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Village Poultry Specialist for the design of a Participatory Livestock Development project in Laos

Brief Description of the activity and the Organisation's role:

In November 2004, the IRPC was asked by the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) to provide Dr Robyn Alders to participate in a livestock design study for the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Laos. The study team was asked to analyse technical, institutional, and regulatory issues of livestock development and develop a program to (i) reduce mortality and improve productivity of livestock production, (ii) expand and improve marketing opportunities for livestock of smallholders, and (iii) promote the development of private service providers in essential areas of livestock production and marketing systems.

Brief Description of Activity Outcomes:

To improve village poultry practices, the key recommendations contained in the report were:

- As women are largely responsible for day-to-day management of chickens, they need to be integrated into project activities: Many rural women have not received formal education and speak only local languages, so training and project meetings need to be conducted using the appropriate level of language and non-formal methods of training, especially where illiteracy is common.
- Promotion of awareness about Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) is critical: Avian influenza is a notifiable disease because of its immense impact on poultry keeping systems, and outbreaks must be reported to the veterinary authorities. Biosecurity (i.e. good sanitary practice) plays an important role in the prevention of HPAI infection in domestic poultry. Humans, fomites and animals should be considered major vehicles for the spread of Avian Influenza and understanding of what biosecurity is should be improved at the level of all stakeholders.
- Training curricula relating to village poultry production needs to be reviewed: Curricula within training institutions should be reviewed and update to ensure that new graduates are better equipped to assist farmers to improve their village poultry production in a cost-efficient manner.
- Village poultry demonstration units should be established in or near the grounds of primary schools where feasible.
- Training modules developed to discuss livestock nutrition should include information on human nutrition to improve farmers' understanding of how good nutrition can improve the health of themselves and their families.
- Extension workers should be encouraged to collaborate with both farmers and researchers. Improving extension activities for village poultry farmers requires greater understanding of village poultry production systems and constraints.