Building Local Networks for Integrated Agribusiness Development

Learning Module Series

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This learning module series is based on ICRA's 30+ years of knowledge and expertise on functional capacity strengthening in agriculture and is produced by ICRA within the framework of the 2SCALE programme during 2012–2017. 2SCALE – "Toward Sustainable Clusters in Agribusiness through Learning in Entrepreneurship" – is implemented by a consortium of IFDC, BoPinc and ICRA and funded by the Dutch government (www.2scale.org).

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Module 5: Supporting rural organisations

Foreword

Farmer organisations are often at the centre of agribusiness clusters. They generally lack experience in working with other business actors, however. This module provides the basic principles and tools to support the development and empowerment of rural grassroots organisations, including farmer organisations and small-scale processor groups. This module encompasses sections that may be used in different combinations, depending on the stage of the organisations in focus, namely:

- For starting organisations, in which stakeholders have no or limited experience of organisational processes; these are often grassroots producers or small-scale processors, and groups with a high percentage of women. Sometimes the request for support comes from the stakeholders themselves – either a champion or a small group – but it can also be a project or lead firm that promotes the idea for support or takes action to do so, through facilitators who have the mandate to put groups or organisations in place.
- For organisations that are further along in the growth of their institutional development.

The module is largely based on the analysis of a specific case in southwestern Benin, the soybean agribusiness cluster in Zogbodomey, about which a video ('*Coaching and Collaboration*') has been produced. We explicitly warn against the idea that this be a 'model' that should or can be replicated elsewhere, even for those who are involved in the same type of activities (processing of soybean into milk, cheese and other products). Rather, this module and video offer examples of organisational aspects that can be analysed elsewhere, while the more technical and practical aspects involved in soy processing should not be at the centre of the discussions.

About this module

Learning objectives

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Support young grassroots level organisations (of farmers or other actors) in their early stages, to get a clear vision on the potential relevance to develop an organisation
- Contribute to empower rural organisations and ensure their sustainability, even if an external actor (lead firm) has initiated the process
- Support rural organisations in practical management aspects like meeting facilitation, writing by-law documents, accountability.

Proposed outline of the sessions

The workshop comprises 8 sessions. Session 1 is the introduction and consists of watching the video '*Coaching and Collaboration*', followed by a brief discussion to set the scene. Session 2 aims at making clear that collective action is useful but not easy, thus the interest of organising has to be questioned before entering into the process. Session 3 analyses what roles an organisation can play and Session 4 deepens the ways to fulfil these roles. Session 5 looks at the process of supporting an organisation in its early stages. Session 6 raises the main challenges faced by organisations and will help coaches to support organisations that deal with these challenges. Session 7 looks at the aspects of growing/maturing organisations and aims at possibilities to develop higher-level structures (development of apex bodies). Session 8 prepares the field work and develops terms of reference for field coaching.

Session title	Session activities	Time involved
Session 0: Introduction to the workshop	Introductory exercises Plenary Video viewing: *Coaching & Collaboration* (40:27 minutes) Round of questions	2.5 hours
Session 1: Sensitisation, collective action and organisation	Group **Exercise 1:** Identifying activities that require collective action Plenary discussion	2 hours
Session 2: Roles of an organisation	Plenary video viewing Group **Exercise 2:** Identifying roles of organisations 3x Plenary discussions	About 3-4 hours
Session 3: How an organisation can efficiently play its roles	Group **Exercise 3 – Parts A and B:** Identifying actions and means 2x Group presentations & discussions Plenary exercise & discussion	About 3-4 hours
Session 4: Steps to build an organisation	Plenary brainstorm Group **Exercise 4:** Setting up an organisation Plenary presentations Plenary brainstorm Plenary PPT presentation by Facilitator	About 4 hours
Session 5: Challenges faced by starting organisations	Plenary round Plenary discussion Plenary brainstorm Plenary discussion	2-3 hours
Session 6: Next steps for an organisation	Plenary introduction and possible video re-viewing, followed by Summary Plenary brainstorm with cards Plenary exercise Group **Exercise 5:** Services provided and relationships between organisations Facilitator conclusion (possible PPT presentation)	About 5 hours
Session 7: Preparation and ToR for field work	Plenary introduction Individual work on TORs and discussion	2-3 hours
Session 8: Module/Workshop assessment	Different exercises/ formats for making assessment of workshop	1-2 hours

Session 0: Introduction to the workshop

Introduction

The length of this introductory session depends on whether the participants and facilitators have already worked together or not. If they have, there is no need for an elaborate introduction. However, if they have not worked together before, introduce some exercises to help the participants get to know one another better.

Learning objectives

This session introduces the participants to one another, sets the foundation for the workshop programme, and gives a first introduction to the video that will be referred to throughout the module.

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards for expectations
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location
- Video viewing equipment and video

1. **Plenary introduction:** Welcome the participants, and if they do not know each other, come up with an introductory exercise. Then provide information on any outstanding accommodation issues, the workshop program, learning tools, directions, etc.. Vary the methods by doing brainstorms, asking participants to fill in cards, etc. Cover the following items:
   - A general introduction on the importance of supporting grassroots rural organisations
   - Ask participants for their expectations and worries of the programme (write on cards, cluster and hang up)
   - An explanation of the learning objectives and the workshop programme
   - Agreement on basic procedures to be followed in the workshop, i.e. on the do's and don'ts. Ask participants to list them on flip charts and stick them on the wall for the duration of the workshop.

2. **Reflection Diary:** Introduce the idea of keeping a reflection diary in which each participant writes down his/her reflections of the day using a standard format, indication what was done, interesting, important and applicable (see general Introduction; Annex 1).

3. **Video viewing in plenary:** Tell the participants that they will now get a first viewing of the film '*Coaching and Collaboration*' that presents the soybean cluster in Zogbodomey, Benin. Explain that this video will be used throughout the module to support reflections on different aspects of rural organisational development. Make it very clear, however, that it is not meant as a model to be reproduced elsewhere. Propose that they will now watch the entire film to get a general understanding of the story. Later on, shorter sections of the film will be shown again for deeper analysis.

4. **Rounds of questions:** Follow the viewing of the soybean film by a round of questions for clarification, if necessary.

   Then ask participants to express what they consider as important and inspiring in the film. Note their answers on a flip chart sheet, and hang it on the wall.

Session 1: Sensitisation about collective action and organisation

Introduction

Collective action can be very beneficial. However, it is not a panacea and requires investment so it is important to question the relevance of collective action compared to individual action. Organisations are tools for collective action at mid- to long-term timeframes.
Everybody has been involved at one moment or another in collective action and collective action has a good image in general. Based on participants' experience, this session aims at questioning the assumption 'acting collectively is necessarily good' and at specifying why and when it is more efficient than acting individually.

Learning objectives

At the end of this session the participants will be able to understand the advantages and limitations of collective action compared to individual action.

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Set of coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

1. **Plenary introduction** followed by **group exercise**: Start by explaining the learning objectives of the session. Then move into a short group exercise: see **Exercise 1**. Split the participants into groups who are asked to prepare a short play to argue about the relevancy of collective action in a specific situation (the situation to discuss about is proposed to them on a card). Then each group presents its outcomes in plenary and small clarifications questions are answered if needed.

2. **Plenary brainstorm with cards:** Each participant receives four cards of two different colours: 2 red cards and 2 green cards. Each participant writes one advantage of doing that undertaking collectively on each green card, and one difficulty or limitation on each red one. Then cards are put on the wall (with one section including the advantages and another the inconveniences).

3. **Continue in plenary:** Ask the participants to give examples of activities that are better carried out alone (e.g. in writing a text, driving a car, maybe, in making a pot or any other delicate fabricate, in managing a small amount of money, etc.); then again, participants are asked to write on cards the advantages (green cards) and the difficulties/limitations (red cards) that they see to acting individually. The facilitator summarises the outcomes and points out that collective action is not better by definition

and that there are situations where collective action is not relevant and/or easy nor fruitful.

4. **Facilitator conclusion**: Make a link to the next session which goes more deeply into 'organisations' by making it clear that an organisation is more than just collective action, as it is putting in place a framework or a structure that makes more visible/concrete the bringing together of people in order to act together. This 'organisation' should therefore be more sustainable (whereas collective action can be *ad hoc* or a one-off event), an organisation is a tool for efficient and mid- or long- term collective action.

Advice for the facilitator

Possible ideas on when there is the necessity or preference or clear advantage to act together (e.g. when digging a well, organising a feast, etc.) or when to better act alone (in price bargaining, maybe, in making a pot or any other delicate fabricate, in managing a small amount of money, etc.)

Possible ideas for advantages/challenges are:

- To act together supposes to agree on the objective and the way to do. Thus, collective action requires concertation, sometimes negotiation (or accepting the authority of someone), and a certain level of organisation, which takes time. Therefore, in case you need to be really fast, being alone may be better.
- On the other hand, a group allows making use of complementary competencies and skills. Being in a group allows for economies of scale. In a group there may be stimulating competition (but there may also be rivalry).

Session 2: Roles of an organisation

Introduction

Organisations can play different roles but some of them may be more relevant than others. The roles to be played are not necessarily beneficial in the same way to all the potential 'beneficiaries'. It is important for an organisation to identify its key roles in a given context, (and why these roles are considered as 'key'); this allows to prioritise among activities to be carried out. This does not exclude to possibly evolve towards other roles in a dynamic context.

Learning objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- List the potential roles to be played by an organisation
- Distinguish roles to be played towards its members and roles to be played towards external actors
- Discuss the relevance for an organisation to play one role or another, depending on the context

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Set of coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location
- Video viewing equipment for the different groups
- Educational video on USB: Coaching and Collaboration' (see also web link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQIBJIriDbc)

Step 1: Identifying possible roles of rural organisations

1. **Plenary introduction & Video viewing:** Once the learning objectives have been shared, organise the room to watch two chapters (processors' organisation and farmers' organisations) of the video**: 'Coaching and Collaboration'**.

2. **Group exercise:** Follow the instructions of **Exercise 2** where participants, in two groups, will from the video identify and establish a list of the roles played and the beneficiaries of the organisations.

3. **Plenary presentations:** After the exercise, ask first one group to present its findings for one organisation, after which the other group discusses and adds details if needed; then the other group gets the floor for the next organisation, etc.

4. **Plenary conclusion by facilitator:** Stress that it is important to distinguish who will benefit from what service. Sometimes it is necessary to have different organisations to

match different requirements. In the soy case, for instance, soy groups have been created within the UCP (*Union communale de producteurs*) framework, and processors have been put in place in their own groups too because they have specific needs, thus there are specific roles to be played by their organisations.

Advice for the facilitator

Organisations visible in the film:

- *Farmers' organisations:*
  - *Union at commune level (UCP-Z)*
  - *a soy specialized sub-organisation of the Union (UCP-S)*
  - *soy groups at village level (GVPS, members of the UCP-Z)*
  - *federation at national level (FUPRO, through his president, Lionel, former president of UCP)*
- *Processors' organisations:*
  - *at local level (GTS, groups of soya processors)*
  - *at communal level (ACFA, association of GTS, member of UCP)*

Main roles visible in the film:

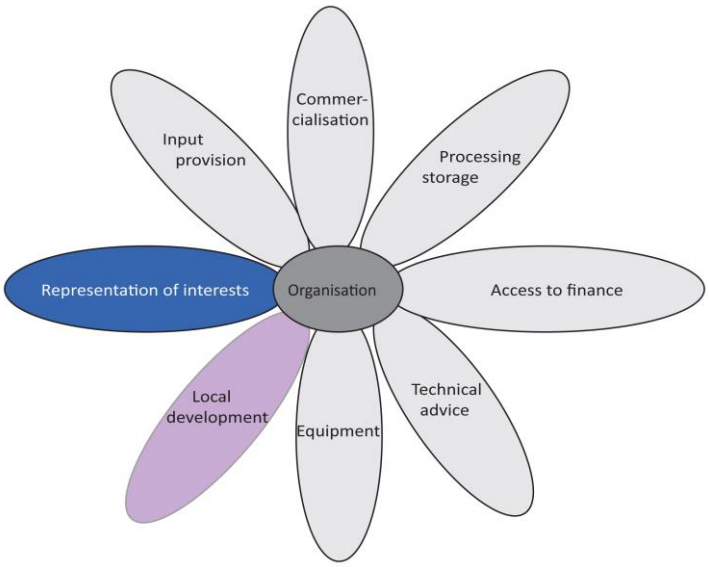
	Role/action	***Beneficiaries***
GVPS	*Provide seeds*	*→ Members (farmers)*
	Soya bean collection	*→ Members (farmers)*
UCP:	*Provide soya seeds*	*→ Members (farmers) thru GVPS*
	R & D on soya cropping (use of inoculum)	*→ Members (farmers)*
	Contract with Fludor	*→ Fludor + farmers*
	Stimulate soy processing	*→ Members (farmers)+ processors*
	Support to get processing equipment	*→ Women processors, members of GTS*
	Support GTS in training	*→ GTS*
	Warrantage	*→ Members (farmers and processors)*
GTS	*Train women processors*	*→ Members (processors)*
	Negotiate for bank agreement	*→ Members (processors)*
ACFA	*Lobby for equipment subsidies*	*→ Members of GTS*
FUPRO	*Broker for IDC support*	*→ UCP*

Remark: *the list above is quite complete. It is not necessary to extract everything from the groups, but it is important that they are aware of the different roles played by one organisation towards different 'beneficiaries', including other organisations.*
Keep track of this work, as it will be used to follow up in Session 7

Step 2: Picturing actual and possible roles

1. **Plenary discussion:** Start by showing the 'flower drawing' *(prepare by drawing this beforehand on a sheet of paper)* and ask for comments on the basis of following questions:
   - Where can we place the roles identified in Step 1 (as depicted in the video) on the flower?

- Are there any petals that are not represented in the video? Give possible examples of roles that could be related to these petals.
- The flower is rather focused on producer organisations. Can you propose improvements or re-formulate it for other stakeholders' organisations?



2. **Plenary exchange:** End the session with a discussion on the relevance of the different petals/roles in the specific contexts of participants. Invite participants to give examples of roles played by organisations they know and/or work with.

Advice for the facilitator

Explain the linkages between what has been proposed by the participants (probably quite specific) and the 'flower' (quite generic). In fact, the 'roles' listed above are probably formulated more or less as 'actions'.

Visualising with the flower helps participants in going toward a more 'generic' formulation of roles.

The 'local development' petal is not really represented in the Zogbodomey case, although you can argue that there is an increase of labour offer.

