

Educational Institutional Approach for Livelihood Improvement and Sustainable Development

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Abstract : The PNG University of Technology (Unitech) has mandatory access to teaching, research and extension education. Given such function, the Agriculture Department has established the 'South Pacific Institute of Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SPISARD)' in 2004. SPISARD is established as a vehicle to improve farming systems practiced in selected villages by undertaking pluralistic extension method through 'Educational Institutional Approach'. Unlike other models, SPISARD's educational institutional approach stresses on improving the whole farming systems practiced in a holistic manner and has a two-fold focus. The first is to understand the farming communities and improve the productivity of the farming systems in a sustainable way to increase income, improve nutrition and food security as well as livelihood enhancement trainings. The second is to enrich the Department's curriculum through teaching, research, extension and getting inputs from farming community. SPISARD has established number of model villages in various provinces in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and with many positive outcome and success stories. Adaption of 'educational institutional approach' thus binds research, extension and training into one package with the use of students and academic staff through model village establishment in delivering development and extension to communities. This centre (SPISARD) coordinates the activities of the model village programs and linkages. The key to the development of the farming systems is establishing and coordinating linkages, collaboration, and developing partnerships both within and external institutions, organizations and agencies. SPISARD has a six-point step strategy for the development of sustainable agriculture and rural development. These steps are (i) establish contact and identify model villages, (ii) development of model village resource centres for research and trainings, (iii) conduct baseline surveys to identify problems/needs of model villages, (iv) development of solution strategies, (v) implementation and (vi) evaluation of impact of solution programs. SPISARD envisages that the farming systems practiced being improved if the villages can be made the centre of SPISARD activities. Therefore, SPISARD has developed a model village approach to channel rural development. The model village when established become the conduit points where teaching, training, research, and technology transfer takes place. This approach is again different and unique to the existing ones, in that, the development process take place in the farmers' environment with immediate 'real time' feedback mechanisms based on the farmers' perspective and satisfaction. So far, we have developed 14 model villages and have conducted 75 trainings in 21 different areas/topics in 8 provinces to a total of 2,832 participants of both sex. The aim of these trainings is to directly participate with farmers in the pursuit to improving their farming systems to increase productivity, income and to secure food security and nutrition, thus to improve their livelihood.

Keywords : development, educational institutional approach, livelihood improvement, sustainable agriculture

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