Impacts of Farmers' Field School on Livelihood Capitals in Tsunami affected Communities of Aceh, Indonesia1

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the livelihoods impacts of farmers field school (FFS) in the Tsunami-affected communities in Aceh. Using techniques of participatory approach, eight units of FFS on chili were evaluated in July-August 2009. Three major tools used for the impact evaluation purpose are focus group discussion, impact assessment on five categories of livelihood capitals, and scoring of changes (impacts) on key aspect of chili cultivation and farmers knowledge. For this purpose, "before and after" method of impact assessment framework was used. The results indicate that FFS has favorably affected five assets (capitals) of farmers' livelihood: physical, financial, human, social, and natural capitals. Several negative impacts on such capitals are also identified, but overall, positive impacts of FFS on all capitals offset the negative impacts. FFS also has empowered individual farmers, and the farming communities. Farmers reported that there is an overall improvement in farming knowledge after participating FFS. Technically, after the FFS, farmers' knowledge on plant protection and soil fertility improvement has increased. After completing FFS, farmers know several technical and agronomic aspects of chili cultivation, which were unknown to them before. Farmers also reported that their social cohesiveness and marketing skill are important for chili farming; and FFS led to increases on both of these factors. Farmers also gave a very high score on five livelihood capitals. In summary, FFS has successfully delivered the improved knowledge and skill on chili farming, and vegetable production in general, to the farming communities that were divested by the Tsunami in 2004.