innovation Plan. More technical expertise on project planning and formulation would have been desirable with regard of developing an adequate, robust and realistic Innovation Plan.

The Monkey Survey for project staff (June 2013) furthermore demonstrates that all respondents are convinced of the usefulness of the LR on knowledge management (54% useful, 46% very useful).

Indicator 2.i: degree of satisfaction of participants. The results of the different surveys indicate that the methodological approach of LR is appropriate and meets with a high degree of satisfaction by participants and projects.

¹⁸ Evaluation sheets

Implementation of Innovation Plans as part of LR:

Indicator 2.ii: incremental benefits of the implementation of an innovation plan

A total of 19 Innovation Plans have been awarded by ROUTASIA with a total amount of USD 51,000 in start capital. Five innovation plans amounting to USD 30,000 were financed in 2012: 3 IPs received USD 5,000 and 2 IPs received USD 7,500. In 2013, 14 innovation plans received USD 1,500 each. After initial campaigning in 2012 to make the IPs known, in 2013 ROUTASIA decided to introduce the same amount for awards for any IP. The content of some Learning Routes is also specifically focused on women's empowerment (two on this topic in Nepal in 2013). The criteria for awarding innovation plans includes the participation of women.

A quality impact study on effectiveness and impact of a selection of innovation plans was conducted in August/September 2013. The complete case studies (4), including videos, will be finalized by November 2013. As the duration of an IP is about one year, and the first batch of IPs wasn't awarded till December 2012, it is too early for a full assessment on the results of the IP. An example may illustrate the potential incremental benefits of IPs.

In October 2012, 7 project managers from the IFAD funded project PADEE, Cambodia, participated in the *Pro-Poor Private Partnership in Rural Development Learning Route*, Thailand, and experienced the successful "Organic Farming Project" in the **Wang Nam Keaw District Community Learning Centers¹⁹, Thailand**. This Centre is visited by up to 1,000 Thai farmers per month, who receive training in community development and farming techniques. Local scholars, called *Prach Chao Bann*, provide practical training as local champions and knowledge providers. As a result of the Learning Route the Cambodian PADEE team elaborated its innovation plan "Organic Farm Clinic Project", which was awarded with USD 7,500 by PROCASUR.

The "Organic Farm Clinic Project" innovation plan defined the replication of some of (i) introduction of organic farming technology, (ii) the importance of the role of the Private Sector, (iii) contract farming modalities, (iv) functioning of community learning centres, and (v) functioning of the organic agriculture market.

This IP aimed to support PADEE in improving the livelihoods of 90,000 poor rural HH and contains clear specific objectives, four components with concrete activities and a budget. After having been awarded initially by the PROCASUR seed capital (USD 7,500), and after having been assessed by the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, Forests and Fishery (MAFF) and IFAD as an excellent initiative to be replicated, MAFF allocated an additional USD 105,000.

These additional funds leveraged the starting capital from PROCASUR and facilitated the implementation of the IP, and further knowledge sharing. Surprisingly, and a good indicator of having appropriated the LR approach and methodology, PADEE managers then decided to create a larger knowledge base in the form of additional knowledge champions before replicating at scale.

By sending a 2nd batch as interns to the Thai learning centre, 16 farmers and 3 regional PADEE project directors, obtained knowledge on organic farming and as knowledge champions.

These internships and the earlier LR led to the following results: i) all participating farmers developed their organic farming systems and increased the area of rice cultivation, ii) all participating farmers organized and implemented training courses for other farmers, iii) all participating farmers received demand by other

¹⁹ The Community Learning Centres visited are:

1. Wang Nam Keaw Organic Farming
2. Mokichi Okada Association (MOA) Thai Foundation
3. Khao Kwan Foundation
4. Plug Mai Lai-Community Learning Center Community Learning Centre

farmers for knowledge services, iv) the design of first Community Learning Centres in PADEE were shaped after the Thai CLC and premises were assigned for construction of the PADEE CLC, v) PADEE regional directors promote the farmer-to-farmer (peer-to peer) training by the new knowledge champions, and vi) the *Prach Chao Bann* from Thailand are invited for the field days in PADEE Cambodia.

