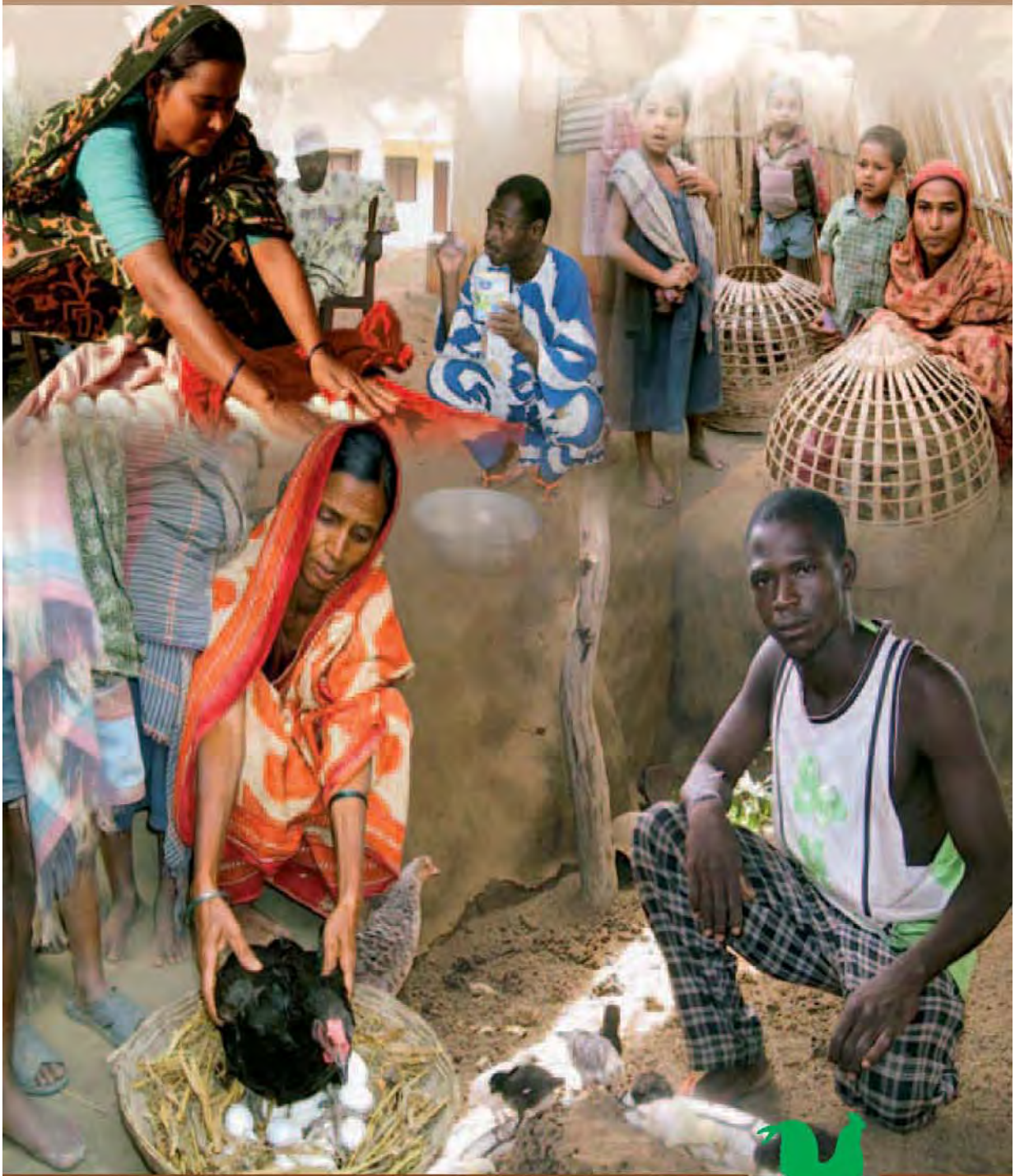


# Keeping Village Poultry

A technical manual on small-scale poultry production



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# Introduction

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## **Need for a manual on small-scale village poultry**

Small-scale poultry production is an obvious and well-documented opportunity for poor farmers to start an income generating activity. Poultry is cheap, easy to rear, and easy to manage. Consequently, there has been and is growing attention and interest in using poultry as a tool in poverty alleviation in villages throughout the developing world. However, existing manuals and books either give advice on industrial or semi-industrial production systems using improved (imported) breeds under highly controlled conditions, or very simple field guides giving little useful advice on how to rear poultry from an economic point of view at village level. This manual is based on existing knowledge on how to improve village poultry production systems with relatively few inputs. *The manual will almost exclusively deal with improved free-range systems consisting of small flocks of 5– 50 local or cross-bred chickens.* These flocks correspond to the FAO-OIE definition of Sector 4B (and partly 3A) flocks. Small-scale confined poultry rearing, sometimes also called small-scale industrial poultry production (FAO-OIE Sector 3A and 3B flocks) will only be referred to briefly in the present manual. The main reason behind this choice is the fact that many excellent practical handbooks and guidelines dealing with such systems already exist. In the light of the spread of Avian Influenza (AI) and the increased attention paid to this disease worldwide, prevention and protection against AI has been included in this edition of the manual. A common practice at village level has been to eat sick birds. With the presence of Avian Influenza this practice should be avoided in future.

The primary target groups of this manual are trainers and extension workers in the government and private sector, involved in smallholder poultry development at village level. A secondary target group is literate small-scale poultry farmers and local poultry workers. Improving poultry production includes several possible interventions, of which the most important are reflected in the titles of the six chapters of the manual: 1. Management, 2. Housing, 3. Feeding, 4. Disease and health management, 5. Marketing, and 6. Breed and animal selection. Each chapter gives background information and possible solutions to practical problems in everyday management of a small-scale poultry production under village conditions in developing countries.

## **Need for a participatory approach**

The use of poultry as a tool for poverty alleviation has been attempted for many years in terms of e.g. cockerel exchange schemes or vaccination programmes. Unfortunately, very few of these projects have been successful over the years. Our analysis and research has pointed towards a number of problems, i.e. lack of

training of the farmers, lack of organisation and lack of follow-up and support being some of the main problems.

When instructing villagers in improving poultry management and production, it is important that the training takes place in a participatory manner. Involvement and learning is enhanced when the participants are part of the training. It is therefore essential that the participants are encouraged to come forward with their own experiences, and that the discussions are based on their local practices and problems. Likewise, practical instruction, where the participants prepare equipment out of local materials, mix local feeds etc., highly increases their ability to remember what they have learned. The participatory approach and learning-by-doing will create a direct connection between the training and the challenges the farmers encounter when implementing new methods. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge the need for support and long-term commitment. Unfortunately, poultry production is not done overnight by donating a flock or offering vaccine free of charge without appropriate support.

Please consult the separate Poultry Network manual on Farmer Field Schools for more advice and ideas on how to use the technical advice in practical training at village or farm level.

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