



# The Capitalisation of Experience into Knowledge Actors' hidden capital

Sustainable Land Use Programme

Sustainable Land Use Programme

**The Capitalisation of Experience  
into Knowledge  
Actors' hidden capital**

May 2005

**THE  
CAPITALISATION OF  
EXPERIENCE  
INTO  
KNOWLEDGE**

Actors' hidden capital

Adapted by Alain Cuvelier  
from Guy Bedard and the "Tany Sy Ala" project team's report,  
Madagascar, May 1999

VFFP, October 2002

## Table of contents

	Page
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. THE CONCEPT OF CAPITALISATION</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1. Definition: the capitalisation of experience into knowledge	2
2.2. Further definitions for better understanding capitalisation	2
2.3. Ten important characteristics of capitalisation	5
<b>3. METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1. Introduction	10
3.2. The personal witness	11
3.3. The cross-interview	12
3.4. Group capitalisation	13
3.5. The capitalisation file	14
<b>4. CAPITALISATION IN PRACTICE</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1. Three approaches	15
4.2. The practical steps of the capitalisation process	15
4.3. Organising the capitalisation work	16
<b>5. CONCLUSION</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Annex 1 – Example of Capitalisation file</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Annex 2 – Example Capitalisation with photos sample</b>	<b>21</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This document explains the concept of capitalisation of experience into knowledge and suggests how it can be applied by VFFP. Many of the ideas and methods presented are the outcome of work done by the Tany Sy Ala (TSA) project team with two external consultants in Madagascar, and have been adapted to fit the VFFP context.

Capitalisation is a difficult process that requires time, energy and specific resources. Although the idea of capitalising experience was introduced for the first time to VFFP in March 2001, it is only recently that action is being taken to implement some of these ideas.

It is the intention of this report to encourage colleagues to capitalise VFFP's experience without it becoming a burden. While many suggested methods of capitalisation are given, it would be wise to limit activities to what is feasible at each level, so that capitalisation can be incorporated smoothly into VFFP.

As a first practical step, the regular reporting system could be carried out to identify lessons learnt. The next step could be to implement capitalisation exercises on special occasions. It is hoped that these activities will show VFFP staff the importance of capitalisation and that they will begin to consider it a regular activity.

Capitalisation has obviously to serve the purposes of VFFP. However, it would also be good for individuals to try out some of its methods in order to experience the process and learn for themselves some of its benefits and limitations.

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF CAPITALISATION

### 2.1. Definition: the capitalisation of experience into knowledge

*Put simply, the role of capitalisation is to retrieve and share knowledge.*

Capitalisation is also:

- An analysis of personal experiences.
- The identification of important facts and issues which could be responsible for an ongoing project's success or failure.
- Extracting both positive and negative lessons learnt, and formulating them in a way so that they inform future project planning.
- Improving personal and organisational practice.

When carrying out a process of capitalisation it is advisable to:

- Be holistic and focus on the broad effects of a project in relation to its objectives rather than simply looking at the results of specific activities.
- If possible, link the experience analysed with experiences from other projects in order to make conclusions about the lessons learnt.
- Prioritise what is useful for the future project phase.

Capitalising is not:

- An exercise in self-justification for the organisation involved to prove its original approach was the correct one.
- An evaluation of the activities undertaken by the programme/project.

(Adapted from the Swiss Development and Cooperation (SDC) Agency in Madagascar)

### 2.2. Further definitions for better understanding capitalisation

#### The actions

In development projects it is usual to define objectives, strategies, results, and activities. However, these must be adapted on practical grounds according to the nature of the organisations in the field. For example, in the case of VFFP, the activities developed with the Nursery Malik Samity (NMS) and the Tree Farmers' Groups (TFG) constitute two important project actions that fit into the project's defined objectives. It is these which are capitalised.

#### The actors

They are the people involved in the actions such as the nursery owners, the tree growers, the field staff of partner NGOs, the Regional Service Centre (RSC) and Network Coordination Unit (NCU) staff, and the service providers. Organisations such as the NMSs can be also considered actors.

## **Experience and Knowledge**

New activities implemented by projects create new experiences and impact the knowledge previously acquired by the actors in positive and/or negative ways. For example:

- A Field Supervisor from the Tree Farmers' Group (FS-TFG), implementing for the first time VFFP's diagnostic technique for problem-solving with farmers, will develop new knowledge.
- A nursery owner, visiting a quality nursery and realising that his or her own nursery management could be improved, will enrich his or her technical knowledge.
- The loss of dynamism of the NMSs was disappointing for VFFP, but this negative experience was also a positive learning experience, and forced VFFP to develop a more appropriate strategy.

All these experiences generated new knowledge amongst the actors. However, it is knowledge that they may or may not be conscious of having acquired and, as such, may go unused.

## **Capitalisation, knowledge and development approaches**

The role of capitalisation is to retrieve and share knowledge. However, the capitalisation of experience focuses on retrieving and sharing approaches and strategies. This is done in order to identify and describe those which had promising and/or successful results, as well as to identify mistakes which should have been avoided. The process helps develop future approaches and strategies which are based on the shared experiences of other actors. Success will become more likely provided the original context of the shared approach is understood.

## **The authors**

Authors of capitalisation are the people who lead or play an active role in the capitalisation process. They can also be actors – the difference is that authors contribute to the documentation and sharing of experience, rather than simply 'living through' them. For example:

- An FS-TFG writes a capitalisation file on how the increased dynamism of a particular TFG increased the income of a village. S/he is an author.
- If a FS writes a document explaining how s/he changed her dealings with the farmers in line with the TFG's methodology, s/he is both an author (of self-capitalisation) and an actor.
- If a Project Officer (PO) at NCU level publishes a document on TFG methodology based on his/her own experience and the capitalisation files s/he collected from several FS-TFGs, s/he is an author of capitalisation (at secondary level), but also partly an actor.