All these activities and results were achieved in only 9 months and supported by the national and three participating regional directors. This represents a favourable development worthy of further replication.



Sharing knowledge: farmer Mr. Chin Chhorn participating at a "Community Interest Group" in Takeo province, Cambodia, August 2013.

Another example of replicating the Learning Route approach and tools is the implementation of the IP "Cooperative Promotion Plan-Kapilvastu" formulated at the end of the LR "Women Empowerment, New Businesses and NRM in Nepal" in April 2013. The IP aimed to promote the development of learning exchanges involving members from 4 Cooperatives based in Kapilvastu and supported by PAF. Through learning exchanges, developed on the Learning Route model, representatives of farmer cooperatives will provide capacity building and training to other Coop members (farmers) in cooperative financial and organizational management, model farming and gender mainstreaming. PAF has recognized the 4 project officers and 4 representatives of the cooperatives ("win-win teams") as knowledge champions for implementing leaning routes. So far 60 cooperative members have been trained. This capacity building initiative is supposed to reach 2000 beneficiaries.

Box 3. Practicing new learning approaches to knowledge management, IFAD staff from Nepal

Sanjay Kumar Jha is the Regional Director of Poverty Alleviation Fund (PAF) for the district of Kapilvastu. In 2012 and 2013 Sanjay took part, as trainee, to 2 systematization processes revolving around the successful experiences of two community organizations, in Kapilvastu and Kavre districts that become host cases of Learning Routes afterwards. In April and September 2013, Sanjay supported the implementation of 2 Learning Routes in Nepal providing methodological support in the development of activities a part of the Coordination Team. Thanks to the continued exposure to the methodology and his active participation to all stages of the learning cycle, Sanjay was able to get a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and tools used by PROCASUR in knowledge management. The knowledge and skills have then been employed by PAF to promote knowledge sharing events using PROCASUR's learning and methodological approach (Learning Routes internal to PAF, designed and currently under development, and the organization of exposure visits open to foreign visitors, e.g. staff from World Bank supported projects in Indonesia that visited Kapilvastu in August 2013). On the process of systematization, Sanjay says: "Before we used to go to the community, ask some questions and say, "OK, that's fine". But thanks to this new methodology we learned how to get information in a participative way, for example through role play, to systematize every aspect of the experience understanding the actors involved and their roles and responsibilities. This provided a lot of positive feedback to us. Before we used to think that only a couple of people in the community was doing a good job, but now, thanks to exercises like the "map of actors", we realised that many individuals and organizations are supporting and that their contribution was crucial for the community to achieve what they have today".

The challenge is how to move from case studies that illustrate isolated successes, and not impact at a large scale, to a more systematic capture of change in the form of an impact M&E system implemented by the beneficiaries themselves (projects, groups). The design of the IPs should include a M&E framework for follow up of the activities and results. The role of the local champions, project staff and ROUTASIA's focal points in a participatory M&E systems has to be defined. This represents a major challenge for Phase II.

The indicator 2.ii 'incremental benefits of the implementation of an innovation plan' has been illustrated. Leverage of the awarded IP funding far outperformed expectations. The case studies are illustrative for showing pathways of scaling up. They do not represent a solid basis for a comprehensive assessment on impact pathway indicators. After one year of implementation it is not reasonable to expect measurable results from ROUTASIA in this field. It is simply too early in the grant programme.

Component 3: Knowledge dissemination and methodological adoption

3.i Degree of dissemination of LR programme products and 3.ii. Degree of adoption of LR by 3rd parties

Knowledge dissemination

3.i Degree of dissemination of LR programme products

The manual for implementing the LR has been published, in English. ROUTASIA has customized the PROCASUR Learning Routes toolkit to the APR settings. The toolkit organizes the main concepts, steps and tools for each stage and is equipped with the standard forms and written, visual and audiovisual examples of best practices. The toolkit has been utilized as support material during several trainings. Specific tools are available in Laotian and Thai (2012), Vietnamese, Nepali and Bengalese (2013). ROUTASIA national focal points participated in the review, customization and testing of the toolkit in order to achieve greatest cultural appropriateness.

