



# CHAPTER 7

Factors in the success of the WIND training in Viet Nam  
- Promoting farmers' self-help initiatives



In the previous chapters, the authors have described the development of the WIND training programme since its inception in a remote agricultural village in the Mekong Delta area in Viet Nam. Reviewing the rich experiences of the WIND programme, this chapter analyses and discusses the reasons the WIND programme was able to provide practical support measures to many farmers in Viet Nam and other countries. The authors pointed to: (1) responding to farmers' immediate needs; (2) Active participation of women and men; (3) participatory approaches; (4) practical training tools; (5) WIND farmer volunteers and mini WIND workshops; (6) national policy support; and (7) international cooperation to support local initiatives, as important reasons for the success of the WIND programme and have described some details of these seven points. These points will continue to be key issues for the future success of the WIND training programme in different countries and regions.

### 7-1. Responding to farmers' immediate needs

The WIND training programme was designed to respond to farmers' immediate needs to improve their safety, health and quality of life. It promoted simple and practical improvements such as better work posture, passageways, wheeled devices, ventilation, heat protection, and resting facilities. These were the areas many farmers actually wanted to change in their everyday working lives and were also areas in which they could make visible changes by using their own available resources.

Farmers in different countries have applied this immediate needs approach and their work experiences to devise practical improvements. This has given external collaborators like us important lessons on how we can work with farmers relying

on their own initiatives. Outsiders like us may have our own views and agendas when we approach farmers. Technical specialists might be interested in addressing the more narrow technical aspects of farmers' working lives such as unsafe use of pesticides and machines, and carrying heavy materials. However, local farmers identify their immediate needs in a more wholistic manner. Flexible, multi-faceted support measures are required to meet local immediate needs. The WIND programme has tried to become a support package in this regard.

The WIND training was built on farmers' daily practices. Before the training, we found a number of local good examples which farmers had implemented without having any safety and health training. Improving safety, health and working conditions was already part of their daily practices. Some specialists and practitioners in occupational safety and health have asked the same question of the authors, "Why did farmers not implement their improvements before the WIND training?" We have responded to them by mentioning, "Yes, farmers have carried out improvements before the WIND training. The WIND training was to further support and speed up their self-help actions."

Practical experiences in safety and health improvements through the WIND training have facilitated new actions of participating farmers. Some farmers have started producing new agricultural products to increase their income. Others have improved work layouts and methods to improve productivity. In addition, the WIND training has enhanced family ties as well as collaborative actions at the community level. The WIND training has served as an entry point to development activities at both family and community levels.



## 7-2. Active participation of women and men

Women farmers have played a crucial role in the success of the WIND training programme. Women farmers understood the need to improve many aspects of both their working and living conditions and have proposed practical ideas for immediate improvements. They were responsible for their proposals. They started their improvement actions with simple, practical household improvements such as removing unnecessary materials from floors, adjusting the working height in the kitchens, attaching labels to their ingredient bottles, or relocating utensils in good order. These immediate, visible changes have increased their confidence, and led to their sustained improvement efforts.

The WIND training has promoted the equal participation of women and men farmers, and facilitated their joint improvement actions. Participating women and men from the same families presented their improvement plans in the training as their joint commitment. If only one woman or man from a single household had attended the training, they would have needed to explain their improvement plans to other family members and some of them might have failed to convince the family members.

The WIND training provides important opportunities to recognize and respect each other's work. We have witnessed that male farmers who participated in the WIND training appreciated the work of their wives and actively participated in household work such as cooking and cleaning after attending the training. These changes in male farmers have built up a solid basis for the cooperative actions between women and men.

Many women farmers later became active WIND farmer volunteers. The WIND training spread through their personal networks in their communities. Even women who had not directly attended the WIND training carried out improvements after looking at those developed in their neighbouring families.



Figure 7-1. Both men and women participating in household work



Figure 7-2. Confident women WIND farmer volunteers carry out many mini WIND workshops

### 7-3. Participatory approaches

Participatory approaches have been fundamental to the WIND training. WIND trainers have spent a lot of energy in supporting the active participation of farmers during the training and enhanced the farmers' sense of ownership in the training. At the beginning of the training sessions, WIND trainers told participating farmers that they were the centre of the WIND training. After a brief introduction session, the participants were taken to a farm and a farmer's house for the checklist exercise. It was essential to organize this checklist exercise at the start of the training before providing presentations by trainers. This was to encourage farmers to plan their improvements instead of waiting for outside support. In the WIND training, farmers have always been at the centre of planning and implementation, not the passive recipients of technical knowledge.

