



Introduction to SMART Skills for rural development

A SMART SKILLS MANUAL



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***THE SMART SKILLS TRAINING MANUAL SERIES IS
CURRENTLY UNDER COMPREHENSIVE REVISION
TO UPDATE THE CONTENT AND ILLUSTRATIONS.**

This publication was made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) Office of Acquisition and Assistance under the terms of Leader with Associates Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-L-10-00003 with the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign for the Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) Project.

MEAS aims at promoting and assisting in the modernization of rural extension and advisory services worldwide through various outputs and services. The services benefit a wide audience of users, including developing country policymakers and technical specialists, development practitioners from NGOs, other donors, and consultants, and USAID staff and projects.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) serves the poor and disadvantaged overseas. Without regard to race, creed or nationality, CRS provides emergency relief in the wake of natural and man-made disasters and promotes the subsequent recovery of communities through integrated development interventions. CRS' programs and resources respond to the U.S. Bishops' call to live in solidarity—as one human family—across borders, over oceans, and through differences in language, culture and economic condition. CRS provided co-financing for this publication.

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ISBN-10: 1614921407

ISBN-13: 978-1-61492-140-0

Download this publication and related material at www.crsprogramquality.org/smart-skills-for-farmers/ or at www.meas-extension.org/meas-offers/training

Suggested citation: CRS and MEAS. 2015. Introduction to SMART Skills for rural development: A SMART Skills manual. Catholic Relief Services, Baltimore, MD, and Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services project, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, IL.

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Foreword

“La Esperanza” is a savings and loans group of 11 women and one man in Estelí, Nicaragua. Formed in 2010, the group used a part of their savings to invest in producing vegetables on a one-quarter manzana (0.175 ha) drip-irrigated plot. The group sells their produce at the Friday market in Estelí and to other villagers. They earn around US\$ 50 a week from selling their produce, a welcome income for the members. The members get paid for the time they spend working on the vegetable plot. The group’s manager is also paid for her efforts in organizing and running the group. These payments are important incentives that enhance the stability and growth of their business. The group wants to double the size of its plot and is exploring the possibility of selling its produce to a supermarket in town.

La Esperanza is an example of a new way of combating poverty in vulnerable rural communities – by helping them engage with markets. To do this, the group members need various types of skills. Here are the main ones:

- **Organizational management:** the group members need to plan and monitor the performance of their work.
- **Financial skills:** they need to save money, invest it in the enterprise, and maintain financial records.
- **Market and enterprise skills:** they need to produce something that customers want to buy; they need to find those customers; and they need to plan their business to make a profit.
- **Natural resources:** they need to conserve their soil, water and other natural resources so they can produce on a sustainable basis.
- **Innovation:** they need to find new, more efficient and more profitable ways of doing things.

In common with many other development agencies, CRS is incorporating a multi-disciplinary approach into its development efforts. We realize that increasing food production alone cannot move poor rural people permanently out of poverty. Building the capacity of smallholders means helping rural communities to work together effectively, manage their money and natural resources, engage in profitable enterprises and learn how to innovate. These are all important elements in a successful and more sustainable agricultural development strategy.

Field agents, extension workers and development managers typically focus on one particular area of expertise. This series of training modules gives them a broader set of skills they need to understand and support a robust enterprise approach and to build the capacity of local people.

Through building the capacity of local people, we are reshaping the way we support vulnerable communities. As in the case of La Esperanza, communities progressively become agents of their own change. They identify and grasp opportunities that turn previous desperation into a brighter hope for the future.

Carolyn Woo

President and CEO, CRS

Preface

This set of manuals on “Skills for Marketing and Rural Transformation”, or “SMART Skills” for short, presents an integrated and sequential approach to building vulnerable farmers’ capacity to link with markets. The guides are intended for use by development facilitators, field extension agents and community leaders working with poor rural communities. They focus on helping to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers by improving the production and marketing of their crops and livestock products.