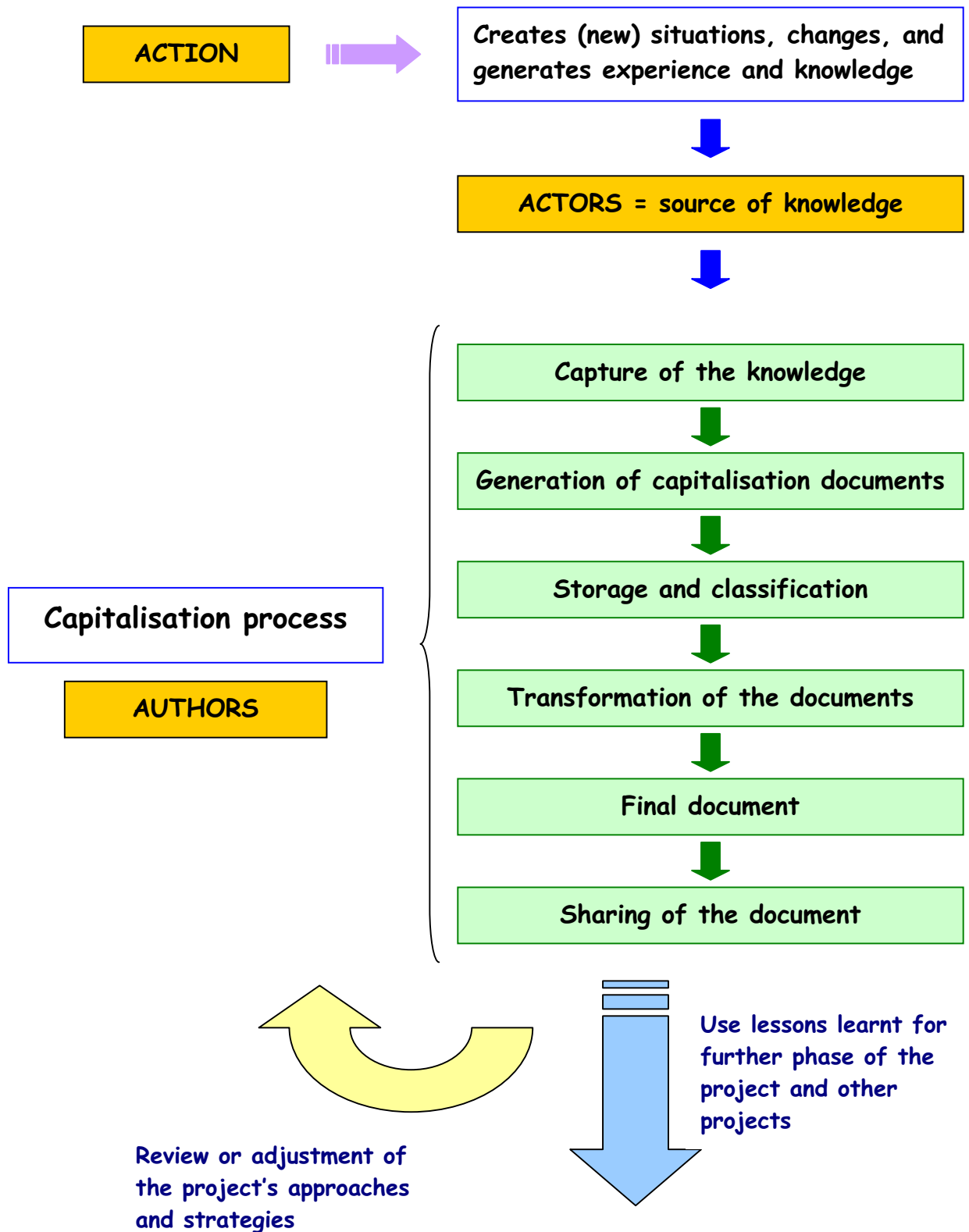
## **Capitalisation versus monitoring**

Capitalisation is a monitoring of processes but not a process of monitoring. While monitoring belongs more to the field of evaluation, capitalisation's *process monitoring* observes how processes and approaches are developed and implemented, and studies what experiences and knowledge they generate. (However, capitalisation can be included as part of a regular monitoring and evaluation process as an indicator of how successfully lessons are learnt from experience.)

## **The capitalisation flow-chart**

Capitalisation is a process and implies several steps, as it is shown in the diagram (see next page).

# CAPITALISATION FLOW CHART





## **2.3. Ten important characteristics of capitalisation**

### **2.3.1. Capitalisation is a simple exercise**

It often takes the form of a story presented in a personal style (“*I did..., we saw...*”) which tells of one person’s life or work experience. This story forms the basis for retrieving the knowledge learnt.

### **2.3.2. Capitalisation must be useful and useable**

It must be useful:

- ☛ for the actors in development
- ☛ for the organisation actors belong to (VFFP, partner NGOs)
- ☛ for the whole project (e.g. Intercooperation (IC))
- ☛ for the forthcoming programme (the new phase)

But also:

- ☛ for the country and the region
- ☛ for the management of knowledge

It must be a useable process:

- ☛ that can be communicated and shared
- ☛ that is transferable but not reproducible (i.e. others do not simply copy but learn from and adapt)
- ☛ that is understandable
- ☛ that attracts or develops interest through being used

### **2.3.3. Capitalisation is the responsibility of all the concerned actors**

Individuals continuously enrich their knowledge through experience. However, this knowledge is often “hidden” or unconscious. The first step in a capitalisation process is therefore to make people aware of the knowledge they have accumulated. It implies that actors have to be enabled to become authors of capitalisation, and discover from themselves their own knowledge.