ROUTASIA has disseminated contents in 4 main online knowledge platforms for dissemination of knowledge products, learning services and partnership opportunities. These knowledge platforms are: (i) PROCASUR regional website: www.asia.procasur.org (e.g. 1780 visits, 860 returned visitors between April and September 2013), (ii) a section at the IFADasia webportal: www.asia.ifad.org/web/1304-procasur (35 postings, managed by IFAD), (iii) a Facebook Site: [facebook.com/procasur.asia](https://www.facebook.com/procasur.asia) (2950 "I like it" fans as September, 2013), and (iv) <http://ifad-un.blogspot.com/>

*"Thank you so much for Procasur approved the my Action Plan for the 'Develop Asparagus' group plantation at Champasak Province, Laos PDR, I use to work a maximum benefit, Facebook 9.Oct. 2013
Thanks to all. I saw the photos of our country, taken by learning route, Procasur. I hope to see members of Procasur again and again in Nepal. Facebook 29.Sept. 2013"*

ROUTASIA largely surpassed its target of dissemination of 15 communication products²⁰. So far, 31 case studies have been systematized (printed as publications), brochures (in EN, TH, LA, VT, NP languages), 1 cartoon on LR methodology (EN), 1 educational poster (EN), 1 publication of LR testimonies from Vietnam. ROUTASIA has participated in 2 International Forums, the UN-South South Cooperation Expo in Vienna 2012 and the Indigenous People Forum at IFAD 2013.

ROUTASIA is mentioned in the national press in Cambodia :

<http://www.un.org.kh/index.php/newsroom/press-release-and-media-advisory/663-2013-ifad-october24>

²⁰ Annex 3 lists internet addresses for publications

Indicator 3.1 Degree of dissemination of LR programme products is fully on track. Communication products are available in different regional languages and on websites like <http://asia.procasur.org/resources/#all>. A user-friendly overhaul of the webpage is pending in order to facilitate Knowledge management exchange and downloads among non-ROUTASIA web-users.

Methodological adoption

3.ii. Degree of adoption of LR by 3rd parties

The overall target was 3 IFAD funded projects trained and assisted in the adoption of the methodology. Following demand and modified capacities, a total of 9 projects has been trained instead: 2 projects from Laos: SNRMPEP, RLIP; 4 projects from Nepal: HVAP, LFLP, PAF, WUPAP; 2 projects from Vietnam: IMPP, DPRPR have been assisted and enabled in the adoption of the LR methodology. In Cambodia, PROCASUR enabled PADEE to organize peer-to-peer learning exchanges (Cambodia-Thailand internship) and as part of project training activities according to the LR methodology (see description of component 2).

Delivery was accelerated due to pronounced demand. Progress was more advanced than corresponding with proposed phasing for the 4 years of the grant programme. This positive experience of significant efficiency gains responding to partner demand and opportunities, and aligned with institutional delivery capacities illustrates the early maturity of ROUTASIA to move out of the ‘awareness-and-trust raising coupled to intensive handholding’ and towards a second-level facilitator role of change. This consideration drives the re-focus to a training-of-trainers (ToT) approach for Phase II thus allowing scaling up and higher outreach.

A total of 4 national/regional organizations were capacitated to act as LR approach and methodology service providers. ROUTASIA has identified and worked with regional and national organizations as service providers such as the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), INAFI (Bangladesh), Management Consulting Company (MCG) Vietnam, and, as partner, AIT, Thailand which was engaged in LR. The corresponding implementation agreements were signed. INAFI will be the main partner for the forthcoming LR in Bangladesh. In Vietnam, Nepal, Cambodia, IFAD funded project were strengthened as training providers (see above).