This guide contains the following parts:

- **The subject matter:** the knowledge and skills you need to master in order to teach the skills. They are printed as lessons on the white pages.
- **Quizzes to test your own knowledge.** These are printed on the light green pages. The answers are given at the end of the guide.
- **Exercises:** these are guides to follow in helping the groups master the knowledge and skills they need. These are printed on the pages marked with a green stripe. The lesson plans are also available as a PDF document at www.crsprogramquality.org/smart-skills-for-farmers/. You can print out these pages and have them laminated so they last longer.

The training methods it contains are proven, and take into consideration the capabilities of field agents and the populations across many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Many examples and records used in the guide come from field experiences and real cases. Names and other information, however, have been changed.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

As a user learning the material. Read through this guide lesson by lesson, section by section, trying to absorb the information presented. Read both the lessons and the accompanying exercises. At the same time, picture how you would use the information and techniques described to help you work with farmers on developing their agro-enterprises. At the end of each lesson, answer the short quizzes. Check your answers with the list at the end of the guide. If you get all the answers right, congratulations! Go on to the next lesson. If you did not get all the answers right, go back to review that section again before moving on to the next lesson.

As a trainer working with field agents. You can use this guide to teach other field agents. You can present the information in the text, then work through the exercises with the participants. Guide the field agents on how they should conduct and monitor the training sessions. For some of the exercises, you can ask the field agents to pretend that they are farmers.

As a field agent working with farmers and other rural people. Once you have taken this course and passed the quizzes, you can use the guide to work with community members to develop their skills. Every group and every situation is different, so this guide cannot anticipate every problem you may come across. You should adapt the relevant items as necessary and use this guide as a basis for building your own series of learning events. If in doubt, check with your supervisor or ask your colleagues for advice.

Before teaching these materials, review and modify the following elements for your own local situation:

- **Names** of people, villages, and groups.
- **Currency.**
- **Amounts of the items** shared in the examples. These amounts could vary based on the target group's income levels. If the amounts are either too large or too small, participants may not feel that these tools apply to them.
- **Stories.** There may be more relevant examples for your community that will better communicate the objectives.
- Items being **bought and sold.**
- Types of **income generating activities.**
- When items are sold based on the **local seasons.**

Wherever possible, work in a **participatory manner** with the participants. This means you should make sure that it is the participants who are gathering and analyzing information and making decisions that will affect them. Your role is to facilitate their learning, not to do the job for them.

As a reference source. You can also use this guide as a reference. If you need to check on a technique or concept, look it up in the table of contents.

LEARNING ONLINE

If you are a CRS staff member or partner, you can also study the ideas in this guide online, through an e-course. Contact your CRS supervisor for a username and password. Once you have been registered for online courses you can begin the e-learning version.

The e-courses use the same text, quizzes and exercises as in this guide. Many of the tables are presented as **forms** that you can fill in online to help you record and analyze the data you have collected.

SMART SKILLS GUIDES

This series consists of the following guides.

- **Introduction to SMART Skills for rural development (this guide)**
- Organizing and managing farmers' groups
- Understanding natural resources
- Managing natural resources
- Facilitating saving and internal lending and savings communities (SILC)
- Financial education
- Marketing basics
- Seven steps of marketing
- Promoting innovation.

These titles are also being developed as distance learning products. As the process is rolled out and experimented with in different situations, we look forward to receiving feedback on modifications and improvements so that these learning products can be continually improved.

FARMBOOK SUITE

Farmbook Suite is a set of integrated mobile tools that have been developed to help agents support farmer groups. The tools are designed to assist with registration and basic data collection, improve training, support business planning, market analysis and monitor geo-referenced service delivery.

Farmbook Suite has several features to meet the needs of farmers, field agents and project managers:

- **Map & track for implementation and basic monitoring of farmer groups.** This application collects important farmer data to streamline and strengthen farmers' registration, e-learning, business planning and monitoring and evaluation at scale.
- **SMART Skills e-learning.** These courses provide agro-enterprise training to help farmers to increase production, grow their incomes and engage with markets.
- **Farmbook business planner.** This tool guides field agents and farmers through the process of creating business plans that are based on participatory value-chain studies.