In other words, *capitalisation starts and finishes with the actors.*

As capitalisation serves both individual and collective interests, the actors should take an active part in the process of knowledge management, just as they have to take an active part in the project itself. This should give the actors a greater sense of responsibility and accountability.

There may be ‘negative’ aspects:

*“We should not repeat the mistakes we made. I would like to tell you and emphasise the consequences of these mistakes, and the lessons I have learned.”*

And positive aspects:

*“Our approach was a success: I shall present what were the conditions of this success.”*

### **2.3.4. Capitalisation is a process involving each project component at each level**

- ☛ The experience and knowledge gained from each of the project’s components should be taken into consideration.
- ☛ Each component contributes to capitalisation and knowledge management. Capitalisation is not only the business of external consultants.

Capitalisation is not done to satisfy authorities, but for self-improvement.

It occurs on the following levels:

**The individual level:** the actors of development are actors of (self-)capitalisation. This process is related to the wider aim of individual empowerment.

**The institutional level:** by looking at itself from a distance, the project can break away from daily activities and considers new perspectives.

**The global level:** this aims at sharing knowledge that could inspire other project leaders.

Capitalisation is therefore a multi-level process undertaken on every part of a project, by everyone involved, and for the benefit of the organisation.

### 2.3.5. What should we capitalise?

- ☛ Any actor's experience that is "knowledgeable", such as a "*how I did it*" story
- ☛ The organisation of the actors and their actions
- ☛ The way actions unfold and the ongoing role of the actors

For example:

#### **Knowledgeable actors' experience**

- A story told by an NM about the changes s/he noticed in the association
- The evolution of the role of FS-NMS from facilitator to accompanier
- The evolution of TFG needs from technical support against diseases to HID support

#### **Organisation of actors and actions**

- The development of NMSs towards self-reliance
- The transition from a vertical to a horizontal relationship within VFFP
- The evolution of the relationship with NGOs

#### **The actions and the role of the actors**

- The development of farmers' capabilities for identifying their needs, establishing Annual Plans of Operation (APOs), and implementing/reviewing their plans
- The passage from the "message delivery" role of partner NGOs to a new participatory training strategy
- The opening of TFG activities to other members of the community

Note: When planning a capitalisation exercise, projects will have to prioritise the most relevant themes according to their capacity for carrying it out.

### 2.3.6. What is needed for successful capitalisation?

The effectiveness of the capitalisation process depends on three levels of dynamism:

- ☛ Internal dynamism
- ☛ External dynamism
- ☛ Permanent dynamism

#### **Internal dynamism**

A motivated capitalisation team can be formed if enthusiasm for capitalising experience has been cultivated. This team will have to focus on gathering the scattered knowledge gained in the field into something more organised that can be shared in an accessible form.

To develop such *capitalisation behaviour* it is necessary to ask people to capitalise their own personal experience of working on a project: "What did I know before? What do I know now? How and why have I changed?". After doing this it becomes easier to start analysing other fields of experience.

## External dynamism

All actors involved in a project must be included, not just those at the centre (e.g. VFFP): farmers, NGO staff (both internal and external actors) and consultants are important. Their role as witnesses and their ability to ask informed questions will create dynamics of exchange and enrich the capitalisation process. Here, the farmers and NGO staff are not the objects of an evaluation, but the authors of capitalisation.

## Permanent dynamism

Because capitalisation is not an easy process (it implies a certain subjectivity as well as the production of an analytical document), project teams often consider it of low priority compared to other field activities. To change this situation, capitalisation should represent an integral part of the planning process and have specific targets built into APOs. This is especially important since human and financial resources have to be provided to carry out capitalisation activities. Capitalisation should not be seen as a one-off “event” organised if there is time, but as a continuous process which is given priority at key scheduled stages. Without continuity of approach, the capitalisation process misses important information, and is in danger of becoming an evaluation.

### **2.3.7. Capitalisation must avoid generalisations**

Capitalising is not evaluating. Capitalisation relies on “real” life, the eyes and ears of the actors and their interpretation of events. It is this subjectivity which provides capitalisation with its wealth of knowledge.

Evaluation is less subjective and must present facts and figures which support its conclusions. Capitalisation reflects more the trends initiated by development approaches. Despite this, the two processes do share some common ground - for example, it could be argued that capitalisation is a means of process evaluation.

- ☛ Experiences are capitalised
- ☛ Actions are evaluated
- ☛ Approaches and methods are systematised

### **2.3.8. Why should we capitalise?**

- To keep the memory of the experience
- To value the actors
- To highlight and value experience
- To share knowledge gained from practice
- To make a process followed by one group of actors clear to another
- To emphasise the role of mistakes as a source of knowledge

#### **Keeping the memory of the experience**

Capitalisation is a means of not losing the richness of anecdotal evidence gained during a development process (e.g. the reforming NMSs). The discoveries and lessons learnt, the “hidden value” within these actions, constitute a precious resource that could inspire other actors to improve qualitatively their development approaches.

#### **Valuing the actors**

All the actors should be valued because they have all learnt from each other, and created new knowledge in the course of the action.

#### **Highlighting the experiences**

In a process of capitalisation, all the actors involved in a project learn many things together: from the experience of change to the capitalisation process itself, which provides additional experience. It is necessary to gather all these “small discoveries” since together they constitute a coherent whole.