If needed, the PPT Introduction to FOs (**Reference sheet 2a**) can be used to conclude sessions 2 and 3.

Additional reading

- Reference sheet M5/1a: Process to support FOs
- Reference sheet M5/1b: Functional diagnosis
- Reference sheet M5/2a: Introduction to FOs (PPT)

Session 3: How an organisation can play its roles efficiently

Introduction

After identifying the key roles to be played by an organisation (Session 2), the next step is to specify the 'how to do'. That is, translating each of these roles into concrete actions; then, looking at the way to implement these different actions; and, more specifically, the means to be used. The question of means is too often reduced to 'money matters'. Thus, strong emphasis is put on the fact that there are more means than money alone, especially human resources (skills, time, etc.). Thus enhancing the available means does not only rely on looking for 'support' outside the organisation (to get additional financial means for instance), but also on capacity strengthening.

Learning objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Identify possible actions to be implemented to fulfil the different roles that the organisation has decided to play, given the context
- Specify the required means to fulfil these roles, and understand clearly that 'means' is not equivalent to money
- Facilitate capacity strengthening needs assessment at the organisation level

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Set of coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location
- Video viewing equipment for the different groups
- Educational video on USB: Coaching and Collaboration' (see also web link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQIBJIriDbc)

Step 1: Understanding how organisations can fulfill the roles

1. **Group exercise:** Start with a group exercise to identify collective actions and means to fulfil the roles in an organisation (**Exercise 3 – Part A**).
   - Groups organise findings on a flip chart sheet, to hang on the wall – Note: Try to regroup the findings to end up with only two tables for the wall.

2. **Plenary gallery walk of group findings:** Each group presents their findings as participants look on, give comments and discuss.
   - End by making a short summary.

3. **Group exercise:** Proceed with a follow-up exercise (**Exercise 3 – Part B**). Split the participants into 'new' groups according to gender, experience, and/or working

environment. Ask them to work out a similar table as in Exercise 3 – Part A, but this time for an organisation one of them is working with (to be chosen by the group).

4. **Group presentations**: Get the different groups to present their results, and in the discussion that ensues highlight that there is not one sole way to fulfil one given role: it will depend on the context as well as on the characteristics of the organisation.

> ***Advice for the facilitator***
>
> The purpose of making new groups is to stimulate exchanges. To make it easier to get in-depth discussions, it can be useful to gather people who have the same type of experience in terms of working with organisations.
>
> However, if there is very limited experience of working with organisations in the group, skip this part of the exercise, and adapt the following step accordingly..

Step 2: Capacity strengthening needs

1. **Plenary exercise:** Choose one or two of the lists developed in Exercise 3-Part B, that are based on participant's PPP cases (1 or 2 lists depending on the length of these lists, the time available, and, overall, the diversity in the content; note that it is not useful to work successively on 2 very similar lists). Paste an additional sheet beside the table in order to get space for 2 additional columns

   For each action of the list ask the participants to:
   - Specify the necessary skills and know-how to be mobilised and
   - Specify the role played or to be played by the coach/BSS.

   After agreement on a common answer, one person (the facilitator or one participant) writes the result on the table.

2. **Plenary discussion:** Organise a discussion around the following key questions:
   - Are these skills available within the organisations?
   - What support or capacity strengthening would be required?

   In the discussion, make sure that the participants become aware that an organisation needs competencies to fulfil its roles (competencies that can be found among members and/or staff).

> ***Advice for the facilitator***
> Example (partial) extracted from the Zogbodomey case

	Role	(some of possible) Actions	Required means
GVPS	Provide seeds to members	-Specify the needs and forward to UCP - Organize the distribution of the seeds provided by UCP and payment	Organisational skills (to insure that everybody expresses his/her needs on time) Good communication channel with UCP Storage facilities Money management skills
GTS	Train women processors	Identify the place to train the internal trainers (Togo) Organize the ToT	Brokering Financial means for travelling, logistical arrangements (know how)

Additional reading

- Reference sheet M5/1c: Operational diagnosis
- Reference sheet M5/1e: Funding FOs
- Reference sheet M5/1f: FO's capacity strengthening

Session 4: Steps to build an organisation

Introduction

Although there is no blueprint for setting up an organisation of actors, there are observable initial steps that determine the future of the organisation. There is no good or bad way to initiate and develop such a process, but there are certain principles that need to be respected. Also some questions need to be asked that take stock of the organisational history. Only then will it be possible to build a sustainable organisation that matches its members' expectations. In this session, the participants will reflect upon the different stages and actions that can be implemented at each stage. The main challenges faced by a young organisation will be identified, making it possible to figure out what should be the attitude of the support actors, such as coaches and/or BSS, to be really helpful.

Learning objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand how to support an organisation in its early stages
- Propose a process adapted to the context, and to the characteristics of its future members

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Set of coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location
- Computer and projector for PPT presentation

Step 1: Identifying steps for building an organisation

1. **Plenary brainstorm:** depending on the time, ask one or two participant(s) to share his/her/ experiences in building an organisation by answering the following questions, referring to their concrete, specific case:
   - What happened at first?
   - Who took the initiative?
   - Who was involved?
   - Then what happened?
   - Etc.

2. Write the different stages on a flip chart as the person speaks. Use the words the participant first uses, and then reword if necessary later on, as you review the list.

Advice for the facilitator

Be careful to leave space between the lines to add stages in-between, in case stages are not mentioned in the first instance.
The main stages would be:

- Sensitisation/Creating awareness
- Getting a common understanding and awareness of the motivations for collective action and the interest of an organisation
- Deciding on the roles to be played by the organisation, for whom and by whom, and discussing the actions seemingly to be played to fulfil these roles
- Figuring out the relevant framework to fulfil the roles: structure of the organisation
- Developing by-laws (not necessarily official ones)
- Choosing leaders
- Looking for means
- Implementing activities

It's unlikely that something like 'Reviewing and improving' comes out, but you may suggest it.
In fact, it is important, even in the early stages of an organisation, to make clear to the members that they are engaged in a learning cycle, and that nothing is carved in stone. It is also a reason for not moving too fast to official registration, as, once you register you're supposed to submit by-laws that are difficult to modify afterwards.

Step 2: Identifying possible actions to be implemented at each stage, and tools to be used

1. **Group exercise:** Start by splitting the participants into small groups, in order to follow **Exercise 4**). This will result in a table.

2. **Plenary presentations**: Ask one group to present its results for one stage, asking the others to add points and to discuss them. Then ask another group to present the next stage, and so on.

Advice for the facilitator

If challenges are raised, distinguish those faced by the organisations themselves (e.g. writing adapted by-laws, choosing representatives, looking for resources without 'losing your soul', etc.) and the challenges that the participants (coaches) are likely to face when supporting these organisations (i.e. mastering the tools, or requiring support materials to help the organisations). The participants can also put limiting factors or obstacles (such as illiteracy or lack of leadership) as obstacles. Do not insist on the differences at this stage. We'll come back to the challenges later on.

Then explain that the intensity of challenges depends a lot on the existing experience of organisations in the specific context; if there are already many formal organisations, it is possible that the actors themselves master more or less the main steps (as in the example of the processors in the Zogbodomey film); they can at least be inspired by ideas from (or learn from experiences of) the surrounding organisations.

Step 3: Clarifying the role/attitude of coaches/BSS in the early stages of an organisation

1. **Brainstorm a checklist:** Explain that by going through the list of challenges above, it is clear that know-how is required to support an organisation in going through the various stages of its development. Note once again, that if participants already have strong experience of working with organisations, it is possible that they would be able to handle the necessary tools to support the process as a coach. If they don't have this experience, ask participants to help come up with a list of what they perceive to be the coaching needs.

2. **Facilitator PowerPoint presentation:** Conclude with the PPT on 'Structure and functioning of FOs' (See **Reference sheet M5/2b**). Also introduce **Reference sheet M5/1** ('Support to FOs') and **Reference sheet M5/3** ('Few recommendations'). Emphasise that the reference sheets are only guiding documents and no blueprints. Also stress that even if participants already have experience with organisations, they should not replicate recipes from one group to the other.

   If some of the participants (coaches) are supporting grass-roots-level organisations in an early stage, you can also introduce the 'Outline of facilitators' guide/Workshop to support a soybean women-processors group, Northern Ghana' (**Reference sheet M5/4**). This last one is a very specific guide (developed within the 2SCALE framework for a group of women processors in Northern Ghana) and is certainly not usable directly in other cases but it gives ideas on how to translate the current module into operational support. The practical tools proposed in **Reference sheet M5/5** may also be useful to participants.

Additional reading

- Reference sheet M5/2b: PPT Structure and functioning of FOs
- Reference sheet M5/3: Few recommendations to support FO's building process
- Reference sheet M5/4: Outline of facilitators' guide/Workshop to support a soybean women-processors group, Northern Ghana
- Reference sheet M5/5: Practical tools

Session 5: Challenges faced by young organisations

Introduction

Especially for actors inexperienced in setting up an organisation, the first steps are quite challenging. Some decisions that must be made at the start will determine the future of the organisation. At the same time, actors are often limited because of diverse obstacles such as lack of information, low academic level, etc. Therefore, it is important to make them aware that they are entering into a learning process that will provide space for further improvement. Agribusiness coaches can support this process by helping them to get a clear picture of the challenges and the consequences of the decisions that need to be made at this stage. This session aims at providing coaches with the basic principles and some tools to support a ground organisation in its initial reflection, in order to create conditions for sustainability.

Learning objectives

At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the main challenges of a young organisation and the factors that weigh on the ability of organisations to reach their objectives
- Support organisations' members in becoming aware of these challenges and how to deal with them

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Set of coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

Step 1: Critical challenges and main limiting factors

1. **Plenary Introduction & Round on challenges:** Start by going back to the challenges that were listed; see outcomes of exercise 4 of step 2 of Session 4. Ask the participants to distinguish **internal challenges** (directly linked to members of the organisation, such as lack of mutual trust, passive attitude – waiting for external support, …) and **external obstacles (**coming from outside), like lack of schools inducing illiteracy, poor information channels, poor roads, etc.). Explain that this distinction is for efficiency purpose: the organisation's members and their support (them, coaches) can deal directly with internal challenges, not with outside obstacles.

2. **Make a round** of the participants, to complete the list of issues if needed, so that they see what is most critical for a young stakeholders' organisation.

Advice for the facilitator

The following framework could be helpful for structuring the reflexion of members:
The main challenges for young organisations can be addressed through a list of structuring questions

- **Why are we here?** Establish a realistic, general objective for the organisation (for whom, for what are we organising, what is our experience of working together?) – in general not yet a vision
- **Who are we?** Decide about membership (consistent with the objective)
- **What are we doing?** Prioritise among the activities to be implemented (including building the organisation)
- **How will we do it?** Key trust/commitment moment must be there and not go too quickly into the next step (that is Action), which is what a lot of inexperienced actors would want to do….) / In the meantime, trust/ commitment comes with doing things together: thus it's a matter of initiating a sort of learning cycle: not going too fast, but not waiting too long to be 'fully' ready…. Which will never be fully the case. In fact let's be pragmatic and consider the real life where people begin to act then consider the idea to organise themselves
- ***Who does what, when, where?*** Decide on roles and responsibilities (for instance, it does not make sense to choose a president if you don't know what will be the role of the president)
    - Figure out the adapted **structure** to serve the objectives
    - Develop workable provisional **by-laws** (which would certainly have to be revised in the future, on the basis of experience), to decide about relevancy of formal registration
- **Perform!** Going to action, and from this experience of acting together, learn, monitor, evaluate, adapt …

In fact, each of the steps to be followed at the beginning is challenging. The risk is either to be too ambitious and/or to go too fast, or to wait too long for everything to be 'ready, nice, and beautiful' before going into action.
Make clear to the participants that their responsibility as coaches is to support organisations in entering a pragmatic learning cycle.

3. **Plenary discussion on limiting factors:** The facilitator then asks the participants what they see as the most limiting (internal) challenges in terms of efficiency or the main (external) obstacles that limit the ability of the organisation to reach its objectives. Then, the facilitator highlights that in a starting organisation there is often a need for internal capacity strengthening as well as for finding means to operate. It is important to address both issues, as both low capacities may lower the efficiency, as well as working with insufficient means. The risk for the organisation is that the members discourage. On the other hand, going too fast, growing too much, or getting large equipment when you're not strong yet, may jeopardise the survival of the organisation, as we will see in the following step.

Advice for the facilitator

Possible answers:

- Academic level (illiteracy) or low academic level (default of reporting/ accountability)
- No or weak access to information (missing opportunities)
- Lack of means, including financing
- Problems of governance leadership (leader not strong enough, or too strong and a chief rather than a leader)
- Lack of mutual trust
- Isolation
- Not enough consideration/recognition from the outside

Step 2: Getting a better understanding of what contributes to make an organisation more sustainable

Working with organisations, support actors (and financial partners) use to raise the sustainability issue. In fact, the sustainability issue should not be raised too early in the life of an organisation. Rather, it makes sense to identify the conditions that give better chances for an organisation to become sustainable in the future.

1. **Plenary brainstorm:** Ask the participants to write on cards what they think are necessary characteristics that enhance the chances of an organisation to get off the ground – or 'determine its sustainability'.

2. **Plenary discussion:** Arrange the cards in logical clusters on the board or wall. Then ask the participants to elaborate a bit and explain why this or that characteristic is seemingly more or less favourable to sustainability. Out of the discussion list the aspects that the participants consider as most critical to support/ stimulate in a starting organisation.

Highlight that, at the early stages, it is not yet the time to be too pushy with the actors, and that not any sustainability will come out of external pressure. Here the purpose is just to get a common understanding of what is favourable or not

Advice for the facilitator

Words that may arise out of the brainstorm: means**,** trust, governance, motivation, commitment, efficiency, etc.

You may conclude the session by mentioning that sustainability is mainly linked to autonomy: both financial autonomy* <u>and</u> strategic autonomy**, both of which are generally weak in a starting organisation. Real autonomy is the result of a process. It is important to both look for autonomy and work to develop it, and, at the same time, to be patient and not to put the bar too high.

* Financial autonomy doesn't mean that not any money comes from outside support, but that the organisation doesn't rely only on external support, especially for basic functioning (ordinary meetings, basic services to members, strategic reflection…). In case of dependence on external money, the minimum should be for an organisation to get several contributors.