AIPP already acted as a main partner in the LR “Managing Forests, sustaining Lives, Improving Livelihoods of Indigenous people and Ethnic groups in the Mekong Region. A joined publication (IFAD, PROCASUR and AIPP) is a direct result of this partnership.²¹

“The objective of the partnership was to mutually learn together the good practices of the indigenous communities on sustainable resource management. AIPP provided facilitation where as Procasur provided methodology, with financial contribution from both parties. The partnership was successful in implementing the Learning Route Journey and sensitizing the government representatives on indigenous issues” (AIPP, Monkey Survey, July 2013)

MCG was the main partner for the implementation of the LR “Strengthening Farmers Organizations, developing Sustainable Business Models and PP in Agriculture in Vietnam” in July 2013. A repetition of this LR by MDG was planned in October 2013, but due to projects areas affected by the recent taifun, the LR had to be postponed to late 2013/beginning 2014. MCG as an implementing and executive body of ROUTASIA has already provided a concept note for a LR/knowledge management project in Vietnam for 2014, to support IFAD funded projects to i) apply the methodology and tools of the Learning Route to capitalize their experience into knowledge products, ii) disseminate their best practices and innovations by

²¹ AIPP/IFAD/PROCASUR, forthcoming, MANAGING FORESTS, SUSTAINING LIVES, IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE MEKONG REGION, LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LEARNING ROUTE

implementing a sequence of Learning Routes by their own, iii) to enhance the capacity of KM Officers and MCG to undertake peer –to-peer exchanges at territorial level based on the Learning Routes approach and methodology.

The indicator 3.ii. Degree of adoption of LR by 3rd parties is fully met, if not surpassed. Early successes in adoption indicate a possible and desirable re-focus of ROUTASIA away from ‘handholding for delivery/implementation’ to ToT of regional and /or national partner organizations for Phase II.

IV. Financial performance

The overall financial performance of ROUTASIA is shown below. It fully meets expectations corresponding to Phase I.

	Planned for 2012-2015 (4 years period) USD		Budget utilized 2012- 2013 (2 years period) USD	Planned for 2012-2015 (4 years period) USD		Budget utilized 2012- 2013 (2 years period) USD	Planned for 2012-2015 (4 years period) USD		Budget utilized 2012- 2013 USD
Component	IFAD	%	IFAD	PROCASUR	%	PROCASUR	Beneficiaries and partners	%	Beneficiaries and partners
C1:Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests	100 000	5	40 000	20 000	20	2 000	30 000	10	22000
C2:Design and implementation of Learning Routes	945 000	47	396500	20 000	20	20 000	250 000	83	127 750
C3: Knowledge dissemination and methodological adoption	350 000	18	157000	25 000	25	18 000	20 000	7	
Programme Regional Facilitation	405 000	20	179 696	20 000	20	8 000	0	0	
Financial Management	200 000	10	85 000	15 000	15	2 000	0	0	
Total	2 000 000	100	858 196	100 000	100	48 000	300 000	100	149 750

ROUTASIA performed highly satisfactory in financials terms. Contribution of beneficiaries and partners to the implementation of programme activities was a 100% of the foreseen contribution. The partners and beneficiaries covered costs for logistic of participants, food and lodging, local transport and rent of venues during preparation and implementation of LR. Disbursement rate is 86% of the target amount for Phase I and is scheduled to reach 100% by year’s end.

The table below provides an overview of the unit costs for the 2 components, i) investment in local and knowledge champions, and ii) design and implementation of Learning Routes. The unit costs per complete cycle of a LR in component 1 correspond to the design cost (~USD 170/person) and is deemed reasonable and commensurate with the introductory stages of awareness raising on innovative LR mechanisms and approaches in the region. The costs for implementing the LR came down five times from the initial design cost (from ~USD 300/person to ~USD 60/person) which proves the high demand for LR once awareness and trust were built up between ROUTASIA and partners and demonstrates ROUTASIA has been able to realize significant scaling up effects and efficiency gains by reaching 8.500 beneficiaries, 4 times more as designed for Phase I, and double the outreach foreseen for the whole programme duration. Such performance does not illustrate that the cautious ambitions were inappropriate at design, they merely illustrate that demand and capacities to accommodate innovations has turned out to be far larger than anticipated and that savings can be made by operating at scale. Phase II can and must build up on this recognition.