### Make clear the process followed by the actors

A simple description of a process is often not enough to understand it. Not only the “what” must be described, but also the “how”.

### Emphasising the role of mistakes

When highlighted, mistakes constitute a valuable source of information about what not to do in the future.

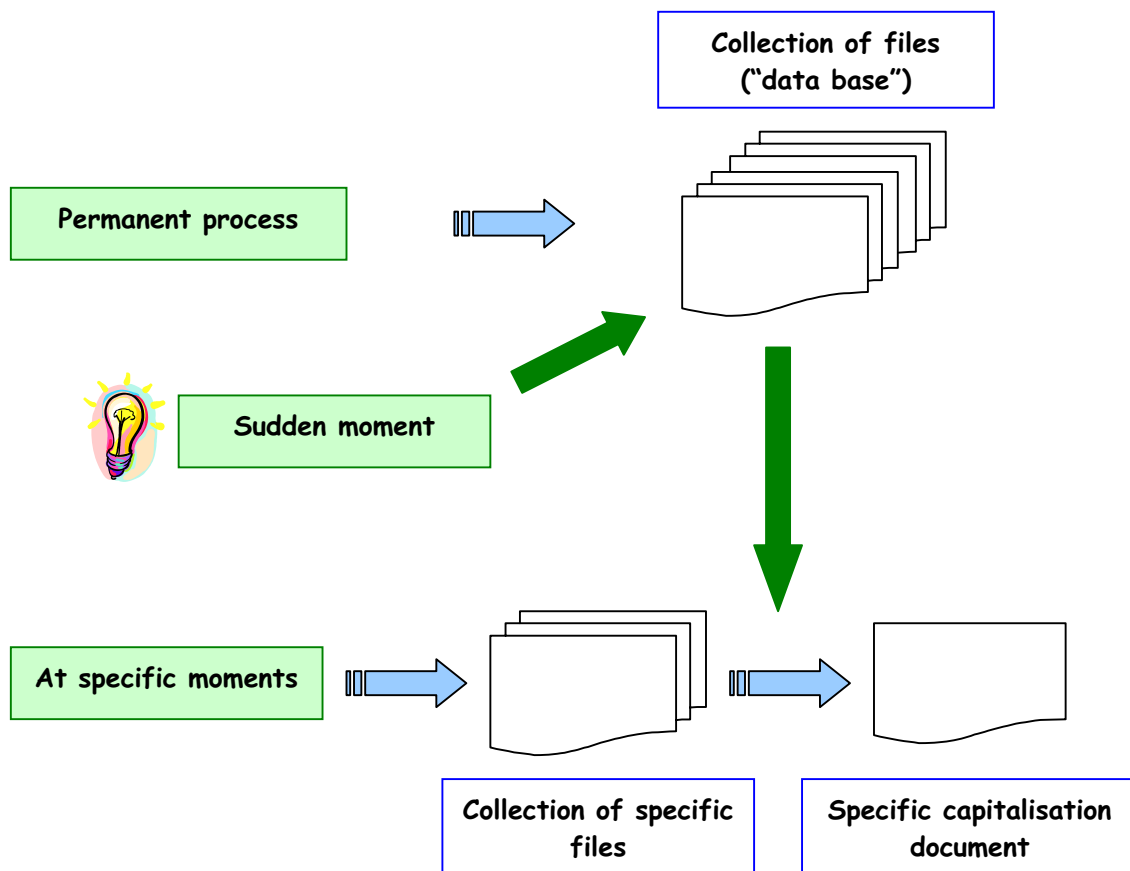
#### 2.3.9. When should capitalisation happen?

There are three suggestions:

- Permanently
- Suddenly
- At specific moments

#### Permanently

- According to the themes identified by the project, capitalisation files or notes will be created. They should be permanently collected and filed on a regular basis in order to keep a record of events.
- The documentation should be stored according to a system of classification (for example, by theme or date), and in a central place, to enable the team to have easy access to it.



### **Suddenly**

- If capitalisation becomes routine, projects need to retain enough flexibility to be able to capitalise spontaneous events.

### **At specific moments**

- The intensive production of a capitalisation document on a specific theme (e.g. NMS dynamism, the TFG launching process) in response to a planned special event (e.g. external review)
- This process must take into account the knowledge/capitalisation documentation already collected through the permanent process to avoid duplication of work or omissions.

### **2.3.10. Working on different levels with different sources**

The types of sources available vary according to which actor provides the information. This could be a farmer or a FS-NMS or a VFFP FS. Each actor will participate in the project in a different way and capacity. Their perception of events will therefore offer a diverse range of interpretations.

The capitalisation process generates different types of products, from “raw material”, often collected on a regular basis and consisting largely of situation descriptions, to “refined material”, published more occasionally and more analytical. Between these two extremes there are other intermediary levels in the capitalisation process.

Although these different levels of sources are linked, they do not really form a pyramid in which the “refined product” is at the top and consists of a summary of the lower levels. It is more a question of coordinating the sources and combining methods of capitalisation that will be necessary for producing the final output.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. Introduction

Like participatory appraisal approaches, there are several ways of capitalising. However, whatever the method used, the quality of the results depends mainly on the team's capability for identifying the relevant issues and asking the right questions to the actors.

#### 3.1.1. The identification of relevant points and issues

##### **An example**

Three people, A, B and C, interview a Nursery Malik who now uses earth pots for growing saplings after she visited a nursery in another region during exchanges between NMSs.

A, mainly interested in technical aspects, will conclude that the NM has developed new technical skills.