** Strategic autonomy is the ability for an organisation to develop its own vision and decide the strategic options (what to do with what means and what support) free of external influence

Additional reading

- Reference sheet M5/6: The issue of FO's Sustainability

Session 6: Next steps for an organisation: Growing-up and structuring

Introduction

Sometimes organisations remain quite stable for a while in terms of structure and number of members. This has the advantage of allowing some time for going through the learning by doing process and consolidating the organisation. Nevertheless, in general, especially when an organisation is successful and efficient, the number of members grows. At the same time, the organisation faces new needs and may look for service provision (training, networking, etc.) or may want to grow and become stronger, and so may need to engage in lobbying, for example.

The purpose of this session is not to provide the participants with tools to support this evolution (which would go far beyond the format of this module). But when supporting a young organisation, it is important to raise the awareness of members and leaders on the possible future of their organisation.

Learning objectives

At the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:

- Consider the possible 'natural' evolution of pathways for an organisation.
- Advise organisations and support reflection on the challenges faced in the different cases

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Flip chart, markers
- Set of coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location
- Computer and projector for PPT presentation
- Video viewing equipment for the different groups
- Educational video on USB: Coaching and Collaboration' (see also web link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQIBJIriDbc)

Step 1: Understanding the evolutionary paths of an organisation

1. **Plenary introduction & possible video re-viewing:** Ask the participants to remember the evolution of the processors' organisation in Zogbodomey. If necessary, propose to watch again the 'processors' part' of the video: how did it all start? What happened afterwards, in terms of number of members, number of groups? And then, what happened?
2. **Plenary summary:** Summarise by explaining that there are two main possible development pathways (not mutually exclusive):
   1. **'Growing in size'**, which means increasing in members (which is often the case if the organisation proves to be useful and successful), either within the same geographical area or beyond

2. **Structuring**', which means creating 'new' organisations, i.e. daughter or sister organisations, or higher level ones, such as federations or associations of organisations

Advice for the facilitator

The organisation began with a few processors –now members of UCP – that decided to constitute a specific group. Then the number of members increased (following the trainings) which led to a multiplication of the groups.

Then, ACFA has been created to fulfil other roles, such as brokering with donors and with banks.

Step 2: Deepening understanding on the challenges of a growing organisation

1. **Plenary brainstorm:** Ask the participants to write down key words on coloured cards that indicate advantages and challenges/difficulties (green colour for advantages, red colour for difficulties) that come up as an organisation grows (getting more and more members; pathway 1).

   Plenary summary: Hang the cards on the wall, clustering them as you summarise the answers. Conclude by saying that, generally, growing up leads to more (re-)structuring which means trying to keep the advantages of having many members, without suffering too much from the difficulties that result from growing.

Advice for the facilitator

Possible answers are:

- **Advantages of having more members**: Proof of success (when people join, you may conclude the organisation has a positive image)
- Higher working force, higher impact
- More means (more contributions, more human resources)
- Higher visibility, more consideration from the outside (partners, donors)

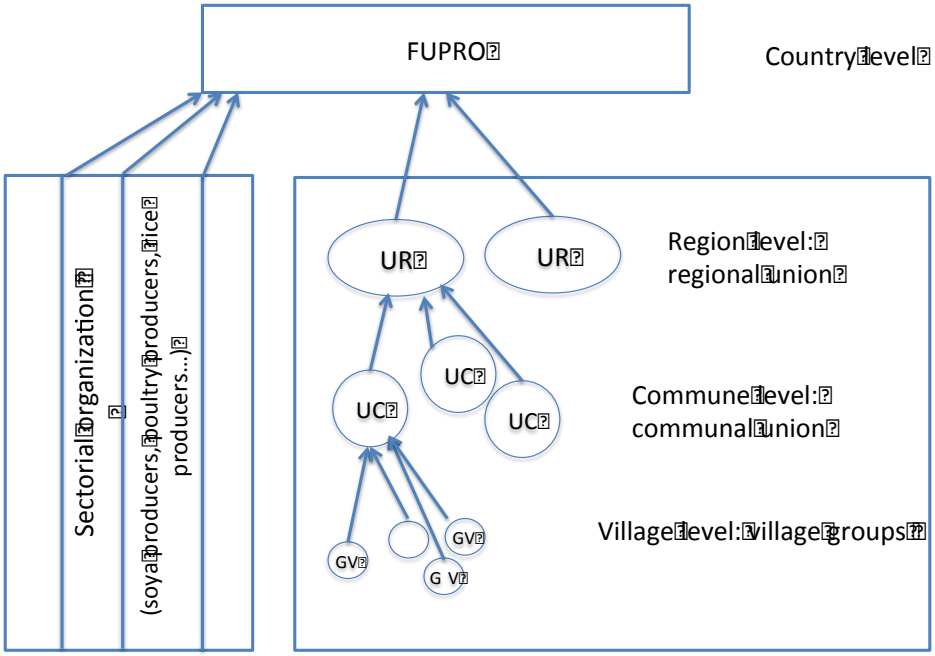
Challenges/difficulties of having more members:

- Reduced vigour/efficiency: decision-making, implementation of activities takes more time
- Communication: sharing information is more difficult
- Representation issues: direct democracy, i.e. everybody expressing themselves is not possible beyond a few tens of people
- More diversity of expectations: making it difficult to address all
- More diversity: also means more difficult to agree on strategy and activities. How to deal with diversity? (membership issue)

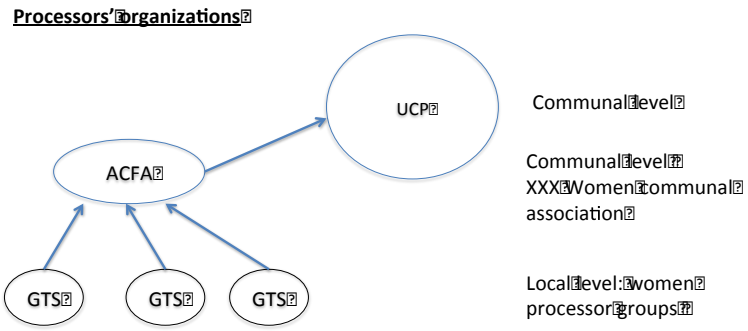
If increase of numbers is also linked to extension of the geographical space, the above issues will be expressed even more strongly, in particular communication issues. This asks for more (re-)structuring – which is the next topic.

Step 3: Deepening understanding on the challenges of organisational structuring

1. **Plenary exercise:** Returning to the Zogbodomey case, ask the participants to list again the different producer organisations that we saw in the film. Draw a picture of the organisational framework in Zogbodomey on a big flip chart sheet (**use picture below**).



Thereafter, do the same for the processors' organisations. Ask for comments.



2. **Group exercise:** Split the participants into small groups to work out the relationships and 'services' that exist between the different Zogbodomey groups and levels (**Exercise 5**).

3. **Plenary discussion:** After sorting and pasting the cards onto the picture (organisational scheme) already made, lead the participants into a general discussion on the basis of the following question:

Why decide to organise at different levels?

- At this stage it is important to highlight that there are different levels of organisation for reasons of efficiency: all the different roles contribute to support grass-roots level actors at the end of the day, but not all of them can be fulfilled efficiently at the same level.
- Further structuring is important when dealing with large numbers of members, to ensure democratic functioning, remaining efficient at the same time (for example, it is impossible to operate if all decision-making is left to a general assembly of 500 persons).
- Which raises the issue of representation from one level to the other: who is representing the lower level to the upper one; how to choose the representatives?

Advice for the facilitator

If the tables elaborated in Step 2 of Session 2 were quite complete, you can use them (or one of them) as a basis.
When comparing processor organisations with farmer organisations, one sees that the framework is simpler. Why is this? Both because the number of members is lower and the organisation is younger but also because it is more specialized (focusing on soybean processing).

Emphasize that you can come back on Lionel's reflection about the future when he speaks of organizing the soya sector at upper levels and especially of an inter-professional body. Explain that it makes sense only if there is a need for coordination at national level, which is not yet the case, as far as we know.

4. **Facilitator conclusion:** As a general conclusion you can use the PowerPoint presentation *Advanced reflexion on functioning* (**Reference sheet M5/2c**) as a basis for further reflexion.

Advice for the facilitator

Using the PowerPoint presentation of **Reference sheet 2c** is relevant only with participants who already have experience working with organisations, as some concepts are a bit complex. If participants are new to these topics, it is better to suggest for them to read the OXFAM guide book (English) or the QUAE book (French), both mentioned below, for a better understanding of the topic.

Additional reading

- Reference sheet M5/2c: Advanced reflections on functioning of FOs
- ***Producer Organisations: A Guide to Developing Collective Rural Enterprises,*** Chris PENROSE-BUCKLEY OXFAM 2007 downloadable on: www.oxfam.org.uk/publications
- In French: ***Appuyer les organisations de producteurs*** *DUGUÉ M.-J, PESCHE D., LE COQ J.-F., 2012, Collection Agricultures Tropicales en Poche, Editions QUAE*

Session 7: Preparing the ToR for field work

Introduction

During this session, the participants will review of the various workshop sessions and identify concepts and tools that are most relevant for application in their cluster context. This will then form the basis for the design of the Terms of Reference for coaching sessions on this topic.

Learning objectives

At the end of the session, the participants will have a better understanding of the relevance of the different concepts and tools on how to better support the set-up of young farmer organisations.

Procedure

List of tools/equipment required

- Paper and writing implements
- Flip chart, markers
- Coloured cards
- Sticky tack, pins or tape – depending on the location

Step 1: Review the sessions

1. **Plenary discussion:** Review the different sessions and tools used during this workshop; for each session:
    - what topics were treated and what tools use
    - what did you learn
    - what will be relevant for use and application

SESSION	TOPIC	WHAT I LEARNT	WHAT WILL BE RELEVANT TO BE APPLIED TO MY CLUSTER
1.			
2.			
…			

Step 2: Preparing terms of reference for field coaching

1. **Plenary introduction:** Ensure that the coaches understand that supporting the ABCs in their process of creating or strengthening organisations is not a matter of doing the job themselves, but that their role is to FACILITATE the reflection of members and/or leaders

or organisations (depending on the size of the organisation) and/or staff to themselves reflect for example on the roles to fulfil in an organisation and activities to be implemented; to themselves assess the needs for capacity strengthening, and to themselves figure out the future evolution of their organisation.

2. **Individual work:** Explain that each participant's Terms of Reference for field work have to be established following the following logic:
   - Which organisations are involved in the partnership?
   - For each of them (or the more important ones for the partnership):
     - Are they aware of the roles already fulfilled/to be fulfilled towards whom? Who in the organisation is aware of this? Do they have a clear picture on how to operate practically?
     - Do the organisations have a strategy to fulfil these roles? Where to find the resources needed, how to structure to be the most efficient, etc.?

   If one or more of the answers to the above questions is 'no' (that is, if organisations have not yet a clear idea of their roles or no strategy to fulfil these roles), propose a way to go for improvements (although it is up to the members and/or leaders to decide, it is important to have some ideas about how to support them to find their own answers).

Session 8: Module/workshop assessment

Introduction

Did this workshop fit the participants' needs and has it satisfied their expectations? Do they now feel able to train cluster actors in the basic knowledge of supporting rural organisations? These are some of the questions this session would like to have answers to.

Objective

With this assessment, the facilitator can find out whether the workshop was appreciated by participants, and will be able to adjust follow-up workshops, if necessary.

Procedure

There are several ways and tools to assess a workshop, from the beginning to its end, and during the sessions.

- **At the beginning of** the workshop: each participant wrote down his/her expectations and worries; these were summarised and hang out on the wall. The facilitator now reviews these and discusses with the participants to what extent the expectations are met and worries are let go.
- **During** the workshop: at the end of each day (even for a 2-day session), the participants were given the opportunity to reflect on what was done during the day in a Reflection Diary. Ask each participant to indicate how well they appreciated each session, why, and if relevant to propose improvements to the content.
- **At the end** of the workshop: Ask participants to either in plenary, or individually, to reflect on how they experienced the workshop.
  - One option: At the end of the workshop, ask participants to fill in the following table – to maintain anonymity and confidentiality, either completed individually on sheets to hand in - or putting an 'x' on a flip chart sheet on the wall, and writing comments on cards to be gone through by the facilitator.
  - Another option: This could alternatively be done in plenary if participants feel comfortable enough to speak out.

Session/topics	Good	Average	Poor
S0: introduction			
S1: Sensitisation, collective action and organisation			
S2: Roles of an organisation			
S3: How an organisation can effectively play its roles			
S4: Steps to build an organisation			
S5: Challenges faced by starting organisations			
S6: Next steps for an organisation			
S7: Preparing the ToR for field work			
Your opinion on the facilitation			

Give general or specific comments on the workshop			

Advice to the facilitator

An often recurring issue in a workshop is that time is too short to go through all planned activities. This often affects the time taken for assessment. This final part is very important, however. So, do not forget to assess how it is going at the beginning, during, and at the end of the workshop. This will give you very useful information.

Before starting this session, prepare the synthesis on the participants' expectations.

List of reference sheets

Reference sheet M5/1: Supporting FOs Basics

- Sheet 1a: Process to support FOs
- Sheet 1b: Functional diagnosis
- Sheet 1c: Organisational diagnosis
- Sheet 1d: Strategic planning
- Sheet 1e: Funding FOs
- Sheet 1f: FO's capacity strengthening

Reference sheet M5/2: Power point presentations

- Sheet 2a: Introduction to FOs
- Sheet 2b: Structure and functioning of FOs
- Sheet 2c: Advanced reflexion on functioning

Reference sheet M5/3: Few recommendations to support FO's building process

Reference sheet M5/4: Outline of facilitators' guide / Workshop to support a soybean women-processors group, Northern Ghana

Reference sheet M5/5: Practical tools

- Sheet 5a: Recommendations about communication management and meetings
- Sheet 5b: Indicative check-list of items to be included in statutes and internal rules

Reference sheet M5/6: The issue of sustainability of FOs

Reference sheet M5/1: Supporting FOs basics

Based on: "Pedagogical materials on Farmers' Organisations and Farmers' Organisations support", by Cirad-Ciepac (MJ Dugue, JF Le Coq), Feb 2006 for Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris and Government of Cambodia.

Sheet 1a: Process to support FOs

How to support FOs is a question that support agencies are supposed to raise daily. In fact, the answer to this question is sometimes implicit, and does not systematically meet every time the expectations of FOs.

The way to design a support process depends on the context but the following steps are common to most of the situations:

1. Identification of the priorities
2. Definition of the support activities
3. Monitoring and evaluation

The process is similar whatever the stage of the FO or the level of intervention (local level or higher). It is a cyclic process, and according to the situation (at the creation of an FO or at a later stage with activities already implemented), the support activities may begin at step 1, 2 or 3).