These features will allow field agents to do the following:

- Register a farmer group
- Track the delivery of training to farmer groups by field agents
- Collect monitoring and evaluation information using digital forms
- Take e-learning courses
- Use the business planner to write a business plan
- Analyze pre- and post-season costs, revenue and profitability.

To learn more about Farmbook, visit the CRS.org website.

WHERE THE SMART SKILLS CAME FROM

The identification of these skills has its origin in the establishment of the Agroenterprise Learning Alliance between the Catholic Relief Services and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in 2002. The purpose of a Learning Alliance on agro-enterprise is to strengthen the participating organizations' capacity to advance and refine approaches that link farmers to markets. CRS has used this modality across Africa, Latin America and Asia, with up to 35 countries participating in one or more learning cycles. In Central America and Southern Africa, the learning alliances are multi-institutional with the participation of several national, regional and international research and development organizations. In 2005, the Learning Alliance identified the need for a new approach to improve the capacity of the poorest farmers to link effectively to markets, and to sustain and manage these links in the long term.

To address this need, the Learning Alliance organized a study tour that interviewed more than 1,000 farmers in five types of farmers' groups in Uganda, Bolivia and Indiato improve its understanding of the formation and development of groups of farmers who want to produce and sell their goods to various markets. A team of eight scientists and technical advisors drawn from both institutions reviewed the literature on various approaches to farmers' group formation, and visited examples of each. Their aim was to look for common elements in farmer groups that are successful in achieving their goals. The approaches to forming farmer groups that were visited included:

- Farmer field schools
- Producer or agribusiness groups

- Self-help groups for internal savings and lending
- Watershed management groups
- Farmer research committees.

From their visits to these groups, the team observed that independently of the country, the cultural setting or the original purpose for forming the group, poor farmers who wanted to increase their income were proactively trying to acquire one or more sets of skills. These skills included:

- Group management
- Sustainable production and natural resource management
- Financial management
- Marketing
- Innovation.

Even though all groups were receiving external assistance in developing or strengthening at least one skill set in a formal way, no one group was receiving facilitation in all skill sets. Although there is nothing new about any one of the skill sets on its own, the team discovered that the farmer groups were seeking combinations of these skills. In many cases, farmers commented on the difficulty in making progress from their original purpose of savings or experimenting with technology into more successful market linkage, unless they had acquired new knowledge and other types of skills.

The team concluded that the essential skill sets combined will effectively contribute to more successful and sustainable market linkage by the poor.

At CRS, we are excited about the way in which our early experiences in applying the skills in an integrated way are having important results for both the communities we work with and our development partners. We recognize however, that the application of the approach makes high demands on field agents and training methods are important. The intention of these modules is to facilitate the learning process for both field agents and the farmers they serve.

Acknowledgments

This manual and the other manuals in this series are the product of a process that began in 2002 with agro-enterprise learning alliances in East Africa and Central America. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) were co-facilitators and among the principal participants in these learning alliances. Since 2002, many other organizations and individuals have contributed to the content by adding new knowledge and experiences and by reviewing the materials brought together here.

The production of the manual was supported by the United States Agency of International Development, through the Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) project, which funded editing, graphics production and a writing clinic.

Sincere thanks to Dina Brick, Gaye Burpee, Geoff Heinrich, and Kathy Younker for their support in developing the concepts for the SMART Skills methodology, and to Jorge Enrique Gutiérrez, who produced the drawings for this guide.

Shaun Ferris

Rupert Best

Paul Mundy

Introduction

People who live in rural communities in the developing world must master a wide range of skills to navigate through the many challenges they face and make progress. They need to know how to grow or purchase enough food to feed themselves and their families. They need to manage relationships with other people in their communities. They need to know how to manage a challenging environment. They need to know how to manage their finances and how to earn money by selling surplus produce from their farms to various markets.

They learn these skills from their parents, from friends and neighbors, and through observation and trial and error. By and large, they are pretty successful. Most people manage to support themselves – most of the time.