B, more interested in HID aspects, will conclude that exchanges between NMSs are important for contributing to the technical development of NMSs.

C, exclusively interested in HID and socio-economic aspects, will ask supplementary questions on the role of NMSs in the exchanges, and will conclude that the existence of dynamic NMSs is a condition for the sustainable development of nursery businesses.

It is clear that what is "relevant" for one person is not for another.

The following recommendations are vital for ensuring that the relevant issues are identified:

- The people in overall charge of the capitalisation process should have a full understanding of the project's strategies, objectives, vision, and results.
- These should be communicated to the team.
- The team should be committed to the project's values.
- The issues useful for affirming or adjusting development approaches should be collected as a priority.
- Where there is a "feel" for certain themes, capitalisation should occur.

However, capitalisation can also be a spontaneous exercise: it is therefore vital to be alert for occurring opportunities.

#### 3.1.2. The choice of questions

The quality and the relevance of the information collected depend to a great extent on the quality and relevance of the questions. With open questions there is a danger of deviating completely from the objective of the exercise, while, with closed questions, the risk is that the discussions are limited and the objective may not be reached.

Based on experience, the following principles are recommended:

- Go into the field with some questions written on a sheet of paper that will serve as a "check list" of the minimal information required.
- Select a place where people feel comfortable to talk, and allow sufficient time for the interview.

- Be sensitive to the behaviour of the people interviewed: if you feel they do not really understand or are stuck by a question, try to reformulate it, or pass to another.
- Take care of prepared answers given to satisfy the questioner.
- Be aware of how the discussions develop and do not hesitate to ask new questions if you feel it would lead to more “food for thought” and other information for capitalisation. Do not hesitate to re-orient the discussion if this happens.
- Balance the number of questions you ask with “free spaces” where the interviewees can express themselves calmly, without the pressure of questions. Remember it is not an interrogation.

### **3.1.3. The choice of methods**

Asking questions is not the only way of carrying out a capitalisation exercise. A silent observation of a situation (e.g. a NMS meeting) can be a very useful learning experience and an excellent way of capitalising.

Based on the experience gained in the field with the TSA project in Madagascar, the following four methods of capitalisation are proposed for use with VFFP:

1. the personal witness
2. the cross-interview
3. the group capitalisation
4. the capitalisation file

## **3.2. The personal witness**

The personal witness supplies a verbal or written “story” in the first person. Normally used at the first level of a capitalisation process, it contains the following raw material:

- What I saw and/or did and what I experienced (a description of a situation, highlighting relevant facts)
- What I learnt
- The questions I now have

The personal witness method is the easiest way for capitalisation at field level, since it is very open with no format constraints. In most cases the stories will have to be re-written, but respecting the “original” ideas and style of language. The personal witness does not provide general conclusions and recommendations, but reflects more a “snapshot” of the emerging situation. Personal witnesses might use the format of a capitalisation file in order to systematise the collection of information (see 2.5.).

### 3.3. The cross-interview

The cross-interview brings together two people to talk on the same topic. Each of them prepares a set of questions (limited to a reasonable number: three to six).

#### Examples of questions (from a TSA programme training example):

Interview	Question	Type of question
Jessore Manager Regional Programme (MRP) interviews Dinajpur Project Officer	1. Can you give me your impressions on the TFG diagnosis process?	Open question
	2. What are the strong and weak points of this process?	Interviewee as evaluator
	3. Can you tell me some comments given by the farmers of Dinajpur on the diagnosis?	Enables sharing of knowledge
	4. What are the impacts of this process?	Could be difficult to answer (impact evaluation)
	5. Can you tell me some comments given by the farmers of Dinajpur on the impacts?	Enables sharing of knowledge but with the added difficulty of impact evaluation
Dinajpur Project Officer interviews Jessore MRP	1. What is this effectiveness of using the mapping tool?	Closed question
	2. What do you think about the consensus of TFG members on the selection of ten needs prioritised out of 35?	Open question that enables sharing of knowledge
	3. Since you have to capitalise the TFG diagnosis, are you yourself satisfied with this process?	Question which places the interviewee in a special role

#### Note:

- The cross-interview favours exchanges that can become in-depth.
- For VFFP, it is a good way of sharing ideas and generating thinking between two or more RSCs or NGOs.
- The interviewee can speak freely.
- The main difficulty is the choice of questions. There are three options:
  - i) start from what the author (the person who asks the questions) assumes or would like to know;
  - ii) start from what the actor (the interviewee) has seen or thinks;
  - iii) start according to one's own interests.

Preference should be given to questions enabling the generation of knowledge, the improvement of understanding a problem or an issue, and better sharing of knowledge. A balance between open and closed questions should be found. New questions can be formulated during the interview if the questions prepared before do not give relevant answers, or if the answers lead the interviewer to pursue new lines of enquiry.



### 3.4. Group capitalisation

A group of people (two to five) capitalise on the basis of common experience and knowledge of a particular action or event (e.g. raising NMSs' dynamism, TFG training sessions).

This approach has the following characteristics: members of the team describe what they have seen, the key points noticed (positive/negative), what has "shocked" them, and what has impressed them.