Remark: Practitioners have to keep in mind that support activities are different from FOs' activities. FOs have their own "life" and support consists in assisting them.

Identification of the priorities

To identify the priorities, it is first necessary to get a clear scope of the **context** (economical, technical, social, institutional), and the **evolution** of this context (mainly recent but sometimes ancient too).

In addition, it is generally useful to capture some "**historical" information** related to the circumstances of emergence of the FO (which initiative created the FO? Who were the first members? Who were the leaders? What were their respective objectives and motivations?

These data can be collected through formal surveys or interviews. The scope of investigation and the precision of data depends on the goal of the FO and the position of the support agency (Reference sheet 1c, *"organisational diagnosis"*). Even when support staff is experienced and has local knowledge, it is necessary/useful to check whether the data are really available and consistent, and to question the validity of their assumption about FOs.

Then, a functional diagnosis *(*Reference sheet 1b*, functional diagnosis)* and an organisational diagnosis (Reference sheet 1c ***"organisational diagnosis"***) of the FO have to be made together with the members of the FO.

To compare the results of the diagnoses with the objectives (explicit and implicit objectives, which can be difficult to identify) allows to:

- Design a strategic plan (big word but not always so complicated): *Reference sheet 1d, "Strategic planning"*
- Identify the needs (strengths and weaknesses) in term of support (depending on the objectives and project of the FO and the activities that the FO has chosen to implement). It may be technical, financial, institutional support or capacity building needs.

Remark: Farmers and people in general are not always aware of their needs in term of institutional management; they are often more focussed on funding problems.

Definition of the support activities

The modalities of support to FOs are diverse. A support agency can:

- Provide means (technical, financial, human means)
- Facilitate relationships between FO and other stakeholders, that is :
  - Contribute to "open doors" – role of intermediary in establishing partnerships with the State or other donors)
  - Facilitate networking with other FOs
- Strengthen capacities of members and/or leaders
- Accompany the FO in the daily management (advising)
- Support strategic planning

These modalities are not equivalent in terms of time consumption, necessary duration of the support (mid or long term), difficulty to implement, risk of failure; they are obviously non-exclusive each other.

The questions of funding and strengthening capacities are recurring and essential issues that determine the impact of the support. They are analysed in detail in other sheets (Reference sheets 1e, *Funding FOs,* and 1f, *strengthening capacities of FOs)*.

Whatever the support activities, a few principles have to be considered:

Trust and confidence between representatives of FOs and support staff is a key factor of success. It banks on mutual respect. This sometimes demands a change in behaviour from both sides. Support staff should consider the FOs as full partners (and not only as project beneficiaries). FO representatives should adopt a proactive position towards support staff (and not just wait for their services and support). Mutual interest and efficiency is better found through a balanced/equilibrate partnership.

Clear contractual rules between support agency and staff on one side, and farmers and FO leaders on the other side, are important to avoid false expectations (from farmers and FOs sides, regarding money matters for example) and/or opportunistic behaviour. **Setting clear rules of relationship** that define **the commitments of both sides** is necessary to develop mutual respect and get a more efficient partnership. This, however, does not exclude regular discussions on the constraints (transparency) that both sides are facing to meet their commitments.

Finally, it is also important to notice that the relationship between FOs and support agents may evolve from time to time. If the strengthening of capacities process is effective, the FOs become more and more autonomous. As asymmetry between the two sides tends to

decrease, supporting staffs may feel quite frustrated; in fact their role may change, and they can be still useful for FOs by providing new types of support.

Monitoring and evaluation

Supporting FOs **cannot** be **a linear process** such as making an initial diagnosis then going ahead without looking behind.

As a farmer organisations are "alive" and the context is evolving, and because an action may induce unexpected effects, it is necessary to regularly assess the impact of actions and the consistency between the objectives of members and the actions implemented.

So, support to FOs follows a cyclic process:

Diagnosis → Planning → Action → Evaluation / Assessment/ Diagnosis →etc.

The monitoring and evaluation activities have to be included systematically in the action plan of the support program (and of the FOs), and they have to start as soon as the actions begin. To assess the effect of an action, it is necessary to have data related to the initial situation and it is generally difficult to get trustable information on it at the end of an action.

A continuous monitoring and evaluation device allows adapting the action plan "on real-time", which is a condition for optimal efficiency.

Last, monitoring and evaluation data constitute a basis for fruitful exchanges between members of FOs, and between FOs and their partners. The tools to be used for monitoring and evaluation can be derived from the diagnostic tools used for functional and organisational diagnoses.

Sheet 1b: Functional diagnosis

What is functional diagnosis and why using it?

A functional diagnosis aims at assessing the activities undergone by the FO, the efficiency of the activities, and their accuracy according to the environment (other services providers).

How to handle functional diagnosis?

Functional diagnosis can be done by supporting staff or external agents. It is also a good tool for FO's members and leaders to strengthen their capacity of analysing their own situation and context. Their involvement in the design and implementation of the diagnosis will result in a better accuracy of the data.

The functional diagnosis process relies on data collection and analysis. The data collected are quantitative ("objective data") and qualitative (perception of leaders and members). The relevance of the diagnosis depends on the quality of these data.

The data on the FO can be collected in various ways:

- Individual or collective interviews with FO leaders
- Individual or collective interviews with other FO members

The methodology (number of interviews, duration of interviews, etc. depends on time and budget available, the expected accuracy of data, the initial level of knowledge of the FO, the relationship between the FO and the support agency. The more accurate information is needed, the more time is required.

Remark: Individual interviews take more time but may provide better information. In collective interviews, respondents may not feel at ease to express their points of view, especially so when collecting sensitive information.

Collective interview helps to have a rapid and shared information but may lead to very vague data or may reflect only the point of views of some of the members or leaders.

Some interviews of stakeholders, acting in the environment of the FO, may also be necessary, to cross-check and complete the information (perception of the FO by other stakeholders, role of these other stakeholders) and increase data accuracy.

The analysis of the data can executed by support staff and/or with the FOs leader or members. It is always good to check the interpretation of the data and the results of the analysis with the FOs leaders and members on accuracy.

A proposal of "functional diagnosis" analytical tool

Different analytical tools may be used and need to be adapted to the specific situations (as much as possible with participation of the FO). The "functional diagnosis" tool proposed hereafter is a simple but comprehensive way to grasp the situation regarding the activities of an FO.

The first step of the method consists in getting a rapid overview of all functions fulfilled by the organisation. It helps to have a comprehensive view of the activities of the FO (see box below).
Remember: not every FO has all functions. FOs can be mono- or poly-functional.

Inventory of the functions fulfilled by the FO:

What are the functions fulfilled by the FO? What are the services that the FO provides to its members?

- Access to production facilities (e.g. irrigation network)
- Access to equipment for production (pump, power tiller, etc.),
- Access to technical information, technical advising
- Access to inputs (seeds, fertilizers, animal feed, pesticides, fuel, etc.)
- Access to market (tra nsportation, trading, information on market, etc.)
- Access to storage, to processing
- Access to financial means
- Provision of social services (health insurance, literacy, etc.)
- Access to subsidies (from project, from NGO, from the State)
- Representation of farmers' interests: in commodity chain, to access natural resources, to access to land, etc.
- Local development
- Natural resource management

Note: It may be useful to ask leaders and members of FOs to sort the functions by order of importance, according to their perception.
Source: http://www2.gsid.nagoya-u.ac.jp/blog/anda/files/2009/06/17_chanrith01_paper.pdf

The second step consists of an in-depth analysis of each function. The following analytical scheme can be used:

- **Description and analysis of the services provided by the FO to its members**
  How is the function fulfilled by the FO? (FO's activities); which resources are mobilised to carry out the activities?
- **Evaluation of the services provided to members**
  Are the services provided to members responding to farmer needs? Are they sure? Are they of good quality? If other stakeholders provide the same service: what are the services they offer? Does the FO have comparative advantage regarding quality, cost of the service?
- **Assessment of the constraints and difficulties encountered to fulfil the function**
  What are the constraints/difficulties faced by FOs and their causes?
- **Identification of solutions (according to FO's leader or members)**
  What are the solutions undertaken, tested, foreseen to solve constraints and difficulties encountered?

➔ see function analytical scheme

Remarks and conclusion

The functional diagnosis tool can be used for an individual FO to:

- Better know its function and design support actions to better fulfil the function it has developed.
- Help define a strategy
  - Develop new functions (diversification) or terminate some of them (specialisation)
  - Strengthen a function by scaling up or by developing a higher level of organisation (federation)

It may also be used to analyse and compare situations of existing FOs in an area. It could then be a precious tool to build a "functional typology" of FOs that makes it possible to grasp the complex panorama of existing FOs in a simple way, and subsequently to better adjust support programs to the diverse situations of FOs.

Function analytical scheme

- **Description and analysis of the services provided by the FO to its members:**
  - Description of the activities of the FO
  - What are the human resources mobilized to implement these activities?
    - Within the FO: leaders, members, salaried people of FO
    - Outside the FO: NGO, State staff, private services providers (contractual agreement
  - How is the activity funded?
    - Internal resources: fee, commercial margin
    - External resources: subsidies, credit, etc.
- **Evaluation of the services provided to members:**
  - What is the appreciation of the members toward the services?
    - adaptation to the needs (convenience)
    - effectiveness (time of delivery, etc.)
    - quality
    - reliability (insurance to get the service)
  - Comparison with provision of services by other stakeholders:
    - no other stakeholder providing these services
    - other stakeholders providing these services: do the FO do better or worse regarding relevance, cost, quality, reliability?
- **Assessment of the constraints and difficulties encountered to fulfil the function:**
  What are the constraints, difficulties faced by FO and their reasons?
  - Poor conception of the activities (no advice, poor advice, …)
  - Difficulty to get the means to initiate the activity
  - Difficulties encountered in the functioning of the services?
    - Technical difficulty due to:
      - equipment collapse
      - human resources limitation regarding members, leaders, partners (no mobilisation, delay, incompetence, lack of skill or knowledge, etc.)
    - Financial difficulty due to:
      - dishonesty of leaders
      - no respect of commitments by the FO's members: no payment of fees, no reimbursement of loans, etc.
      - no respect of commitments by the partners (support agency): delay in delivering the support, temporary stop of the support, end of the support, etc.
    - Management difficulty due to
      - no or ineffective monitoring system
      - no or ineffective use of financial monitoring tools

Note: it may be useful to register the final impact of the difficulties: the service doesn't work at all, service is not satisfactory, or, the service is nevertheless working

- Identification of solutions (according to FO's leaders or members):
  - What are the initiatives taken by the FO to try to cope with the identified problems and that are somehow efficient? Under which conditions?
  - What are possible solutions that could be tested in future (that can be possible future projects of the FO)?
  - What are the difficulties of which members and leaders have not any idea of solution?

Note: it is useful to get an idea of the solution undertaken, tested, or forecasted, according to the leaders and members of the FO (as they often have already a lot of ideas and the best "field knowledge").

Sheet 1c: Organisational Diagnosis

What is organisational diagnosis and why using it?

As functional diagnosis aims at assessing the activities undergone by the FOs, the organisational diagnosis aims at assessing the functioning of the FOs and its capacities. It is useful as well for the members of the FO when wanting to improve its efficiency, for leaders of the FO to address its legitimacy (→ see sheet *"Representation of interest")*, and for support agencies when defining the modalities of their interventions (→ see sheet *"Support process to FOs"*).

The capacities of FOs concern:

- Internal activities (communication with members, decision making process, etc.)
- External activities (relationships with other stakeholders)

An organisational diagnosis helps to:

- Define what the capacities of the FO are
- Determine the bottlenecks of the functioning.

Combined with functional diagnosis, organisational diagnosis helps to design a realistic and well-tailored strategic plan (→ *see sheet "strategic planning").*

Organisational diagnosis can be used on every existing FO whatever the level of the organisation (grass root to national level) or the functions.

How to handle it?

An organisational diagnosis can be carried out by external human resources (non-members, support agency staff, consultants, etc.). Better results are generally obtained as to accuracy of information and usefulness for the FO, when this diagnosis responds to a demand of the FO's leaders or members, and is carried out with their involvement. Nevertheless, relying on an external vision may be useful for the FO to obtain sensitive information and discuss this.

Organisational diagnosis could then be used as a management tool (or as a self-monitoring and evaluation tool) by FO leaders to improve the functioning of their organisation and its sustainability. Strong involvement of FO members and leaders in the implementation of organisational diagnosis (for example in the definition of the criteria) can also be considered as a way to strengthen the analytical capacities of FO leaders or members.

Organisational diagnosis goes inside the "black box" of the organisation. It thus asks for confidence between the interviewer and the FO leaders and members. This is why the objective of organisational diagnosis must be very clearly presented, and be validated by the FO. Moreover, to create a good climate of confidence, the information gathered during the process should be used and broadcasted very carefully, to avoid that other stakeholders use it against the FO's interest.

The implementation of organisation diagnosis, as functional diagnosis, asks for direct interviews of members and leaders. Individual interviews or collective interviews can be used according to objectives in term of accuracy, and implementation constraints (time, means) (→ see *functional diagnosis*).

Proposal of an "organisational diagnosis" analytical tool

There are many analytical tools to conduct an organisational diagnosis. They use different criteria to assess the functioning of the FO and focus on one or another criterion according to the objectives. The tool presented here results from the synthesis of several analytical tools that have been extensively used in different situations. It has to be considered as a starting point since adaptation and refinement are always necessary to fit local conditions. Nevertheless, it covers the main points to be addressed in an organisational diagnosis.

Two types of information can be collected when implementing an organisational diagnosis:

- Basic information on the FO, enabling to have a rapid grasp of some characteristics

  → Basic description of the FO

- Basic information on the functioning, focusing on the way the FO is managed (internal rules, decision-making process, etc.) and on the way the FO is organised (e.g. organisational set-up, links between the different levels)

  → Description of the functioning of the FO

Those two types of information help to provide an insight of the internal functioning of the FO but they are not sufficient to design support services to FOs.

The evaluation of **FO capacities** is a complementary operational tool to better identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation in an operational way. The information needed to establish this evaluation can be collected through open discussions with FO leaders. This information is not quantitative though, and the appreciation is more or less subjective.