Caution is expressed to not review the unit cost further downward as new countries are opened up under ROUTASIA Phase II which may represent different, or even less favorable, conditions as the first batch of pioneer countries and projects. Overall outreach reached so far needs to be consolidated at the price of strengthening the IP coaching, moving into TOT mode to obtain the desired scaling up effects, and strengthening M&E towards performance and impact monitoring, including financial performance.

Components	Total planned (4 years) USD '000	Total outreach planned (persons)	USD/ person	Spent in 2 years USD '000	Total outreach Phase I (persons)	USD/ person
C1: Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests	150	900	166	64	380	168
C2: Design and implementation of Learning Routes	1.215	3960	306	544	8690	62

V. Assessment of Sustainability

The sustainability prospects of the outcomes of ROUTASIA are favourable and form part of the 4-year programme approach. As such, the following elements are identified in Phase I which support sustainability of the overall results of the Programme:

1. Local knowledge champions have been trained and are available for peer-to-peer learning (farmers and IFAD project staff)
2. IFAD partner projects have accepted the LR methodology as a useful instrument for knowledge management and co-finance Innovation Plans
3. Reliable partnerships with regional and national organizations have been developed with INAFI (Bangladesh), AIPP (Thailand and Lao PDR), and MCG (Vietnam) for the continuation of the LR methodological approach.
4. Early experiences are available in the implementation of Innovation Plans (e.g. Cambodia, Nepal)
5. Early experiences in mainstreaming the LR methodology are available (e.g. Nepal, Vietnam, Cambodia)

In order to secure these elements towards enhanced sustainability Phase II needs to address:

1. The local knowledge champions base needs to be expanded by ROUTASIA and retained by IFAD co-funded and 3rd party projects as knowledge service providers. This would require further support by ROUTASIA of mentoring the mixed working teams consisting of project staff and farmers
2. IFAD partner projects should be motivated to incorporate the LR methodology into their Annual Plans of Work and Budget, and monitor correspondingly. ROUTASIA needs to support this mainstreaming by making the projects aware of appropriate K-platforms and supporting projects in the dissemination of their own successes
3. Regional and national partner organization become the implementers of further LR under guidance ('mentoring/coaching') by ROUTASIA. This is the essence of the shift towards the Training-of-Trainers approach
4. Building on early successes in the implementation of Innovation Plans and mainstreaming of LR, the corresponding stakeholders need to be further supported by ROUTASIA to achieve multiplier effects beyond the immediate scope of initial participants and knowledge champions.

VI. Conclusions and way forward for Phase II

1) Conclusions

The programme 'Strengthening knowledge sharing on innovations using the learning routes methodology in Asia and the Pacific', ROUTASIA, implemented by PROCASUR, has proven to be relevant, effective and efficient. It demonstrates clear potentials for scaling up and impact.

The likelihood of achieving the development objective is given as major outcomes have already been realized, or are in an advanced state of realization. Commitments have been made that engage Phase II. ROUTASIA is on track or even has surpassed its targets in all 3 components of Phase I.

All 3 triggers for the release of funds for Phase II have been met at mid-term (October 2013). The major findings of the Aide Memoire (July 2013) are confirmed.

The ROUTASIA programme offers ample scope for consolidation through the agreed Phase II. The programme strategy, its objectives and the 3 components remain valid. In order to consolidate the now reached targets, achieve those partly met, and address scaling up potentials as originally proposed in the grant design within the programme period of 4 years, ROUTASIA needs to continue its activities as foreseen under the 4-year grant design.

Opportunities for further quality enhancement of relevance, efficacy and efficiency towards impact and scaling up are available and can be pro-actively explored by ROUTASIA and the newly created regional institutional partner capacities for Phase II.