#### Example of comments (adapted from TSA programme):

What I saw (description)	What I learnt (analysis)
All the members were present, even if there was pouring rain	The agenda is interesting for them
Women are placed apart from the men	The traditional culture is still strong
The women do not take the floor during the meeting	Our efforts toward gender aspects are still not really effective
The president facilitates the meeting in a good way	The farmers' capabilities exist, we can rely on them
The trainer (a farmer) is seated behind the assistant, among the men	The farmer trainer is humble and respects the villagers' values
The trainer gives economic inputs (costs and selling place of the vaccines, profitability of the operation...)	The trainer masters his subject because he practises it. Economic information helps farmers perceive all the aspects related to one activity.
The farmers want to share with the trainer their experiences on goat rearing	If the training session has a room for exchanges, the trainer can learn from the trainees
The decisions are taken according to the consensus agreed during the negotiations between the trainer and farmers	One negotiation well carried out can serve as a contract between the actors
Negotiation is a learning process (both trainer and farmers learn how to defend their viewpoint)	Negotiation contributes to socio-organisational strengthening

Some advice:

- It is best to write down the ideas of each team member on a flip chart before filling in the table.
- Concentrate the discussions on the central theme of the capitalisation (e.g. the process of negotiation).
- Other columns could be added: the questions I have, open questions.
- General points or recommendations can come at a later stage (the upper level of capitalisation). The most important in this method is the exchange of viewpoints and ideas.
- The raw material used for the exercise is both the memory the people have of the event and any personal notes they have written.
- The capitalisation document should be easily readable (not too many ideas, short sentences).

### 3.5. The capitalisation file

Capitalisation files are used in order to organise and systematise capitalisation exercises.

#### Characteristics of the file:

- Starts with the actor's experience.
- Uses an easy-to-read form, and avoids abstract speech.
- If the form is adapted by the actor in collaboration with the author, it must make clear who has contributed what.
- The form should be clear and brief in order to facilitate sharing between the different actors such as farmers, field staff and others. It must be constructed so that it can easily contribute to the learning process at all the different levels, from individuals to groups and institutions.
- The collection of the files should be according to a system of classification based on capitalisation themes, and will form part of a database that can be used in later stages of capitalisation.
- Only the best files should circulate broadly, while the others will be stored in the database.

<b>CAPITALISATION FILE</b>	
<b>1. Title</b>	Topic or event observed
<b>2. Author</b>	Name of the "capitaliser"
<b>3. Date</b>	Date of collecting information
<b>4. Text</b>	Description of what I observed, saw, and heard. Include some actors' sentences. In the case of a long story, write this on a separate sheet.
<b>5. Comments</b>	What I learnt and discovered. What surprised me, shocked me, interested me, and invited me to exchange ideas.
<b>6. Notes</b>	If needed: additional information on the place or experience, the people met and their qualifications, etc)
<b>7. Type of source</b>	The methods used getting information: discussion, observation, witness...
<b>8. Code</b>	Reference to the system of classification (area, theme, numbering, region...)

See the example in the annex.

## 4. CAPITALISATION IN PRACTICE

### 4.1. Three approaches

The capitalisation process for a project like VFFP or a programme like SLU can be undertaken in the following ways:

1. **The actors as witnesses:** the actors (farmers, NGO and project staff) give their stories to an author of capitalisation (or record them themselves) in various different ways: verbal feedback, written comments, capitalisation files, and micro workshops. This capitalisation is normally a permanent process (e.g. regular articles in Shekor or other publications).
2. **Capitalising key themes** is carried out according to the specific themes identified by the project. This process will concentrate on specific scheduled occasions when information is required or when there is enough material to produce a document. A special team leads the process, but will involve others (NGO staff, for example).
3. **Proposing key areas for a future project.** While the first two entry gates are more concerned with the existing actions, this last gate capitalises knowledge in order to propose actions or strategies for the future (based on promising and/or successful approaches that have been observed).

### 4.2. The practical steps of the capitalisation process

Steps	Description	Type of “products”
<b>1. Collection of the information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collection of witnesses, stories, observations, self-capitalisation documents</li> <li>- Storage of the information at different levels (field, regional, central)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capitalisation files, notes, small articles, written witnesses' stories (with photographs)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Reflection on the organisation of the information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Identification of areas and sub-areas of capitalisation, themes</li> <li>- Review of existing information</li> <li>- Organisation of reflection sessions/workshops on how knowledge was collected</li> <li>- Additional collection of information (if needed)</li> <li>- Elaboration of drafts and short documents insisting on more emphasis on experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internal or intermediary documents</li> <li>- Small articles (corresponding to an approximate period of experiences)</li> <li>- First drafts of documents requiring further elaboration before publication</li> </ul>
<b>3. Sharing: (re)composing the knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Secondary level of work trying to collate knowledge from the mosaic of experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Books, brochures, special features in Shekor or others</li> <li>- Comics strips, pictures, audio-tapes or cassettes, video tapes, interactive CD-ROMs</li> <li>- Websites and downloadable documents</li> </ul>

### 4.3. Organising the capitalisation work

The organisation of the work depends on the gate we choose.

#### 4.3.1. Capitalisation based on actors as witnesses

This process would generate material that is collected and organised into files related to identified themes of capitalisation (at national and regional levels). The RSC should encourage and support the development of capitalisation exercises, and identify who can be used for capitalisation at the farmers' and NGO staff level. This could lead to the development of specific vocations and skills for capitalisation, and create a pool of competences.

The NCU should ensure there is support for, coordination of and follow-up to the process, in collaboration with the Monitoring and Evaluation Desk (for the collection and collation of information) and the Communication and Training Desk (for the editing and sharing process).

The outputs provided by the capitalisation based on actors' stories would mainly be intermediary documents such as capitalisation files, statements and stories, small articles for Shekor, and reports.

Although regular information is needed, it is important to be realistic in what can be achieved. Capitalisation should not become a burden, and nor should the collection of information. Restricting the activities to prioritised themes is the main way of ensuring that this does not happen.