But many people still cannot grow or earn enough. They are still poor. Drought, flooding, war, disease, and economic shocks can drag huge numbers further into poverty. And the world is changing: rising populations, changing lifestyles, more extreme weather, and the global marketplace put ever-increasing demands on natural resources and force people to adapt in order to survive.

To lift themselves out of poverty, rural people need to learn new skills. One of your tasks as a **project manager or field agent** is to help the rural people learn and practice these skills so they can improve their incomes from agriculture.

PURPOSES OF THIS MANUAL

This manual introduces you to five key skill areas:

- Group management
- Natural resources management
- Finance
- Marketing
- Innovation.

These skills are covered in more detail in separate manuals in this series. This manual provides a general overview of the skills and describes how to plan and implement training courses using these skills.

WHAT IS IN THIS MANUAL

This manual describes the SMART Skills approach and how to use it in rural development projects. It is made up of six lessons:

- 1. Using a skills-based approach.** An introduction to the SMART Skills approach to rural development.
- 2. A closer look at the skills.** Discusses the key sets of skills, and how they relate to each other.
- 3. Organizing the team.** How to organize the project team, use the SMART Skills approach in a project, and use new training approaches.
- 4. Working with the community.** How to start working with a community and target particular groups in it.
- 5. Ensuring sustainability.** How to manage and transfer different types of assets in a way that does not promote dependency.
- 6. Building a training plan.** Ideas on how to plan a series of training courses, how to monitor progress, and how to exit at the end of the project.

This manual does not try to cover all the things you need to know to plan and implement the SMART Skills approach. You will have to draw on your own experience, and that of your colleagues, to fill in the gaps. Feel free to adapt the ideas and exercises where appropriate.

Lessons



LESSON 1. USING A SKILLS-BASED APPROACH

IN THIS LESSON

After this lesson you will be able to:

- List the main skills that groups of male/female farmers need to improve their livelihoods.
- Explain why farmers need a combination of skills.
- Outline the model of change used in this and related courses.

FIVE FARMERS

Victor is a member of a farmers' group that grows and markets chickpea. An NGO helped them with the production technology and linked them with a big trader. But the project has ended, and the NGO staff has gone. Without regular meetings, the group has started to fall apart.



Anita grows crops on a steep hillside. Her yields are low, and every time it rains, fast-moving water will wash tons of precious soil down into the valley. How can she prevent this erosion and improve her yields?



Everyone in **Marco's** village grows rice. But they thresh it by hand, and many of the grains are lost. Marco wants to buy a machine to thresh his own grain, and to rent out to his neighbors. But he has no money. How can he get a loan to cover the cost?



Viju grows vegetables and sells them to a trader at harvest time. The trader offers low prices, and Viju has little choice but to accept. How might he earn more by improving his marketing?



Achieng raises chickens in her backyard. But birds of prey often swoop down and carry off her baby chicks. Others chickens die from a disease that seems to recur every few months. How can Achieng raise more chickens?



FIVE TYPES OF SKILLS

Victor, Anita, Marco, Viju and Achieng are all small-scale farmers. They need different types of skills to solve their problems.

- **Group organization.** Victor needs to improve the organization of his group so it can continue to function independently.
- **Natural resources.** Anita needs to stop erosion and improve the fertility of her soil by planting trees.
- **Finance.** Marco needs to find ways to save money, get a loan and invest in new equipment.
- **Marketing.** Viju needs to find ways to improve the marketing of his vegetables.
- **Innovation.** Achieng needs to identify and test technologies that will help her improve her production.

SMART SKILLS:
GROUP ORGANIZATION,
NATURAL RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT,
FINANCE,
MARKETING,
INNOVATION

ONE SKILL IS NOT ENOUGH

Good news: Achieng has found a way to raise more chickens: she uses baskets to protect the baby chicks from birds of prey, and she vaccinates them against the disease.

But that is not the end of the story. She now realizes she needs to grow more grain to feed her flock. She needs a loan so she can build a bigger chicken house. And she wants to sell chickens and eggs on the local market.