Key elements of the assessment are brought together as follows:

Implementation modality:

The decentralized implementation modality by PROCASUR/ROUTASIA, an organization based and operating in 'The South' and which is geared to regional and national partnerships, is deemed appropriate and supportive of delivering the development objectives. Enhancement and consolidation of the existing partnerships and capacity building of new partners in the countries where ROUTASIA has recently been established is deemed necessary for consolidation and expansion.

Trigger 1: Achievements of milestone targets

On balance, the milestone targets set for Phase I were not overly ambitious or unrealistic and correspond to 'exploring new lands'. These have broadly been met, or even surpassed. The outlook for Phase II in meeting the programme development objectives is highly positive especially vis-à-vis a proposed re-focus on capacitating partner organizations in the region to become 'Trainers-of-Trainers'. Some of the indicators need to be revised and targets need to be reviewed. It is suggested that certain outputs are reduced e.g. the number of local talents and/or the number of peer-to peer knowledge champions, the number of LR, the number of IP designed, awarded and coached. Other output targets need to be increased, e.g. the number of persons benefitting and/or the number of projects trained and assisted in adoption of the methodology.

Trigger 2: Acceptance of the approach and methodology by 10 IFAD projects and Programs

This trigger has been met satisfactorily, or even surpassed. Consolidation of the methodology, further adaptation of country specific requirements and monitoring of the replication of the learning approach and tools would form a key area for Phase II. It would be recommendable to have at least one (1) fully trained national organization per host country where LR methodological approach have been conducted or are to be applied. Where no such capacities may be developed within the remaining 2 years of Phase II, ROUTASIA

is suggested to desist from 'opening up' new markets or limit its engagement to narrowly focused and short-term time-bound support services to IFAD projects only.

Trigger 3: Competency recognition of 10 national and/or regional organizations

The trigger is 70% achieved. This is more than sufficient for this early stage of implementation. It's the consultant's opinion that this 3rd trigger is somewhat non-appropriate for a 2-year funding period .

Component 1: Stocktaking of relevant knowledge and interests

The systematic capture of essential information is implemented with participatory research techniques hitherto mostly unknown to the learning participants. This represents a valuable achievement and merits to be consolidated and expanded in Phase II.

The utilization of the knowledge harvested and the participation of local champions exceeds the original expectations. Written case studies enabled local support not only to Learning Routes but also to IFAD supervision missions, COSOP and Projects Designs. 40 local champions have delivered services to LR participants and/or 3rd parties. The use 90 properly trained and motivated knowledge champions as well as the growing tendency to use learning cases, all represent a highly appropriate, effective and pertinent way to enhance self-esteem among participants and peers, and enhances overall project performance. Inclusion and equity may be favorably affected. Phase II should seek to consolidate these aspects and re-enforce the ToT approach strengthening the knowledge champion methodology and outreach. An indicative outreach number of knowledge champions could be around 200, doubling the current outreach of about 90 knowledge champions.

Component 2: Design and implementation of Learning Routes

Participants' satisfaction with the LR

The results of the different surveys indicate that the methodological approach of LR is appropriate and meets with a high degree of satisfaction by participants and projects. The questionnaire for the evaluations of the LR should be revised in order to capture better the Learning objectives and the qualitative statements.

Implementation of Innovation Plans as part of LR

The incremental benefits of the implementation of innovation plans have amply been illustrated. Leverage of the awarded IP funding far outperformed expectations. The case studies are illustrative for showing pathways of scaling up. However, case studies alone do not represent a solid basis for a comprehensive assessment on impact pathway indicators. After one year of implementation it is not reasonable to expect measurable results from ROUTASIA in this field. It is simply too early in the grant programme for impact measurement.

Component 3: Knowledge dissemination and methodological adoption

Knowledge dissemination

Communication products are available in different regional languages and on websites such as <http://asia.PROCASUR.org/resources/#all>. A user-friendly overhaul of the webpage is pending in order to facilitate knowledge management exchange and downloads among non-ROUTASIA web-users.

Methodological adoption

Early successes in adoption of the LR methodology and approach indicate a feasible and desirable re-focus of ROUTASIA away from 'handholding for delivery/implementation', which correctly corresponds to Phase

I, to 'Training-of-Trainers (ToT)' of regional and/or national partner organizations for scaling up and impact corresponding to Phase II.