The WIND training organized many small group discussions among participating farmers. Even shy farmers spoke about their improvement ideas in small group discussions. Group work increased participants' sense of ownership with regard to the training and implementation of the improvements. Participating farmers found their daily work experiences in their farms and rice fields to be rich sources for improving safety, health and working conditions. Active discussions with neighbouring farmers have facilitated the exchange of diverse improvement ideas and the achievement of practical consensus.

Participating farmers presented group discussion results in front of other participants. Many presentations have received positive feedback from participating farmers. This was the first such experience for some farmers at least and increased their confidence, “Yes, we can make changes through our own ideas and actions !”.

Following the training, participating farmers implemented improvements in their working and living conditions. These improvements were visible evidence that farmers can make changes using their own ideas. The “sense of achievements” further motivated the farmers to sustain their innovative actions.

## 7-4. Practical training tools

The WIND training programme has three key tools to promote the active participation of farmers in improving their working conditions. They are: (1) WIND action-checklist; (2) good example photo sheets; and (3) follow-up books for planning and recording. These three tools have translated the concept of participatory approaches into real actions of participating farmers. These tools were easy-to-understand and have many clear-cut illustrations for the immediate action of participating farmers. The inter-related tools provide farmers with practical assistance at different stages of their planning and action.

The WIND action-checklist was the heart of the participatory training tools used in the WIND training. Details of the action-checklist are already mentioned in Chapter 1 (See Figure 1-3). The WIND action-checklist was the core planning tool for farmers. With the application of the action-checklist, they were able to look at their working and living conditions with fresh eyes and come up with initial ideas for improvements. Action phrases and clear-cut illustrations used in the action-checklist motivated participating farmers to develop practical ideas from their own work experiences.



Figure 7-3. Photo sheet showing good examples was a powerful tool for WIND farmer volunteers



Figure 7-4. Support tools for WIND farmer volunteers: action-checklists, good example photo sheets, and follow-up books for planning and recording.

Photo sheets or photo booklets showing local good examples provided participating farmers with a number of practical ideas for improvements. We have also developed many illustrations based on good example photos. The farmers were able to devise their own improvement ideas after looking at the examples of the photo booklet. Since they were all good examples made by farmers from the same country with a similar socio-economic background, participating farmers were able to agree on the ideas from these examples and apply them to make their own improvements.

Follow-up books served as a practical tool for farmers to plan, record and sustain their improvement activities after attending the initial WIND training. Each farmer family was given one follow-up book. Participating farmers and family members recorded their family improvement plans in the book and, one by one, recorded the improvements they had implemented. Later, WIND trainers in Cantho developed a poster to record the progress of the improvements. Farmers displayed the posters in their houses as a reminder of their improvement plans. In fact, many farmers enjoyed recording the progress of the improvements and have continued their planning and actions. WIND trainers collected the improvement examples and counted the number of the improvements through the follow-up books.

WIND farmer volunteers and community collaborators regularly visited participating farmers and collected examples of improvements implemented. The follow-up books recorded which planned improvements had actually been carried out and which had not. The results provided useful information for WIND trainers to understand the further support needs of local farmers.



Figure 7-5. Good example photo contest in an achievement workshop (Dien Bien province, Viet Nam)

## 7-5. WIND farmer volunteers and mini WIND workshops

The WIND farmer volunteer system presented an innovative way to extend the WIND training widely at the grassroots level. Previously we had to rely on safety and health specialists, practitioners or inspectors to provide OSH training. The number of these resource persons was limited and many farmers could not be reached. On some occasions, the resource persons were not very familiar with the practical needs of local farmers.

Having created the WIND farmer volunteer system in Cantho, the Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health then began to disseminate it widely in Cantho and surrounding provinces in Viet Nam. The Centre proved that farmers are the best trainers for other farmers in safety, health and working conditions since they know the immediate needs of their neighbouring farmers. Practical training materials have been developed to support the training activities of WIND farmer volunteers. As a result, the number of improvements developed by trained farmers continues to increase. This multiplier effect has been possible because of the extensive training activities by many WIND farmer volunteers at grassroots level. Safety and health specialists alone could not have reached such a huge number of farmers.