To be a successful farmer, Achieng needs **multiple skills** – in innovation, natural resources management, marketing, finance and group organization.



MULTIPLE SKILLS - A COMMON NEED

The other farmers are in a similar position.

To control erosion, **Anita** will have to **organize** with other people in her village to plant trees and build contour bunds on the hillside. Once they have managed to control the erosion, they may want to **innovate** by testing which types of crops to grow, and find out how to **market** them.

Victor's group already knows how to grow and market chickpea. But they need to take care of their **natural resources** to ensure they do not exhaust the soil. And by forming a savings group they can qualify for a **financial** loan to invest in a warehouse to store their harvest.

Many different types of farmers need the same sets of skills: large, well-established groups as well as farmers who are just getting organized; richer farmers as well as poorer ones; women and men; farmers in different parts of the world.

MULTIPLE SKILLS - MUTUALLY SUPPORTING

The skills all support each other. For example, getting **organized** as a group will help **Viju** and his neighbors take full advantage of the opportunities for **marketing** their vegetables. They will need **financial** skills to manage their income and get loans from the bank. They will need to **manage water**, maintain their soil fertility and control pests to grow their vegetables



in a sustainable manner. And they will need to introduce **innovations** to boost their yields, develop new products, and improve quality of the vegetables they sell.

Without all these skills, their efforts may fail.

With several of the skills - or all of them - they have a much better chance of succeeding. And they have a better chance of sustaining their success, and being more resilient.

BENEFITS FOR RURAL CLIENTS

It is clear how farmers and other beneficiaries can gain from the skills:

- **Food security:** by growing, accessing and utilizing more food.
- **Income:** by selling better-quality produce at higher prices in more lucrative markets.
- **Organization:** by working with neighbors to learn and overcome problems together.
- **Sustainability:** by maintaining and building on improvements without outside help.
- **Scaling up:** by reaching more people in the community and helping farmers to sell more in larger markets.

BETTER PROJECTS

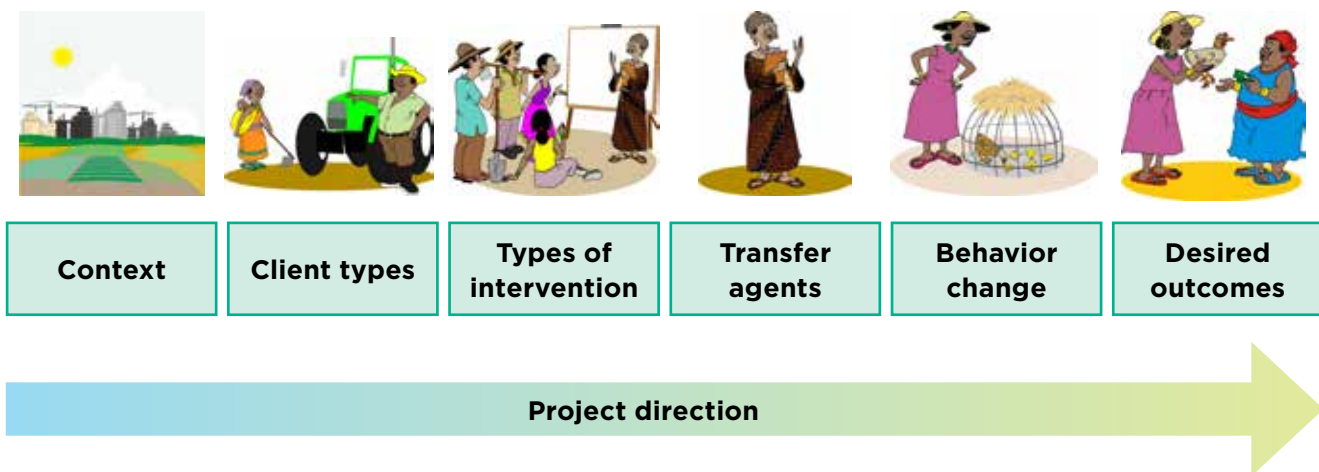
Project management should also benefit:

- **Knowledge, skills and attitudes.** The managers and staff will gain knowledge and improve their skills, so become more effective and efficient.
- **Training tools.** Field agents will gain a more effective set of training tools to use with farmers and other partners and clients.
- **Open education and certification.** Easy-to-use training materials for the various skills are available in printed and online formats. Online training and testing makes it possible to certify learners who have taken the courses.
- **Better information.** Field agents, farmers and community members systematically gather information that they can use themselves, and they can use to improve the management of the project.
- **Measuring outcomes.** Better information makes monitoring and evaluation more effective by showing what works and what does not work.
- **Improve sustainability.** When local people have mastered the skills they need, they can be more responsible for their own development. This can lower project costs in the long term. Community members can start providing services, and can continue when the project ends, providing greater sustainability to the development process.

THE SMART SKILLS IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

How do the SMART Skills help promote change in rural areas? They help farmers and other clients to manage their finances, natural resources, technologies and market linkages more effectively. Farmers learn how to manage money, save and invest wisely, improve their productivity in a sustainable way, and build long-term and profitable market linkages.





SIX ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

When designing a project, you must make sure that the development approach fits the local context and needs. The SMART Skills are a part of the process of matching the interventions with the needs.

To understand project design and how the SMART Skills fit into a project, let us look at six aspects of development projects:

- Drivers of change
- Client types
- Intervention strategies
- Transfer agents
- Behavior change
- Desired outcomes.

We will look at each of these aspects in turn.

CONTEXT

The scale and types of results a project sets out to achieve will depend on many factors at the country and local level. You need to take these factors and the local context into account when designing a project.

At the **country level** there are various **drivers of change**: demographics, national and local patterns of economic growth, infrastructure, markets, government policy, stability, large-scale investments, and climatic conditions.

These drivers set overall framework conditions within which a project will operate. The project has to take them into account, but has little or no influence over them.



Context
Demographics
Local growth trajectory
Infrastructure
Market access
Government Investments
Climate

PROJECT CONTEXT AND CLIENT TYPES

Initial status. The local situation is also vital in shaping the project design and intervention strategy. Are the people recovering from an **emergency**, such as a flood? Or are the problems **longer-term** in nature, caused by political instability or poverty? Does the project aim to help poor people **build up their assets** from scratch? Or does it aim more for **growth** – helping people who already have some assets to boost their incomes and escape poverty?

Population segments. Who are our **clients**? We use the term **client** rather than **beneficiary** to highlight the point that we respect those we work with. We should take a business-like approach to identify challenges for specific client types, and find cost-effective interventions that will raise the ability of specific clients to live a more productive and fulfilled life.

In the SMART Skills approach it is important to engage both male and female clients (single and married, old and young) from the planning process onwards to ensure their needs are known and are being addressed.

Different people in a community have different opportunities and challenges. **Very poor people** are in a different situation from those who are slightly better off, so projects that target the very poor, or people with some assets will need different approaches and different measures of success.

Women and men often have different roles and responsibilities. They may be able to make decisions, or may face social, economic and legal barriers. Their opportunities, needs, constraints and priorities may vary considerably. You need to think of these when designing the training approach, when choosing the time, location and content of the training, and the types of support to provide.

People who live in **remote areas** face different challenges from those close to roads or markets. Similarly, people of different ethnic groups, educational levels and ages also have differing ambitions and possibilities.

Assets. People with no or very few assets (the landless, widows, orphans) may find it impossible to invest in improving their lives. Those with a little land or some savings have a basis on which they can build. The mix of people in the community may also be important: a few relatively well-endowed farmers may help their poorer neighbors improve their lives – or they can make it more difficult for them.

TYPES OF INTERVENTION

Projects help clients by providing them with various types of **assets**: technology, food and money (for example, in food or cash-for-work programs).

Projects also provide clients with **skills and linkages**. This is where the **SMART Skills approach** fits in: it builds the clients' skills in five key areas. It ensures the clients develop the linkages with input suppliers, financial services, extension advice, and markets that they need to improve their resiliency and prospects for growth.