#### 4.3.2. Capitalisation based on identified key themes

The project will have to identify key or promising experiences which it is interested in capitalising. The key themes must follow a certain hierarchy (see table) in order to help organise the capitalisation process, and will have to take into account both field experience and programme requirements.

#### Example of possible key themes for VFFP:

Areas	Sub-areas	Themes
Development of farmers' capacities	Approaches for strengthening self-help groups	Promoting NMSs dynamism through a relevant approach
		The emergence of local capacities: the farmer facilitators
	Farmers' organisation as partners of a project	The role of NMS Apex associations Organisations establishing germplasm sources
		The establishment of local service provider networks
Improvement of relations with partners	The development of a new relationship between farmers' organisations, NGOs and the project	Transition from the dissemination of technologies to a planning process starting from the farmers' needs
		The experience of reversing funding systems
	Sustainability of a system supported by a project and sustainability of the partners	How NGOs can develop their own sustainability whilst promoting greater self-reliance processes
		The development of local capacities as a condition for sustainable action

From this proposal for VFFP, we can make the following comments:

- The capitalisation work would concentrate on themes or areas for which normally separate documents would be published.

- Depending on the choice of components and sub-components, some overlapping in the capitalisation process will occur (highlighted in green). This is not a problem since capitalisation is not a precise evaluation exercise.

Once the selection and prioritisation of the themes is finalised, the capitalisation team members and their leader have to be chosen according to their experience and their conceptual capabilities. A good team should consist of people familiar with the project who are able to extract knowledge from the actors' experiences.

The capitalisation team will work as a task force and use the following procedure:

- Meet to develop a common understanding of the themes, and review the components and information already available.
- Organise at least one workshop to identify key ideas and lessons learnt which will be structured according to the chronological development of these experiences.
- Establish a plan of action, with individual responsibilities, to check what information is missing.
- A single capitalisation document should be started as a "work in progress". The document will allow authors to identify what actions are still necessary (e.g. gathering more witnesses to confirm an idea, the collection of additional information to deepen the analysis, photographs to illustrate specific subjects, the need to re-interview someone if something is unclear).
- When the document reaches a draft form, it should be circulated and discussed (including in workshops) in order to add and question ideas, and improve the content.

A "conventional" document of capitalisation should comprise the following sections:

- a description of the action
- an analysis of the lessons learnt
- examples from witnesses (including photographs) that reinforce the main themes

#### **4.3.3. Capitalisation proposing relevant areas for a future programme**

As in the previous process, a specific task force will carry out capitalisation aimed at providing "ideas" for a forthcoming new project or plan of action.

Though the approach is similar, the task force will mainly operate through workshops. This means that the members of the team have to have both strong conceptual capabilities and experience of the action or project.

The capitalisation document will also have to be different. It must clearly tackle easily identifiable key ideas.

**Example of key ideas taken from a capitalisation document** (from a capitalisation exercise by the TSA project for the definition of the new SDC programme in Madagascar):

<b>Component: Approaches and areas of intervention</b>	
<b>Lessons learnt</b>	<b>Justification</b>
In certain areas communities are mobilised spontaneously, but this mobilisation does not constitute a basis for a real process of improved dynamism. These areas are: education, health, security, religion, water management, and socio-cultural matters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobilisation only occurs in case of absolute necessity (i.e. in emergencies) or to analyse an immediate problem and treat it in the short-term</li> <li>- Conflicts of interests and jealousy between families and clans are an important obstacle to mobilisation</li> <li>- Traditional society does not accommodate the vision of economic and democratic development</li> </ul>

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This document tries to provide enlightenment on a topic that is not always easy to comprehend. It seeks to facilitate an understanding of capitalisation and how to carry it out in the field. It does not mean that the reader should now follow strictly what is written here.

The most important thing is to experience it.

The experience in Madagascar showed that the main difficulty is in producing a final document. Many of the capitalisation activities carried out in workshops proved unsuccessful in producing the intended documents. However, despite this “failure”, the process clearly contributed to the development of analytical capabilities and a better understanding of development approaches. This was typical “capitalisation behaviour”.

There is no reason to doubt that VFFP would find the adoption of capitalisation processes beneficial.

CODE: D1 S1 - 026

**CAPITALISATION FILE**

1. **Title** A NMS meeting in Chapai Nawabganj
2. **Author** AC
3. **Date** 12/06/2002

**4. What I saw during my visit:**

I arrived in Chapai Nabwabganj with Mahmud, the Rajshahi Manager of Regional Programme (MRP), one hour before the monthly meeting of Nawabganj NMS.

At the moment we reached the venue, the members of the Executive Committee (EC) were already there, as well as the field supervisor of Trinamool (the partner NGO) and a few other members of the association.

The EC members sat together in order to identify the agenda items and shared out the responsibilities for facilitating the meeting. The FS did not intervene too much in the discussions, as the ideas of the EC members were clear. The agenda was then written on a white board.

The meeting started almost on time, in a room – obviously a former shop - belonging to the family of Arif Reza, a general member of the association. This latter had proposed this vacant room for the office of the association. It was the first time it was used by the NMS.

I was told that two “outsiders” had requested to attend the NMS meeting. They were present today and curious to see what would happen during the meeting, which could or not confirm the interest to become new members of the NMS.

As I was enquiring about the level of attendance, Arif told me that they reached the level of 100%. This figure did not match with the information I had from the RSC: I counted fewer members attending the meeting than the number mentioned in my papers. Actually, Arif informed me that the association had already discarded the members no longer involved in nursery business.