2) Ways forward for Phase II

Recommendation for Phase II broadly coincide with those made in the July 2013 supervision mission and refer to:

R1. With all triggers met, IFAD is to swiftly approve the release of the 2nd tranche of USD 1,0m for the foreseen USD 2,4m programme funding in order to continue ROUTASIA for consolidation and scaling up in Phase II thus leaving no finance or institutional gap. Commitments by ROUTASIA, and hence counting with IFAD's tacit management approval, to service projects in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have been made and need to be rewarded at peril of reputational risk for IFAD should these commitments remain void. In order to close any eventual administrative gap between Phases, it is recommended that reimbursement for expenditures of eligible categories covering the period between Phase I and the effectiveness of Phase II be agreed between IFAD and PROCASUR. This arrangement is deemed viable as IFAD has already agreed (by President's Report) to the 4-year programme. Hence the reimbursable cost period would NOT be the period between EB approval and effectiveness, but the signalled one.

R2. The Innovation Plans (IP) have demonstrated to be an appropriate vehicle for change. The continued use of start-up or seed capital (equal for all new IP ventures) provided by ROUTASIA and leveraged (at varying degrees) by the client or partner projects is recommended. Additional funding by ROUTASIA to existing IP ventures or repeat IP is not recommended; such funding –if available- would best be allocated to new IP ventures. ROUTASIA may render valuable methodological services to expanding IPs, e.g. in the fields of knowledge management, scaling up advices and M&E of impact. The incremental number of IPs may be determined by the stakeholders.

R3. ROUTASIA is to gradually shift from 'handholding for delivery/implementation' of LR and IP to 'Training-of-Trainers (ToT)' of regional and/or national partner organizations for scaling up and impact. This would require enhanced attention to institutional capacity strengthening of these partners organizations. It is deemed recommendable that in each partner country at least one (1) competency or resource center be strengthened to take over the implementation of LR and IP. ROUTASIA, where applicable, would focus on refining approach and methodology, knowledge management, scaling up advices and M&E of impact. Its value added as knowledge broker would consist of bringing together pertinent 'network' lessons and good practices in APR.

R4. M&E of impact pathways will constitute a management field to be strengthened and further operationalized. The recently introduced M&E strategy with its internally reviewed logframe and output and outcome indicators, needs to be further aligned with ROUTASIA and partner budgets. Case studies, testimonials, good practices, and other 'stories from the field' are considered useful and should not be discontinued. However, a set of measurable indicators also needs to be implemented and documented by the respective host projects. The use of ex-alumni, i.e. the knowledge champions and other LR or IP trainees, is suggested to be explored in this context. ROUTASIA can then draw on these findings and, where required, engage in field verifications. Continued use of IFADasia portal and other websites for dissemination of knowledge on impact is recommended.

R5. Sustainability prospects of the results of ROUTASIA can be further enhanced by: i) securing the use of the local knowledge champions (farmers, IFAD project staff) particularly in mixed working teams mentored by ROUTASIA, ii) mainstreaming of LR and IP into APWB of IFAD and 3rd party funded projects supported by ROUTASIA in the dissemination of the project successes, iii) shifting to TOT (see above R3), and, iv) supporting implementers of IPs to achieve multiplier effects beyond the immediate scope of initial participants and knowledge champions.

R6. Scaling up represents a big opportunity for ROUTASIA and APR. Initial successes (e.g. Vietnam, Nepal) demonstrate that there is a fertile field for innovations in the APR region. ROUTASIA commitment to continued intensive dialogue with CPM/CO and PMUs has led to admirable initiatives on scaling up that merit to be replicated. Such scaling up should be a strategic choice by APR management and its CPM/CO in support of ongoing and future loan operations. As such it should be part of policy dialogue in the context of annual reviews of RB COSOPs and supervision/MTR of selected portfolio programmes and projects. The renewed partnership between IFAD and the Asian Development Bank would offer a suitable vehicle to capture new audiences.