To evaluate the organisation and its viability, five basic categories of capacities can be taken into account:

- **Strategic capacity**: capacity of the FO to propose a vision of the future of its members (objectives) that takes into account their expectations, and to design a programme to achieve this future wanted situation.
- **Capacity of organisation and implementation of action**: capacity to implement activities, to share responsibilities, to adapt to unexpected situations.
- **Capacity to mobilize and manage human resources:** capacity to mobilize the members to participate efficiently to activities, to manage the power, to share the responsibilities, to train new leaders, to inform the members.
- **Financial and accounting capacity:** capacity to mobilize internal resources (fees, margins from economical services) and external resources (subsidies, credits), to manage them properly, to develop these resources and to report on the results.
- **Capacity of managing relationships with other stakeholders and negotiation**: capacity to communicate with the other actors, to identify allies and opponents, to develop partnerships.

The basic categories can be refined. The criteria to evaluate them should be defined in detail according to the situation (possibly with the FOs). → Example of practical criteria
Remark: Not all the capacities have the same importance. The importance will depend on to the objectives and the stage of the FOs.

Basic description of an FO – some criteria

- Date of establishment
- Condition of establishment (core members, endogenous initiative, exogenous initiative)
- Members' characteristics: number, d type of members (e.g. activity, socio-economical level, gender)
- Scope of intervention : local, provincial, national
- Domain of activity: product oriented, territorial oriented
- Level of structure: grassroots, federation
- Statutes

Description of FO's functioning

- Type of decision-making process
- By-laws (content and orientation: more or less participative, more or less demanding membership)
- Relationship between levels: autonomous organisation inside a network, hierarchical linkage between organisations, level of autonomy)
- Respective roles of different levels
- Financial resources (assets, capital, internal or external sources)
- Human resources (salaried or not)

Example of practical criteria to evaluate FO capacities

- **Strategic capacity**:
  - **Very low**: FO has no project for the future and no vision of the future.
  - **Low**: FO can describe a future vision but with a vague description only, with few ideas to reach this situation (and often focusing on the lack of means).
  - **Satisfactor**y: FO has precise objectives, and designed a realistic and convincing action plan.
- **Capacity of organisation and implementation of action**:
  - **Very low**: FO activities are not running.
  - **Low**: FO always implements the same activities without any adaptation and innovation.
  - **Satisfactory**: FO tries to improve its activities, to develop new ones, to test, to innovate, to adapt to new demand of members.
- **Capacity to mobilize and manage human resources:**

Sheet 1d: Strategic planning

The activities that and FO may implement in a given sector are generally numerous and diverse. At the same time, resources, both financial as human, are limited as well. Choices have to be made. On what basis? That is the purpose of strategic planning.

What is strategic planning? What is it useful for?

For an FO, strategic planning consists in defining the objective the FO wants to reach and the actions to be implemented, and the time and the means to do it in order to achieve its goals.

First of all, a strategic plan is based on the **objectives of the FO**. It is not always easy for the members of an FO to identify or to agree on these objectives (→ see *organisational diagnosis*). But if there is no target, there cannot be a strategic plan and consequently no consistent action plan, and hardly any partnership building.

Given these objectives, a strategic plan specifies:

- The ways chosen to target the goals, i.e. the **scope(s) of action**
- The **means** to mobilize to implement the activities
- The **stakeholders** to be involved

A strategic plan includes a **time dimension**, but it is generally not a precise schedule of detailed activities as a lot of elements are not fully known yet at the time of planning and not controllable.

Strategic planning enables defining **priorities**. It is:

- A guaranty for consistency in action. It often includes a global financing plan.
- The basis for management to discuss allocation of funds, to share means (e.g. logistic means, but also available time) and tasks (between members, between members and staff, if any)
- A reference for the decision-making process in case disputes or conflicts occur in the organisation on the actions to implement
- An essential tool for (and product of) internal communication, the basis for short-term scheduling, etc.
- Essential to develop fruitful and clear partnerships

How to develop a strategic plan?

To be useful (as internal communication tool and as reference document), a strategic plan has to be the result of a common work involving (at one level or another) all members of the FO.

After analysis of the context and the FO's situation (→ see *functional and organisational diagnosis*), the **main steps** are the following:

- Identification of the FO's objectives
- Definition of the priorities for action, and, eventually, of their probable evolution
- Choice of the ways to address the identified issues
- Identification of the means to mobilize to implement the activities

The strategic plan has to be shared between members. It has to be reviewed and adapted regularly but not too frequently (otherwise the strategy cannot be clearly understood by members and partners, and may reduce trust). Usually, a strategic planning exercise is done every 3 or 4 years.

On what basis would an FO design an action plan?

Strategic planning is making choices: The objectives have to be defined first. This enables establishing a strategy to reach these. Then, the scope of action can be determined and the activities themselves identified (→ see sheets *"functions of FOs"*), including the means to mobilize, and the potential constraints. The result of strategic planning is a strategic plan → strategic plan: the case of FPFD.

Remark: For operational purposes, the strategic plan can be refined as to actions to be implemented, tasks, and time schedule. This is the **action plan.**

In the process of strategic planning, several issues need to be taken into account:

- To choose between different possible solutions, FOs have to consider what the other stakeholders are doing. If one FO decides to fulfil a new economical function, it has to evaluate whether or not it can do this better than existing stakeholders.
- Collective action has its efficiency, but is not always more efficient than other actors (private ones).
- Among the different possibilities, achievable solutions depend on the stage and experience of the organisation, level of mutual trust between members, capacities of the organisation (specific), level of means (especially financial), etc.
  → See sheet *"organisational diagnosis".*

How to support an FO in defining its strategic planning?

The main challenge is to support FO members and leaders in this delicate process without doing their work, as that would not be useful at all.

The work of support staff consists mainly in facilitation. Sometimes, the process may result in a strategic plan, but this does not fulfil (or not fully) the objectives of the support agency.

Although a strategic plan should be somehow ambitious, the support staff should warn the FO that it should be realistic and achievable at the same time (to avoid discouragement in case the objectives are not reached).

Example of Strategic Plan: the case of FPFD in Guinea

Basic assumption: *"The only way to improve farmers' livelihood is wealth creation"*

- **Objective:** Improve livelihood of farmers on a sustainable basis
- What **strategy** to reach the objectives? Develop profitable production (supposes to identify areas where local economy has chances to be competitive then concentrate the means on it)
- What the **scope of action**? Potato is chosen as marketable and potentially competitive
- What **actions** to implement in order to develop the production and to enhance the benefit?
  - To improve the members' production (quantity, quality, and time):
    - Provide technical support and training to producers
    - Deliver inputs (seedlings)
  - To improve marketing conditions:
    - Negotiating prices with traders
    - Organizing group marketing, lobbying to lower the competition of imports, in order to give time to the farmers to become competitive
- What particular **conditions** are necessary to succeed?
  - Financial means for offering credits to farmers (e.g. to pre-finance the cropping season): One has to look for funds, either direct funding or a guaranty fund to enable getting a credit within the bank system (financial partners have chosen the latter solution)
  - Functioning logistic system: Getting support for the building of storage facilities, convincing development partners to invest in rehabilitation of roads and bridges, etc.

Sheet 1e: Funding FOs

The context

There is a strong link between development of an FO's activities and its funding capacity. Thus funding is a critical issue.

Some statements:

- A severe bottleneck is the need for funding of agricultural activities.
- There is a high demand for funding of farms, support services, rural infrastructures.
- There is a high expectation from stakeholders towards FOs, but FOs often have low financial capacity and low management capacity.

There is a concrete risk of a vicious circle: Low capital → low capacity to fulfil its economic functions and organisation management → low credibility (members, banks) → difficulty to raise funds → low capital → etc.

The needs of FOs for funding may be diverse:

- To enhance farmers' access to financial resources and financial services
- To fund collective economic initiatives
- To produce resources to cover operating costs, to participate to financing of service to members, etc.
- To fund internal activities (internal communication, etc.)

Different ways and sources of funding

- Mobilize internal funding from members (fees, etc.)
- Develop financial resources from its activities
  - Margins on economic activities (commercial margins, etc.) → FPFD
  - Payment of services (technical advice, marketing services, etc.) → UNPCB
- Mobilize external sources of funding
  - Credit (at market level or subsidized) from institutional partners, banks, etc.
  - Subsidies (from State, project donors, NGOs)
  - Para-fiscal taxes (→ see Definition of para-fiscal tax and French case)

Common funding problems faced by FOs

- Not enough money to carry out its activities, due to:
  - Too many activities (and/or non-economic activities)
  - Activities run in a not-effective way
  - Too limited income → consider the different sources of incomes
- Not enough money to develop the activities
- Cannot get contribution from the members (problem of trust, free riders), because:
  - Members do not see the interest of the FO for themselves → define the objectives and clear services that FOs will play for members
  - Members do not have sufficient money to pay → revise the fees

Ways for FOs to solve these financial problems

To solve the financial problems, FOs may:

- Reduce their activities or adapt their activities to the funding capacities – cases 1, 3b.
  Risk: This may lead to a collapse (an FO without a project) and subsequently it may lose its credibility and the involvement of farmers.
- Choose and focus only on activities that provide an economical benefit – cases 1, 2.
  Risk: selective membership (not pro poor)
  Condition: capacity to run an economic service efficiently, analysing capacity
- Clearly communicate with members on the FO's objectives – case 3
- Define clear rules of the financial functioning (transparency, reporting to members) and the decision-making process, involving members – case 3
- Develop new financial partnerships at FO level (diversification of funding sources) – cases 1, 2, 3, 4
  Condition: Capacity to build projects (money is always easier to find when FO objectives are clear and achievable) → see sheet *"strategic planning"*.
- Negotiate long-term support and program (including perennial financial mechanism such as para-fiscal taxes) to support FOs dynamics at regional or national level.

How to support FOs in coping with funding issue

There are several ways to support FOs in coping with funding issues:

- Support the FO in developing a relevant action plan, in identifying possible internal resources, etc.
- Inform FO members and leaders on funding opportunities (subsidies, etc.)
- Contribute to developing bankable projects
- Play an intermediary role to submit these projects to potential donors (e.g. international NGOs), or to develop partnerships.

Examples

Definition of para-fiscal tax and French case

A para-fiscal tax is a tax charged on marketed products by the State and set by the law, which is dedicated to finance specific activities for the benefit of the sector as a whole (especially product-oriented activities).

In France, para-fiscal taxes are collected on the agricultural marketed products and are used to fund product-oriented activities implemented by FOs or technical services, such as technical research and advising or representation of interests. E.g.: This system contributes to fund the "Chambres d'agriculture" which are farmer organisations that represent farmers' interests and do technical and economical counselling for farmers.

A para-fiscal tax system also enables funding product-specific applied research centres.

UNPCB Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, the *Union nationale des producteurs de coton* gets most of its resources from the services that are provided to the commodity chain by the grassroots farmers' organisations. These groups are managing the marketing of seed cotton at village level – grouping, weighing, loading of trucks, as well as the distribution of cotton inputs to the farmers. The buyer (cotton society) pays the group an allowance per marketed ton of product. This allowance is shared between the grassroots group itself and the upper levels (departmental, provincial, national) of the organisation that support these groups (training, support, etc.).

FPFD in Guinea

In Guinea, a large part of the resources of the Federation of Producers of *Fouta Djalon* is coming from the benefits realized by getting both commercial margins on inputs supplied to the farmers (potato seedlings, vegetable seeds and fertilizers) and allowances on marketing of the products (potatoes). Input supplying activity has been made possible thanks to the support of donors that established a guaranty fund, allowing the organisation to obtain credit from the banks. Marketing activities are funded through contracts passed with the traders. The traders only pay the "farmer's part" when picking up the products; the remaining is paid to the FO at the end of the sales period.

Sheet 1f: FOs' capacities strengthening

Problematic of FOs' capacities strengthening is a large subject; the available tools are very numerous and diverse and the issue of choosing among them relies mainly on ground knowledge.

What is the issue?

What are the capacities of an FO?

Two main types of capacities can be distinguished:

- Technical capacities: capacities to handle tasks
- Strategic capacities: capacities to decide, to manage, etc.

For more details → see sheet *"organisational diagnosis".*

The capacities of FOs comprise both capacities of leaders and capacities of members. Although leaders are also members, the role they play in the organisation is specific and requires particular capacities, necessary for the good functioning and success of the FO. The capacities of the FO finally results from:

- Capacities of "ordinary" members: literacy, technical capacities, general knowledge of the context, organisational knowledge (statutes and by-laws, regulations, etc.) in order to succeed in implementing activities, democratic functioning, satisfactory collective decision-making, sustainability (ability to renew leaders, etc.)
- Capacities of leaders: managerial, strategic, communication skills, ability to represent the members and discuss on their behalf, ability to take decisions if necessary, take calculated risks, etc.

What capacities have to be strengthened? How to define priorities?

The capacities to strengthen will depend on the current situation of the FO (→ see sheets *"functional diagnosis"* and *"organisational diagnosis"*) and on the objectives of the FO (→ see sheet *"strategic planning"*).

Priority could be put on:

- Capacities that the FO lacks, placing the FO in a dangerous situation
- Capacities that are useful to achieve the objectives defined in the strategic plan

The priority setting should be done by the FO leaders (and members, whenever possible) since the willingness to improve capacities is a basic condition for effective capacity building.

What are possible ways to strengthen capacities of an FO?

Several pedagogical methods/tools are available and commonly used:

- Demonstrations: generally used for technical issues
- Formal trainings: specific to one FO or one activity, or grouped with other FOs
- Tours and visits: local, national, foreign countries
- Daily accompanying : facilitating a "learning-by-doing" process → UNPCB

The range of pedagogical methods or tools that can be used is large. Whatever the method, compliance to some principles may increase the efficiency of the training.

The ways to implement these methods can change over time, according to:

- The scope of capacities that are on stake
- The target people and the experience of staff involved in the capacity strengthening process. The major variations are related to the level of involvement of "trainees".

Some basic principles

Some basic principles may be useful to increase the efficiency of the capacity building process, e.g.:

- As much as possible, capacity building activities should give the opportunity to FO leaders and members to experiment with new situations; the FO members and leaders draw lessons from all activities they implement themselves.
  Remark: it has to be noted that the activities that include monitoring and an evaluation, have a high impact on capacity strengthening.
- Try to involve the FOs as much as possible in the design of capacity building activities (e.g. planning and content). Even if more time-consuming, it may be more fruitful on a long-term basis.
- Clearly adapt activities to target people (members, leaders), their levels and their objectives.
  Remark: capacities building of leaders is especially important for the development of large-scale FOs and may thus require particular attention.
- Focus on the learning process rather than on the knowledge.

In fact, a capacity building process is generally based on several complementary activities, e.g. training, implementing, evaluating, and drawing lessons from experiences.