I noticed that the association gathered in the same time members looking clearly like farmers, and other members having a “more urban” style. These latter were most probably involved in other types of business. Or, like Arif, belong to a family that has various types of activities.

The President started the meeting by reviewing the last meeting’s decisions. He led the meeting in a professional way: organised and systematic in the discussions, but also ensuring the active participation of the members.

The Secretary noted the decisions in the resolution book after each point of the agenda. Since he was not really at ease at writing the right sentences, the FS discreetly helped him. To make sure the resolutions were well understood and internalised, the Secretary read them to the members.

A special agenda attracted the attention of the members. They had asked the oldest and most experienced member to show them how to prepare saplings for sale. After two words of theory – quite difficult to understand - the group went to Arif’s nearby nursery for a demonstration followed by practice.

At the end of the meeting, the Treasurer proceeded to the savings collection, with a little help from the FS.

Once this task was complete, the group moved three kilometres from there for another practical activity: the selection of Acacia Plus trees. The explanations of how scoring and selecting Plus Trees were given both by the NMS President, who had been trained on the subject, and the FS NMS.

2 pm had already passed when we came back to the meeting venue. A lunch had been cooked for the members, with their financial contribution, and we were invited to share their meal. But before eating, we were invited to a more important event: the official opening of the brand-new NMS office!

When the moment came for us to leave, I took a picture of them all, standing just below the new signboard of their association. I was impressed how proud they felt of their association.

## **5. What I learnt from this visit:**

- The ownership of NMS by their members has become a reality. It confirms somewhat we chose the right strategy after the NMS crisis.
- The meeting was led in an effective way: interesting, attractive, and useful. The agenda are diversified and fulfil the diverse needs of the members. It contributes to the cohesion of the association.
- The EC shows a high degree of independence in leading its association, though support is still needed to develop the confidence of its members in their respective roles.
- The role of FS has shifted from facilitating to accompanying the group.
- NMS is capable of taking difficult decisions, like discarding members.
- NMS is open to welcome new members.
- But what is exactly the interest of these new members: joining a professional organisation, or having an easy access to credit?
- The diversity in the “types” of NMs contributes to the NMS dynamism, by combining technical and field know-how with the commercial capabilities of other members.
- Such a NMS constitutes a good example which could be used for motivating less advanced NMSs.
- The simple observation of an event – even without understanding the language - is a good means to retrieve many lessons.

## **6. Notes**

This observation was made about one year after we developed a new approach for supporting the NMSs.

## **7. Sources**

Feedback from the observation of a NMS meeting, and discussion with some of the executive members.

## **8. Classification**

**Area:** Farmers develop their capacities  
**Sub-area:** NMS self-reliance



## A NMS meeting in Chapai Nawabgonj



1

One hour before the NMS meeting, the executive committee discusses the agenda items and the way to lead the meeting with the FS (field supervisor) and VFFP staff.



2

During the meeting, the FS helps discreetly the Secretary note the decisions in the resolution book.



3

One special agenda: the NMS members ask an experienced NM to explain how he prepares his saplings for sale.



4

After the theory, a demonstration in the close nursery, and then the practice.



5

Following the agenda written on the white board, the President leads the discussions in a professional and participatory way.



6

The NMS decided to discard from their organization the members no more involved in nursery business, and invited 2 other nursery owners to attend the meeting. One of these is discovering Shekor.



7

The treasurer of the association, with a slight support from the field supervisor, now ensures the collection of the savings.



8

Another concrete activity: 3 kilometers further from the meeting venue, the members are selecting “plus” trees, under the guidance of the field supervisor and the President, who already received training on the subject.



9

An important moment that emotes the photographer: the official opening of the NMS Office.



10

At the end of the meeting, the members shared their lunch with us (each of them has contributed to the costs) and stand proudly below the brand new signboard of their association.

May 2005



inter  
cooperation

Natural Resource Management  
Rural Economy  
Local Governance and Civil Society

DEZA DIREKTION FÜR ENTWICKLUNG UND ZUSAMMENARBEIT  
DDC DIRECTION DU DÉVELOPPEMENT ET DE LA COOPÉRATION  
DSC DIREZIONE DELLO SVILUPPO E DELLA COOPERAZIONE  
SDC SWISS AGENCY FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COOPERATION  
COSUDE AGENCIA SUIZA PARA EL DESARROLLO Y LA COOPERACIÓN



Other documents available in this series:

- The notion of accompaniment.
- Promoting dynamism in nurseries' associations.
- A journey from advanced from farmer-to-farmer training to farmer-centred training.
- Empowerment of farmers' organisations: Capitalisation of a new approach.
- The Farmer Field School (FFS): An instrument for poverty reduction.
- Promoting human Institutional development.
- Reaching the poorest: Capitalisation of an Experience.

This document was originally produced by VFFP (Village and Farm Forestry Project) in October 2002. VFFP was a project funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and managed by Intercooperation, which ended in 2004.

Delegation of Intercooperation

House # 29, Road # 35A

Gulshan 2

Dhaka

Bangladesh

Tel: (880)-2-881 56 88, 882 76 33, 882 92 08

(880)-175 181 062

E-mail: [icdhaka@citech-bd.com](mailto:icdhaka@citech-bd.com)

Web: [www.intercooperation.ch](http://www.intercooperation.ch)

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

House B31, Road 18,

Banani,

Dhaka-1213

Bangladesh

Tel: (880)-2-8814099

(880)-2- 8814396

E-mail: [dhaka@sdc.net](mailto:dhaka@sdc.net)

Web: [www.sdc.org.bd](http://www.sdc.org.bd)