The mini WIND workshop was another invention in Cantho in order to extend the coverage of the WIND training. Mini WIND workshops have been held in houses of WIND farmer volunteers by using simplified WIND action-checklists and good example photo booklets. Five or six farmers gathered together and spent 2 – 3 hours in each mini WIND training workshop. Mini WIND workshops have become popular in many villages since the training content was immediately useful to farmers and the training venue was easy to access (It's in their village!).

## 7-6. National policy support

The 1st National OSH Programme of Viet Nam selected agriculture as the country's priority action area in OSH. The WIND training programme was integrated into the National Programme as a practical measure to reach the national goal. This strong national policy support was epoch-making and ensured that WIND trainers now receive support from the national government system to extend the programme.

Funds from the national budget were allocated for the programme and inter-agency cooperation was promoted to implement the programme. The government regularly reviewed the achievements of the WIND programme for their effectiveness. The PSCs, consisting of departments of labour, health and agriculture, and women's unions and farmers' unions at provincial level, strengthened the networking of WIND farmer volunteers as already described in Chapter 5.

The National OSH Programme of Viet Nam also provided a good example to neighbouring countries. Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia and Thailand included OSH in agriculture as a priority action area in their National OSH Programmes and recognized the WIND training programme as a practical measure to realize their goals.

## 7-7. International cooperation to support local initiatives

International technical cooperation has played a vital role in developing and promoting the WIND programme. The initial cooperation activities launched in 1991 between the Vi Thanh Hospital School, Viet Nam and the Institute for Science of Labour, Japan focused on observing the real work of farmers in the Mekong Delta and identified their practical improvement needs. These findings and experiences later formed the essential background from which to select appropriate items for the WIND action-checklist, promote equal participation of women and men, and organize farmers to be WIND farmer volunteers.

The ILO's WISE (Work Improvement in Small Enterprises) training programme provided the WIND programme with practical, participatory training methodologies such as action-checklist exercises, group work, or low-cost improvement approaches. The WIND programme applied the five technical areas of the WISE programme (materials handling, workstation design, physical environment, machine safety and welfare facilities) and modified them for farmers' practical needs.

### Facilitator roles in international cooperation for inter-ministerial actions

International collaborators in Viet Nam and other countries have facilitated collaborative action among different ministries and agencies within the same country to promote the WIND programme. The participatory methodologies used in the WIND training were new to government officials and different from their own training methods. Vietnamese WIND trainers have been asked fundamental questions about participatory methodologies, for example, “Why do we show only good examples, and not bad examples?”, “Why do we start the training with the checklist exercise and not with technical presentations?”. The Vietnamese WIND trainers have responded to these kinds of questions carefully and have stressed the importance of positive reinforcement of the self-help improvement initiatives of local farmers. In addition to the improvement efforts of local trainers, international collaborators have provided technical explanations and showed success stories from other countries. The joint efforts of local and international resource persons have increased the understanding of local government officials on the WIND training methodologies.





The advisory role of international resource persons has facilitated closer collaboration among the WIND trainers from different organizations and agencies. For instance, Cambodia trained WIND trainers from the government, workers' and employers' organizations and NGOs. International and national resource persons have worked together in national planning and achievement workshops on the WIND programme and consolidated collaboration among different agencies.

### **Cooperation with neighbouring countries**

International cooperation has facilitated the exchange of experiences between neighbouring countries. Safety and health practitioners from Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand were invited to contribute to the initial bilateral cooperation activities in the development of the WIND programme between Japan and Viet Nam. Subsequently, ILO technical cooperation activities in WIND have facilitated this kind of exchange between neighbouring countries and organized regional meetings. The regional networks were a powerful means of exchanging information and practical solutions in OSH in agriculture.

The WIND training experiences in Cambodia and Viet Nam have been shared within ASEAN-OSHNET. ASEAN-OSHNET is a strong regional network of occupational safety and health departments of the governments of the ten ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) countries. ASEAN-OSHNET is increasingly playing important roles in promoting safety and health in agriculture and other grassroots workplaces.

## 7-8. Conclusions

The reasons behind the success of the WIND training programme encompass a range of positive efforts at different levels: from the wisdom of women and men farmers at the grassroots level to government policy support at a national level, or, from local initiatives to develop user-friendly training materials to international efforts to extend the coverage of the WIND programme. Everyone involved shared the will to improve OSH and working conditions of farmers and contributed to devising practical approaches and tools in the WIND training programmes. Their mutual efforts produced a synergy which increased the impact of the WIND programme.