The main problems

- Strengthening capacities is not profitable on a short-term perspective and it is difficult to assess its impact precisely. It may thus be difficult to find donors for such activities as, poor FOs or FO members are unlikely to pay for it at least in the first stage (that may change quickly).
- Strengthening capacities may be considered as "subversive" and some people (leaders or partners) may be reluctant to develop such activities. In fact, if members become all well for democracy and autonomy (of thinking) but leaders may be more questioned and support staff jobs may have to be redefined.

Example

Example: UNPCB Case Burkina Faso

The Cotton producers association decided to improve its capacities as this issue appeared to constitute a bottleneck for communication and development of the organisation. Several forms of training activities have been implemented: literacy courses for basic members (at village level), accountability and bookkeeping for leaders of grassroots FOs (grouped at provincial level), tours and workshops for leaders at upper levels as well as learning-by-doing process.

These activities are partially funded by UNPCB's own resources and also by external donors. The members themselves contribute by spending time without any compensation.

Reference sheet M5/2: Power point presentations

Sheet 2a: Introduction to FOs: what are FOs, roles of FOs

1 - What are Fos?
Roles of FOs

Basic principles

What are Fos?

- FOs are tools of producers for producers
  Their role is mainly to improve the environment in which their members are working
- ⇔ The objectives of one FO depend first on the needs of its members.

Remark: the definition can be easily adapted to organizations of other actors

Few aspects that make organizations different from groups

- An organization has an objective and develops a strategy to reach on a mid- or long-term perspective: there is a time frame dimension (an organization is more sustainable than a group)
- An organization is committed to its members and vice-versa, while a group is often more opportunistic

What are members' needs?

- To better implement their activities
  - Technical knowledge
  - Required ressources: labour, equipment, cash…
- To get a better profit from their activities
  - Commercial negotiation
  - Adapted regulations
  - …

Sheet M5/2b: Structure and functioning of FOs

2 - Structure and Functioning of organizations

Basic principles

What are we speaking about

Organization's functioning ⇔ framework and process choosen by this organization to fulfill its functions

- → Human resources management
- → Decision making
- → Technical and finacial resources management
- → Communication

Translated in organizational chart, statute documents, official processes , *and practices (technical and financial reporting…)*

Structure

An organization is characterized by:

- A territorial and/or sectorial structure
- Relations between different levels
  - How a level is represented at upper levels
- Bodies that constitute the decisional and operational framework

Functioning

Functioning of an organization is the way chosen to implement its duties, which includes:

- Decision making mechanisms
  - How roles and tasks are shared (between and within organs)
  - Who is accountable to whom through what process?
- Operational processes
  - Who does what, with what means?

Sheet M5/2c: Advanced reflexion on functioning

3- Advanced reflection on functioning

Representativeness/ Legitimacy (of leaders)

- Representativeness ⇔ acknowledgement (from outside) that one person or one group really represents the concerns of those that he/she/it represents - *issue of democracy, which is linked to the process of choice of the leaders*
- Legitimacy ⇔ acknowledgment of the relevancy of one person or one group to occupy a given position (intern) - *issue of trust and respect of statutes, which is linked to what is done*

Note: legitimacy is not the same than legality

Governancy

- Characterized by:
  - Participation
  - Transparency
  - Accountability
- Linked to principles
  - Primacy of law
  - Effectiveness
  - Efficiency
  - Equity

FO's Communication

Legitimacy/representativity are linked to democratic functioning and communication:

- Internally: between ground level and higher levels of the organisation
- Externally: image that the organisation gives of its functioning

What makes a FO efficient?

- Autonomy (technical, financial) – at least a minimum
- Cohesion (solidarity between members) relying mainly on communication
- Internal capacities

Questions still on board

- Sustainability of an FO: always desirable? Under what conditions?
- Democratic functioning: can be assessed from outside? (is leaders rotation a good indicator? Is it the only one?)
- Governance/leadership: ⇔ decision making and resource management

Reference sheet M5/3: Few recommendations to support the building processes of FOs

General recommendations

Wherever the initiative of creating the FO comes from, the purpose is to build a sustainable FO (a win-win situation is impossible to attain with a weak FO).

The main challenge for the FO members (champions) is to have a clear understanding that sustainability is a matter of legitimacy and that this relies on proper completion of roles that the organisation is supposed to fulfil (i.e. the roles that you planned to fulfil at the beginning) or the roles that people expect you to fulfil for them. Legitimacy is specifically linked to the expectations of the members. Sometimes you also have to take into account the expectations of the partners that support you.

First Steps

The first questions to be answered by FO members (or the initial group) is the following:

- Why are we together, what do we look for through organizing?
- What will be the roles of our organisation?

Remark: This is more or less developing roughly a vision, though still provisional and imperfect. Generally, people need to share some experiences before being able (and eager) to figure out precisely where they want to go together, and how they will do this.

Secondly (and not before!), issues of structure (organisational framework) and functioning (regulations to be adopted) have to be dealt with. The basis for decision-making is:

- What structure, what functioning to fulfil this/these role(s)?

Lastly, the relevance of legal registration (as a cooperative or another structure) has to be questioned. Registering takes time and is energy consuming. It is worth the effort only if there is some added value from registration (which generally occurs one day or another, but generally not at the start of an FO).

Critical issues to deal with in the beginning

The following issues have to be addressed by organisation members (at least by the initial or champions' group – speaking of an organisation it is highly desirable that there is more than one champion person)

Note: There is no "good answer" to any of the following issues, but addressing them is critical. It is important to be pragmatic.

- **Objectives/motivations**: Are we gathering for ourselves and/or for others (partners)?
- **Membership**: Do we opt for inclusiveness (everybody welcomed) or exclusiveness/ exclusivity (club): what option? The answer will depend on the vision (why are we grouping: if the organisation looks for matching the high standard requirements of a narrow niche market, inclusiveness is probably not recommended, which does not mean that small farmers cannot be part of the process. Generally speaking, full inclusiveness is not realistic, because for a group to work well, it is necessary that all members share

some basic principles and objectives. It is thus better to endorse "non-inclusiveness" and reflect upon the criteria to join the group.

- **Formalization**: is legal registration needed or not? Why getting an executive committee?

Note: legal registration is often required to get support (from administration, in particular)

- **Communication**: How will we manage information sharing (even for small organisations this can be an issue)?
- **Means:** where will we find means to accomplish what we want to do? (Not only money matters, human resources are critical in particular as well).

Factors that condition sustainability

Autonomy:

⇔ Resources: (as mentioned above, resources are not only related to finances): to be autonomous (i.e. to be free to define its vision and to choose its strategy) an organisation needs to get at least a part of its means from its own resources (through members' contributions – cash or in-kind, or through or other ways like provision of services)

⇔ Strategy: Mastering its resources is not sufficient. An organisation also needs to be autonomous in terms of thinking, both from a long term (strategic) perspective as from a shorter one. This implies it has to be able to define its own vision and objectives but also to identify new challenges and to design original solutions to cope with these challenges. Supporting organisations in that domain is a critical dimension of the coaching, as it is not easy to provide support in strategic thinking without interfering with the organisation's orientation or strategy.

Efficiency: an organisation is as more sustainable as its members consider it as able to match their expectations. That is the condition for them to be active members, to consider the organisation as legitimate.

Nevertheless, the legitimacy is not only a question of efficiency (although important) but also a matter of trust (the perception of being listened is important) which lead to the following point

Communication: there two dimensions in communication: internal and external, and two ways to consider:

Internal communication: between members, between members and leaders. Both for the "top" to know what the ground looks for, and for the ground to be aware of the strategy and decisions taken (linked to governance practice)

External communication: the image that the organisation gives to (potential) partners, and the information that she gets about external opportunities and threats.

Dynamics: to summarize, an organisation that doesn't evolve will quickly die (or is already died). An organisation has never a linear story; then, whatever the stage that an organisation has reached at a given time, it is never too late to question (draw again). A living organisation is necessary involved in a learning cycle: there is always a story before, to consider and to learn from, in order to go further.

Facilitator's/coach's role

The role of facilitator or coach is critical and very challenging, especially in the early stages of an organisation. The coach needs to find a balance between providing ideas and support and working to develop autonomy; this means that his role will evolve from a councillor position to a one of service provider. The two aspects do not require the same qualities and behaviour.

Reference sheet M5/4: Outline of facilitators' guide - Workshop to support a soybean women processors' group, Northern Ghana

General outline

This document aims at providing the ICRA trainer (Ben or Rowland) and coach(es) (Gabby and/or BSS staff) with an outline and tools to support the soybean processors' group in Tamale Region.

These women are not yet formally organized, although they use to work together occasionally and some perhaps regularly and they know each other quite well. They are part of a soybean cluster and supported by 2SCALE in the implementation of collective activities related to processing soybean to soy cheese (so called kebab) and soy milk. In the coming months, they could benefit from a piece of "high standard processing equipment" subsidised by BoP. In that perspective they aim at constituting a formal organisation to handle the machine.

The challenge is to move from an informal group to a functional and autonomous organisation and the capacity strengthening process proposed hereafter aims at supporting the existing group to move that way.

As usual in capacity strengthening organized within the framework of 2SCALE, the process will follow a step-by-step and learning cycle logic, building competences and know-how progressively, and addressing mutual trust and common awareness of the challenges. Rather than providing the group with recipes or blueprint models to build a smart organisation, the capacity strengthening process is based on reflection upon concrete experiences, the ones of the group itself, and others, so that the women will be able to develop their own vision, define their own strategy and figure out the way they want to follow to reach the common objectives.

At this stage we therefore propose a set of sections of which the specific choice and order can be revised according to the priorities of the group. Each "combination of sections" will follow the learning cycle process, i.e. will comprise 3 steps:

- A "workshop" (2-3 days), co-facilitated by the ICRA trainer and the coach(es), followed by
- A "coaching" during which the organisation will live its ordinary day-today life and put into practice what has been learned during the workshop, supported (coached) by the coach(es), and with occasional back-up support by the ICRA trainer
- A "reflection" (1 day) to review the life experience, to look at what was/is going well and/or what not in applying the principles and using the tools.

Sections 1 to 5 provide the framework to reflect on the basic question: "Why building an organisation and what kind of organisation":

Section 1 deals with awareness of what can be the interests and limits of collective action.

Section 2 aims at assessing the interest of collective action for the participants in their specific context.

Section 3 analyses what can be the roles of an organisation and the ways to fulfil these roles.

Section 4 explores what type of organisation is adapted for what purpose; this reflection being then applied at the specific case of the participants.

Section 5 helps developing a first vision and action plan.

Developing or maintaining an organisation also implies to deal with practical issues, such as managing communication, organizing meetings, sharing roles and responsibilities, decision-making, documenting, accounting, etc. These questions have to be addressed very pragmatically, as they will normally crop up spontaneously and therefore have to be addressed during the field coaching sessions.

The set of reference sheets attached can provide some support in developing pedagogical materials if needed. These reference sheets have been developed for farmers' organisations but are relevant too for other actors' organisations, especially small scale and/or start-up organisations.

Introduction

Tour de table: The facilitator asks the participants to present themselves and tell why they are there. He/she then summarizes what is mentioned in terms of main expectations.

Then, the facilitator explains the participants the capacity strengthening process they are involved in: it is not a school-bank way of learning, as they are already experienced people, but rather learning through reflection. We want to support them, as much as possible, in guiding their reflection based on their own experiences (individual or collective). We trust them to find, develop and implement their ***own solutions*** to issues they are facing, especially because as they are a group and as it is always interesting to learn from other people's experiences. We will support them in doing this by also sharing other experiences (of other groups, some in other countries), guiding their reflection through questions, discussions, and bringing in new ideas and advices, if necessary. For such a process, one has ***to be patient***, as the capacity strengthening will be progressive and the result of a sort of cycle:

- Learning something (through workshops or training meetings, personal reflection and/or exchanges within the group)
- Testing how it can be applied in real life situations
- Reflecting on experience and refining the initial learning

We are committed to support them all along this learning process. The trainer will be there mainly during the formal learning and reflection phases, coach(es) will support the trainer in formal training and will also be there for coaching in-between.

Section 1: Interests and limitations of collective action

Learning objectives

- Make clear that collective action is often useful but not always relevant and never easy…
- Be aware of the experience of working together they have already

Procedure

The facilitator asks each participant to give one concrete example of activity/action that one cannot easily implement alone, and one example of an activity/event for which it is better to work alone.

Give the participants 5 minutes for reflection and then organize a tour de table. The co-facilitator draws or writes the ideas on cards as pictorials or simple words, which are put on the wall to support further discussion.

For each card, the group discusses the following points:

- Possibility/impossibility to implement the action alone
- For the "done alone" cards: What is easy/difficult?
- For the other cards: What are advantages/challenges of not being alone?

The facilitator summarizes the discussion and points out that there are situations where collective action is not relevant and/or not easy or not fruitful.

Advice for the facilitator

Possible ideas*:*

Necessity or preference to act together: digging a well, prepare a feast, going to election,

Better to be alone: price negotiation (maybe), making a pot (or other delicate fabrication process), managing a small amount of money…

Then, in discussing challenges/advantages of the two (acting alone or not), possible ideas can be:

- *Collective action supposes to negotiate (or to accept the authority of someone), to organize somehow, which takes time → if you need to be really fast: being alone is better. The group allows scale savings. You can find here stimulating competition, but also rivalry.*
- *Being alone, you may lack means (labour, money…) and you miss opportunities for new ideas through discussions and sharing of experience. On you own you are faster to decide, however, flexible, and you are the only one responsible for success and failures, and you do not have to share benefits, if any.*

These are only ideas: obviously there is no "good" or "bad" answer, and you can discuss about what is the meaning of "being alone" or "collective action" (e.g. are you alone as a woman when giving birth, as a human when dying these are questions you can discuss endlessly about, so try to avoid these!)

Before going to the next step, the facilitator asks the participants mark the cards with activities or actions that they have already implemented together (all or a few of them). He/she explains that it will be used later on.

Section 2: Assessing the needs of participants for collective action

Learning objectives

At the end of this section, the participants will be able to:

- Draw a picture of their common activities (that they may implement individually, one beside the other, or collectively) and the overall context of these activities
- Analyse their performances, specify the room for improvement and the way to improve
- Specify for what actions it makes sense for them to work together.

Procedure

First, the facilitator proposes to view a film related to an experience of a soybean cluster supported by 2SCALE in Benin. Before starting he/she mentions this is not a model to be replicated, but it will help in the reflection, as the situation in the pictured cluster can be compared with their own, and thus we can may develop ideas from it. The facilitator suggests to focus specifically on HOW the actors reached the present state of operation:

- Who did/does what?
- How did/do they manage?
- What did/do they do alone? When?
- Why did/do they work in groups and when?

> ***Advice for the facilitator***
>
> *If not all the participants are fluent in reading English, the facilitator and/or the coaches can read the subtitles (putting the sound at a low level, or cutting it off)*

After a round of questions & answers for clarification, the facilitator asks for one volunteer to summarize the story of the soybean cluster.

Then, in the form of a tour de table, each participant indicates 1 or 2 point(s) that seem inspiring in the Beninese experience. Each participant has to propose a new idea or give the floor to the next person.

> ***Advice for the facilitator***
>
> It is not to make an appraisal of the Zogbodomey soybean cluster, neither to look for things to be copied.
>
> On one hand, we want to stimulate the participants to think “out of the box” (e.g. about the type of machine used for processing, the relationships with other actors, what has to be handled individually or collectively). On the other hand, the tour de table, strictly limiting to 1 or 2 points only, will show the importance of trust in collective intelligence when working in a team. “What I cannot say, another one will say”.

Subsequently, the group establishes a simple map of “their” soybean value chain as they have seen in the film. For that purpose the facilitator asks: “what is the product you are working with, where is it coming from (from whom), what are you doing with it, where (to whom) is it going?

Advice for the facilitator

Do not spend much time on the map; details and improvements will come later. We want to use it as a means for reflection on actions already accomplished or activities to be implemented. It will help to have a framework, to not forget anything, and to discuss the efficiency of actions, etc. (see below).

The next step is to establish a first list of what the women have already been involved in, either together (all or a few of them) or individually (part or all of them), in relation to soybean processing (or to the entire value chain).

The facilitator begins to fill out the following table with actions written on the cards marked at the end of section 1, taking care of placing them in correct order, following the steps of the value chain they are related to. Through a tour de table the group then completes the list with activities that have not been listed yet, either implemented in a group or individually.

Action	When	Collective or individual	Whom involved	Result
- - - - -				

Advice for the facilitator

Be careful in the beginning, when filling out the table with the cards from section 1, to leave sufficient space in-between the lines to be able to insert other actions or activities at their place along the value chain. Focus on the steps of the soybean VC that participants (at least part of them) are involved in (for instance, if women are only processing, start with the step of buying the beans, if some of them crop soya, include the production step).

The last part of Section 2 is a kind of assessment of the activities: the facilitator forms four (4) groups; the different actions listed above are shared between the groups. Each group has to assess the performance of each action, according to the following:

- What works well, and why?
- Why does not work well?
- How it can be improved if needed, either individually or collectively, according to the following table?

Action	Appreciation (++, +, -, --)	Reason(s) for success or difficulties	Ideas to improve if needed
-			
-			
-			

Advice for the facilitator

Explain the codes for appreciation; you can also use smileys.

Insist that the participants have to try to fill out the two last columns, that is, for each issue they face, look for what can be done individually and what will require collective action.

Explain that it is a matter of efficiency as collective action takes time, as explained earlier. When: leaving the room at the end of the day, each of them can begin to do something to improve. This does not mean that collective action will not come on top of it, but it will be more efficient if all possible individual improvements have been achieved already.

First, the different groups present their results of the appraisal columns, column 3: appreciation and reasons for success/failures. The facilitator then organizes a first discussion to prioritize the steps/actions that urgently need improvements, taken into account what currently are the weakest points or the more penalising ones.

Advice for the facilitator

At this stage, to avoid frustration, it may be useful to come back on the learning cycle principle. If an action/step is not on the top on the pile now it does not mean we will not come back to it in the future; it is just a matter of prioritization.

Make clear that prioritization can be based on many criteria, among which:

- What is the more penalising?
- What concerns more people (or what concerns specific persons considered as important for one or another reason)?
- What is the easier solution to put in place on a short term basis?
- What is easier to support?

Subsequently, the groups present column 4, ideas for improvement. Discuss further on possible improvements for the priorities identified. The facilitator launches this discussion by proposing to sort the solutions that have been considered, whether they are:

- Individual or collective
- Expensive or affordable
- Requiring external partners or relying only on the willing of women here…

At the end of this section a first list of necessary improvements that require collective action will have been established. The facilitator writes it on a flip chart for future use, but insists that this list is a working document and that it will need to be refined.

Section 3: Roles of an organisation and ways to fulfil these roles

Learning objective

At the end of this section the participants:

- Understand the difference between a group and an organisation; they see the interests and implications of becoming an organisation.
- Have initiated their reflection upon their own case and are able to pursue: is it relevant to go that way, i.e. what roles to be played by our up-coming organisation

Procedure

The facilitator explains the participants that they will now focus on organisations. To start, he proposes to look again at the part of the "Benin" film that deals with processing. He stresses that the participants should not focus on the technical aspects (machinery, etc.) but rather on how the processor women organise their activities (what they do with whom, not only what we see, but also what they speak about)

After looking at the "processing part" of the film, the participants form sub-groups to answer the following questions:

- What processor activities do we see and/or do we hear about?
- How is each of these activities organised, regarding:
  - Persons involved
  - Decision making
  - Means used, etc.

Advice for the facilitator

Seen: processing itself (to cheese/kebab, to milk, to brochettes), sale at school, storage…
Heard: training (being trained, being trainers for others), buying soybeans, getting loans from the bank, buying equipment, grouping for matching specific demand of milk for ceremonies, etc.

The groups present their results. The facilitator will synthesize these and explains that sometimes people work together but there is not an actual "organisation". For example: when Elise is processing soya in front of her door, two women help her but Elise is the only one to decide, the beans are hers, so is the machine, and she pays for the work done by the women.

On the other hand. when Elise is speaking of being trained (in a group, supported by the FO), providing training to others, processing soya to meet larger demands, getting subsidies for buying machines (individual ones but through the organisation), and looking for arrangements with the bank to fund soybean purchase, it is the organisation (the FO or the processors' organisation) which is at the front.

Then the facilitator gives a presentation on what an **organisation** is compared to a **group**, what can be its roles, and how to fulfil these roles. For this he/she uses part 1 of the PowerPoint presentation – see Reference sheet 2 – or something else, depending on the literacy level of the participants. He/she uses examples from the film to illustrate (or asks participants to do so).

Advice for the facilitator

The PowerPoint presentation speaks of farmers' organisations, which should not be an issue, as the participants probably know farmers very well. Nevertheless, having drawn (or shown) the "roles flower" you can ask the participants which petals are relevant for them (as processors) and which should be formulated differently (for instance: specify what the inputs are in their case, does it make sense to have a "processing/ storage petal?).

In the next step, we will go back to the participants' project. They have to question themselves to specify the actions/activities that really require (or are worth) setting up an organisation (activities that individuals or a simple gathering of individuals cannot implement efficiently). This is done through answering to the following questions for each of the activities that are listed at the end of section 2:

- Would individuals or a group of individuals be able to implement this activity?
- If the answer is no, what would be the concrete added value of the organisation (that is the role of the organisation for this specific case)?
- Who will benefit from this activity?

At the end of section 3 we will have then an initial "**working programme**" for the organisation.

Advice for the facilitator

The challenge here is for the women to really look from a distance at their project of forming an organisation. We insist on questioning what will be the added value/the role of the organisation.

Try to speak of "work plan" or "work programme" rather than of an "action plan" at this stage, as an action plan not only includes activities aimed at fulfilling the roles of the organisation towards its members or partners, but also activities related to the functioning of the organisation itself.

Section 4: What type of organisation for what purpose?

Learning objectives

At the end of this section the participants will be able to:

- Understand that there are different types or levels of organisations, and that they are not all equivalent, to fulfil different roles
- Assess their needs in terms of organisation, given their perspectives at short and mid term
- Determine what structure and what regulations are relevant for them at this stage

Procedure

The facilitator gives a short presentation on the structure and the functioning of an organisation (using part 2 of the PowerPoint presentation, if desirable), on the requirements to constitute an organisation and on what is not compulsory (you may already be an organisation without legal statutes or registration).

Then, in a plenary section, he/she draws the organisational framework of the Zogbodomey soybean cluster, by asking the following questions (if needed, the film is shown again):

- What categories of actors are formally organised?
- What are the processors' organisations? Are they linked to one another?
- What are the farmers' organisations? Are they linked to one another?

Advice for the facilitator

Examples of structures in the film:

Processors:

- Grass-roots processors' groups
- ACMA: association of grass-roots processors' groups

Note: these processor' groups and association are members of UCP-Z

Farmers:

- Village level soybean producers' groups, (UVPS)
- Communal Union of producers (UCP-Z*), including
- a sub-organisation focused on soybean production related activities: UCP-S Communal Union of Producers of Soya
- National federation (FUPRO)

** Note: Z: Zogbodomey*

Participants watch the FO part of the film, to deepen their understanding of the organisational aspects (unless the whole film has been shown again at the beginning of this section).

Then the facilitator draws the table below and the participants complete it with the information they got from the film. This can be done either in plenary or in working groups (sharing the organisations between the groups), depending on the time available, the group dynamics, etc.:

- What do we know or not know about the **structure** (linkages between different levels, membership, staff, etc.)
- What do we know or not know about the **functioning** (decision making, legal status, regulations, resources, etc.)

Organisation		Structure	Functioning
…	Known		
	Not known		
…	Known		
	Not known		

Using the attached complementary document, the facilitator gives some answers/examples to the "Not known" lines (not all!) and insists that this functioning should not be seen as a model, as it depends a lot on the context. In Benin, for instance, farmers have been organised for a while already and the "organisational culture" and know-how is strong.

Because of this, organisational issues did not weigh heavy on the process and were not shown in the film (it would have been be boring as well!).

Advice for the facilitator

Possible answers on Processors:

- What we learn from the film: structure: groups are associated in ACFA
- What we do not know: almost nothing about functioning (although we understand that Elise is president of her group, and she is the/ one of the motor(s) of the process)

Possible answers on Farmers, e.g. UCP:

- What we know: structure: members of UPC are village level groups, UCP is a member of FUPRO network. They have several staff (we see one of them in the film: Roland; Aubierge is another one who is mentioned). Functioning: Bank account
- What we do not know: very little about functioning

To help participants, you can ask for instance what they think about the position of Elise (she is the president of her group, and the president of ACFA). Then ask as well how long ago the story started (to raise awareness for the time necessary to build an organisation)?

You may also compare the organisation of processors with that of the farmers. The latter is more elaborated, as it is older, it has many more members and the range of activities is wider. It thus requires a higher "standard".

The next step of this section aims at initiating the reflection of participants towards their own organisation:

- What should be the structure?
- What type of functioning to consider?

To do this, the participants have first to go back to the working programme/list of roles that was established in section 3. The facilitator puts the list on the wall and asks one participant to remind everyone of what was raised.

The facilitator then explains that, for each of the roles to be fulfilled, we must reflect on the practical implementation and specify:

- What is needed to implement the activity, in terms of
  - Human resources (labour and competences)
  - Equipment
  - Financial resources
- What could be the difficulties and how to prevent them?

The facilitator proposes to do this assignment in groups, each group working on one or two roles. Next, the groups present their results, and the others complete and discuss.

Advice for the facilitator

Depending on the kind of "promises" and "incentives" that have been made, the activity on the top of the list might be: "handling a piece of equipment (machine) to be acquired with 2SCALE support". The problem is that participants may have only a vague idea of what the requirements for operating such equipment are.

If other activities are listed, such as training or collective marketing, it will become clear that some activities are less demanding from the organisational point of view than others

Ask what would be a "wise" strategy? (One could say: Beginning with the easy issues before moving to the more difficult ones, has the advantage of giving the organisation time to become strong enough to face more difficult challenges). Is this "wise strategy" possible? Is it desirable?

If handling the machine is the only thing that motivates the group, insist on the last question, i.e. are there any difficulties to forecast? Can they anticipate on how to solve these difficulties?

The challenge is to stimulate the reflection of women on the difficulties that they may face in future. The purpose is not to discourage them but to make them aware that delivery of the equipment/machine would not mean the end of the exercise. On the contrary, it would be just the beginning of the challenging period for their organisation. If they are aware of that, they will be able to anticipate to that.

The final step of the section is to draw the framework of the organisation. This is done in plenary. The facilitator ask the participants to discuss and agree on answers to each of the following questions:

- Who will be member of the organisation? Are all members/potential members attending this workshop? Who may be the other members? Are there criteria to join and what are they?
- What will be the resources of the organisation? (Once again, look beyond money, consider working force, competencies, facilities, etc.)
- What will be the process to make decisions on technical and financial aspects?

Having asked these questions, the facilitator explains briefly that there are two main options for decision making in an organisation:

- By delegation: the members decide to delegate the decision to one person (one of the ordinary members or a staff member). The delegate should then report to the members how it will be done and when it has to be decided.
- By direct decision making, through voting or consensus

The two options are not equivalent in terms of constraints and advantages. That is why, depending on the decision domain, the choice may be different. It is important to be pragmatic in the decision domain (what will work?). In particular, the participants have to be aware that decision making through voting or consensus is time-consuming and generating inertia. For technical operating it is generally better to give the responsibility to one person.

Advice for the facilitator

Make clear that the decision-making process will probably have to be adapted to take into account the actual situation. Insist that it very important that the choice of "how to decide" is to be agreed upon by all the members.

In the beginning, the enthusiasm is high and the feelings positive (we are all friends, we will always remain on the same line, etc. but that is likely to change with time, and people react differently on difficulties. Once again, do not discourage participants, but prepare them for possible difficulties to avoid total discouragement in case they occur. You can do that by questioning them on bad experiences they heard about, or give them examples. Insist that a success is more sustainable when attained after a process of solving difficulties rather than when attained smoothly, without encountering any problems.

- How will the roles and responsibilities be shared? Will there be an executive committee, how many people, to do what? How will these persons be chosen?

To address this question, it is necessary to come back briefly on what is needed to run the organisation: operational decision making (see above), accountability, communication (both internal – i.e. calling for meetings – and external – sometimes called public relations), administrative management, etc. For each of these tasks or responsibilities, specify what the required competencies/qualities should be. Then decide if and how these responsibilities will be shared between different positions within an executive committee (e.g. president, treasurer, secretary). And how will the persons for the different tasks be chosen (see the decision-making question above)?

- Do we already have the necessary skills and know-how in the group? If not, how to acquire them?

Based on his knowledge of the specific context and national regulations, the facilitator advices on the following issues:

- What type of organisation is relevant and what regulations should be adapted to match the requirements listed before?
- Will legal registration be needed? Why and when?

A short presentation of what has to be included in the organisational documents (statutes and internal regulations) may be useful at this stage (see reference sheet "List of items"). The facilitator will once again stress the need to reflect and be patient and recommend participants to reflect and come back upon all issues that have been discussed.

Advice for the facilitator

It is important for the participants to understand that although it is always possible to evolve and come back on decisions (learning cycle and continuous improvement), the formalization stage is an important step that should not be treated lightly, and it is important to take time to address the critical issues addressed at the end of this section.

Section 5: First visioning and action planning

Learning objective

At the end of this section the participants will be able to:

- Outline a first vision for their up-coming organisation (being aware that it is yet provisional)
- Establish a draft action agenda for their organisation

Procedure

The section begins with a visualizing exercise. The facilitator asks the participants to "picture" the present and future in the form of a drawing (rich picture), distinguishing what is related to the individuals, and what is related to the organisation. They should first draw a picture of the present situation, and next one of where they want to be within 3 years, for example.

The facilitator explains that at this stage it is important to remain realistic (it is a project, not a dream). That is also why we are not thinking too far ahead, but of a relatively nearby future.

Advice for the facilitator

The pictures have to be consistent with the previous results (sections 2 and 3), but there could be a few differences, as a result of the reflection already run, or because of the fact that they are positioning now as an organisation. If this is the case, highlight this and insist that it is not bad (even good!). Nevertheless, it is important not to move too fast before implementing, and capitalized on field experience.

Question the main gaps with the group by asking for instance: you said you would do that, and now you have apparently changed your idea. Why? Does it change anything if you consider yourselves as an organisation?

Comparing the two pictures, a rough action agenda can be developed for the organisation, asking the following questions:

- What changes are we looking for?
- What is needed for that changes to happen?
- How can the organisation operate to make these changes happen?
- What roles would the organisation play in future?

Advice for the facilitator

Explain the difference between:

- List of activities to be handed on what has been established in section 2, which included a large range of collective and individual activities
- List of priorities that motivate the "creation" of the organisation (section 3),
- Current (draft) action agenda for the 'nascent' organisation, which includes not only "technical aspects" (such as e.g. handling the equipment) but also making the organisation operational, sharing of information, representation, partnership development, etc.

Reference sheet M5/5: Practical tools

Sheet 5a: Recommendations in communication management and meetings

Principles related to sharing of information

Whom to inform?

First of all, all people concerned with a certain activity have to be informed about its outcome. Concerned people are people that are:

- Directly involved (e.g. a farmer who has been involved in a survey or an experiment is entitled to be informed about findings and conclusions)
- People mandated a representative (for a meeting, a visit)
- All relevant decision makers within the organization

Who has to inform about what?

Sharing of information is not limited to the activities implemented and decisions taken within the organization, e.g.:

- For people outside the organization: the conclusions of each research or study implemented in the framework of an organization have to be presented

Within the organization: each work trip or visit, each participation to a workshop has to be reported.

How to inform?

Information must be shared in an effective way, taking into account the profile of the people to receive the information. This often signifies holding oral presentations of the results next to writing reports. Support materials in these presentations have to be adapted, language issues have to be taken into account to enable interaction and provide accessible information for the people to use.

Organizing and facilitating a meeting

The basic principles listed hereafter are valid for all types of meetings, including ground level meetings:

- Carefully prepare each meeting: have documented folders (not saying that the conclusions are pre-known), smart presentation materials, etc.
- Keep a written track of each meeting: at the beginning of the meeting, a session secretary (or two), has to be identified you can record the minutes in an acceptable period of time.
- Provide a meeting agenda and reference documents to participants prior to the meeting for more efficiency. When strategic decisions have to be taken, preparatory ground level meetings are necessary to allow the representative to make a decision based on proper information rather than on personal opinions or feelings.
- Effectively manage time in a meeting: It is important to make an agenda of which all items can be discussed. Going too fast, without giving sufficient time to people to

express themselves, generates frustration and is may damage community feeling. If needed, a follow-up meeting has to be planned precisely.

- Have a strong chairperson: sometimes debates are sterile. The chairperson has to be strong enough to stop such discussions. A good preparation gives to the facilitator the tools to avoid too much digression.
- Make sure to end the meeting with some conclusions: Before leaving, it is recommended to summarise the main conclusions of the meeting and a list of follow-up tasks and to decide on the date and venue of the next meeting.

Sheet 5b: Indicative check list of items to include in statutes & internal rules

Statutes (take also into account national regulations, depending on official statute, association, cooperative, etc.)

- Official localization *(generally central office place)*
- Fundamental principles
- Purpose and vision of the organisation
- Means of action *(for instance capacity strengthening, technical support, economic activities)*
- Type of resources *(quite general)*
- Legal status *(e.g. cooperative, association)*
- Organisational framework (*representation at different levels: board and its composition, diverse committees, general assembly, etc.)*
- Designation of constituent bodies: *how are the members of the different constituent bodies as listed in the organizational framework chosen? (vote – then: who votes? or otherwise)*
- Decision making regulations *(main principles: what constituent body decides on what…)*
- Control process *(who or what constituent body controls who, and on what basis)*
- Regulations related to the closure of the organisation: *who is habilitated to decide to close down the organisation, on what basis, and what circumstances imply automatic closure).*

Internal rules

- Who can become a member? *(Criteria to apply for membership: financial or other contribution, handling a specific activity – e.g. rice farmer or soybean processor living/working in a specific area, etc.)*
- Rights and duties of members and staff
- Sanctions in case of failure to comply to rules and regulations
- Relations between members and staff *(who is in charge of staff management- familiarly spoken, who is the boss of whom, who is accountable for what and to whom)*
- Internal organization *(including communication, ordinary decision making, hierarchical chain, etc.)*

Reference sheet M5/6: The issue of sustainability of FOs

Based on: "Pedagogical materials on Farmers' Organizations and Farmers' Organizations support", by Cirad-Ciepac (MJ Dugue, JF Le Coq) Feb 2006 for Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Paris and Government of Cambodia

It has to be noted that the sustainability issue is more often raised by support services and donors (and sometimes by FO leaders) than by FO members themselves…

It is difficult to propose a precise process to improve the sustainability of FOs because it is a very complex issue, and because the solutions are strongly locally specific. Some questions, however, may help FOs and their support agencies to clarify the issue to improve sustainability.

What is sustainability? What it is useful for?

Sustainability of FOs is a complex and subjective issue: Many factors are at stake in the level of sustainability reached by a given FO at a given time, and the appreciation of this by support agencies will strongly depend on the time span considered. In fact, evaluating the sustainability of an FO relates to making a kind of hypothesis of what might be its future role.

For a support agency implementing a project with an FO, sustainability is the capacity of an FO to maintain its activities after the project has ended. It is considered as a major indicator of success, which explains why support staff is strongly concerned with this issue.

For farmers, it will depend on the objectives of the FO. What is important for them is that the function(s) is/are continuously fulfilled. Thus, to them, the sustainability of the function is more relevant than the sustainability of the organisation itself, which is not an objective on itself: a sustainable FO is an FO which remains useful for farmers.

Sometimes, some collective actions can stop when objectives are reached or when other stakeholders or individual farmers implement the activities previously ensured by the FO (e.g. when moving from collective to individual equipment).

Sustainability should not to be confused with the capacity to stay alive without evolving like “disappearing” by merging, upscaling with other organisations, or generating - often specialised – “daughter organisations”.

Visible sustainability, though, (keeping the same name) may be important for FOs to fulfil efficiently certain functions. For example, to represent the interests of the farmers, the duration is useful and sometimes necessary to be considered legitimate.

Finally, sustainability can be defined as the capacity of an FO to fulfil its roles toward its members in a continuous way whatever the changes of the environment are, especially to maintain its activities and framework when support is lowering or reducing, and/or to manage internal crises. This is strongly linked to the questions of legitimacy, capacities, especially strategic ones, and autonomy.

What factors need to be considered when addressing sustainability?

During its "life", an FO has to find an **equilibrium** between various crucial issues, i.e. between:

- Upscaling and relationship with the members: e.g. developing activities towards the current members *versus* looking for new members, developing new activities (new functions) or increasing their scope of intervention (like building a federation at a higher level, provincial or national)
- Means (financial, human) and activities (scale, intensity, etc.): it is often difficult to adjust the level of activities to the resources (especially human resources with too many leaders, for example);
- Internal activities and external activities:, e.g. fixing the level of means to invest for activities oriented directly to the members (to assume functions, for internal communication) or establishing/developing contacts with potential new partners (networking, external communication)
- Involving members and involving leaders: there may be huge differences between investing in members and investing in leaders.

These equilibria are dynamic as they change with the evolution of the context. Experience shows that the ability of an FO to define these equilibria within a **participatory process** is a key factor for sustainability. Involving the members in the process as much as possible will enable the FO to answer to most of members' expectations, and will reinforce its legitimacy.

The **autonomy** of an FO is also a critical issue. Autonomy can have two aspects:

- Autonomy of thinking: the ability of the FO to design its own solutions, to solve new problems, to cope with new challenges. It will depend on the strategic capacity of the FO, i.e. the capacity to have a vision of the future.
- Financial autonomy: an autonomous FO is able to find (part of) its own financial resources, to keep having leadership in strategic decisions. If all financial means of an FO are coming from a certain donor, this donor will be in the position to strongly influence the objectives of the FO.

This autonomy results partly from the FO's ability to find and mobilize diverse partners (sourcing diversification strategy) and to get mid or long-term funding.

Remarks

It has to be noted that an FO will never be fully independent as it is working in a common context with other actors. The sustainability issue has necessarily to be replaced in this context.

If an organisation has no project for the future, it will end with the support to the current activities. A project often aims at mobilizing 'members' for a certain time, limited by the duration of the project. To get sustainability, however, it is necessary to anticipate the end of the project, and thus to include strategic planning of the activities beyond the project duration.

Instruction on group work and exercises

Before starting each exercise and the group work, please verify whether all group members have well understood the exercise or the assignment on hand.

To the facilitator:

- Make sure participants are distributed into groups of interest, based on gender, or at random, whatever is needed. The objective is to stimulate real interaction between all the participants at the end of the day, that means to insure that one moment or another any of them will get the opportunity to express him/herself and to be listened by others. This supposes they feel comfortable enough in his/her group, and that these groups are motivating enough: sometimes it is good to make mixed groups to avoid boring exchanges between people that know too well each other, sometimes it's better to make it easier for participants (for example having shy women together) …
- Make sure each group receives adequate tools and materials such as flip chart sheets, markers, etc.
- Assign an appropriate place/location to each group and sufficient chairs and tables so that they can work comfortably.
- Make sure the participants have a good understanding of the task at hand before they split into their groups so that they do not spend unnecessary time in trying to understand the assignment.

To the participants:

Discuss and exchange within the group about your individual understanding of the expected outputs of the exercise and make sure to come to a common understanding on:

- The objective of the exercise (what is expected and why?)
- How to proceed to answer the question as a group
- How to 'visualise' your findings (using poster paper or pin board and coloured cards or the computer)
- Who to appoint to lead/moderate the discussion
- How and who to present results during the plenary session
- Who will be in charge of the final electronic write up?

Exercise 1: Identifying 'undertakings' that require collective action

This exercise takes up to 15 minutes.

Prepare the cards ahead of time: An undertaking requiring collective action is written on each card. These activities should be based on concrete experiences by one or more of the group participants (e.g. digging a well, preparing a feast, having an election, etc.)

1. The participants form groups and each group takes a card on which an activity requiring some (more or less) collective action is written.

2. The group establish a short list of advantages and inconveniences of acting **collectively** in that **specific** situation (remain concrete).

3. Then they prepare a short scene (3 to 5 mn) with two persons representing the 'in favour' and 'against' positions

Exercise 2: Identifying roles of organisations

NB: If possible, organise equipment for the two groups to be able to view the videos separately, to be able to repeat parts if needed to be able to properly analyse the roles.

1. The participants form two groups, preferably in a different grouping from the one for Exercise 1.

2. Each group first identifies the different organisations that are presented in the video '*Coaching and collaboration*', and to then specify which organisations relate to producers and which to processors.

3. Thereafter, the groups identify and list specific roles and beneficiaries.

Producer organisations	**Roles/actions**	**Beneficiaries**

Processor organisations	**Roles/actions**	**Beneficiaries**

Exercise 3: Identifying actions and means

Part A: Actions and means of the organisations presented in the film "Coaching and collaboration".

1. Depending on the number of participants (and video equipment available), form two or four groups: one (or two) group(s) work on UCP (the producer organisation), and one (or two) on GTS (the processor organisation).

2. Based on what you saw in the film, identify and list the concrete actions that are implemented by each organisation to fulfil the different roles (and to fill these in in the table below).

3. Then specify the means used (human or other resources) and where they come from. **Note:** It should be clear that we are speaking of "means", not only of money. Means include first human resources, capacities, space, equipment, land, etc.

Roles	Actions	Means	Source
	- - -		
	- - -		

4. In the case of four groups, the groups that are working on the same type of organisation first come together 2 by 2, exchange their findings and then organise together into one table to be able to present one collective outcome during the plenary session.

Part B: Actions and means of the organisations (to be) supported by the coaches (workshop participants)

1. Form new groups on the basis of gender or experience and/or operational work setting e.g. coaches working with organisations at grass-roots level or at higher organisational levels.

2. The groups reflect on the organisations involved in the partnerships that they work with in the field: Have each group choose one of partnerships.

3. Based on the results obtained in Step 1, list the roles played by the different organisations regarding the members/the lead firm if any, or other partners.

4. Finally, the groups specify the actions already implemented to fulfil these roles, or identify possible actions that would support the organisations to fulfil their roles.

Exercise 4: Setting up an organisation

1. The participants form small groups.

2. For each stage identified in Step 1, the groups 'propose' the actions to be implemented and the tools to be used. Note the possible challenges/difficulties; these challenges will be analysed later on.

   Use the following table format to fill in the answers:

Step	Actions	Tools	challenge

Exercise 5: Services provided and relationships between organisations

1. The participants form small groups.

2. Each group identifies all existing relationships and services between the different producer/processor groups in the Zogbodomey case and the levels of producer organisations and of processor organisations, as depicted in the video "*Coaching and collaboration*".
3. One card is used per service or relationship, considering all possible pairs of organisations, e.g.:
   - GVPS x UPC
   - UPC x FUPRO
   - GTS x ACFA
   - GTS x UPC
   - Etc.

4. Sort the cards and paste them onto the organisational scheme that was presented earlier, and discuss.

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