Rather than focusing on a single theme, the SMART Skills approach provides a combination of assets, skills and linkages.

At the end of the project, the clients should have a better knowledge about financial management, more sustainable production, and better links to markets so they can support their families.

A project may have to adjust its work according to the needs of the clients. People tend to be busy or free at different times of day, depending on their workloads. You may need to offer services for men, women, young people, or people with disabilities or chronic diseases at different times or locations so they can attend easily.



Client types

Initial status

Emergency
Acute/chronic
Asset building
Growth

Segment

Poverty rank
Market access
Ethnicity
Education
Gender
Age

Assets

None
Low
Medium
High



Types of intervention

Asset transfers

Technologies
Food
Money

Skills training

Groups
Savings & loans
Marketing
Production
Innovation

Service linkage options

Inputs
Finance
Extension
Output markets

Public works

Roads
Water
Watershed
Communications

Education and literacy levels may influence how you deliver an intervention. You may need to allocate more time to help certain types of people understand an idea or perform an exercise. Some people may need training in basic skills such as literacy or numeracy before they can adopt new technologies. Women and young people are often socially less empowered than older men, and may need special support and agreements from the community to start new endeavors.

TRANSFER AGENTS

Projects generally work with local service agents: **government extension advisors, NGO field agents, community volunteers, private-sector service providers**, and so on. Most projects use a combination of these players to supply a mix of services to communities. The roles of these different players need to be clearly identified so that they can provide capacity building in multiple skills. It is important that the gender balance of the transfer agents are aligned with the clients' gender-balance and that the appropriate transfer agent is assigned to groups.

Projects increasingly use service providers that **charge clients a fee**. That makes the services more sustainable, as the provider can continue to offer the service after the project ends as they are paid. Fee-based providers can include farm input suppliers, trainers, business or financial advisors, veterinarians, and marketing specialists.

Many projects managers have indicated that if you are going to use fees, you should do this from the start to avoid any confusion. However, there are many ways to introduce fees: for example, the project may negotiate with the community to provide in-kind contributions from the participants so that the services are not explicitly free. Alternatively, the project may begin with providing farmers with free extension or financial services, but on the understanding that after a certain time, perhaps two seasons, that additional training will be on a fee basis. In other cases, fees may be introduced once the farmers have passed a certain level of skills or received training for a certain period of time. After that they have to start paying for the service.

If you plan to introduce fees during a project, the field agent must make this change clear to them from the beginning of the project.

In many countries, it is highly advisable to hire women as field agents so they can support female farmers and other clients. Consider issues such as:

- **Transport:** Is it regarded as appropriate for women to ride bicycles or motorbikes? Make sure the bike is a suitable size and design for women.
- **Safety issues:** Can women travel and work alone safely?
- **Location:** Are there constraints on where women can work? Is it possible for them to work close to home?
- **Training men:** Are there constraints for having women agents train male clients?

BEHAVIOR CHANGE

How quickly can the clients make changes in their attitudes and behavior so the project can meet its goals?

The answer depends on who they are and their starting point.

- Projects that support very poor, less educated, male or female headed households in remote areas are likely to show slow rates of overall change. But these changes may have profound positive impacts on the lives of the women and her children, for the rest of their lives.
- A project that supports middle-income, educated, male-headed households who have access to services and markets can show fairly rapid progress in terms of



Transfer agents

Government services
Civil society services
Private services



Behavior change

Skills integration
Technology
Market relationships

production and income gains. If these changes are sustainable they can lift entire communities out of poverty.

- In both cases however, the positive gains will only lead to long-term change if the community members sustain them when the project ends.

When making decisions on interventions, it is also important to weigh the effects of investments within different community segments. Look at percentage gains as well as absolute amounts.

- For a poor farmer who produces a dozen eggs a week, three more eggs is an **increase of 25%**.
- That is more in percentage terms than a yield increase of 200 kg of maize per hectare for someone who normally harvests 1,000 kg per hectare: a **20% increase**.

For the very poor, a few extra eggs are very important: they make a bigger difference to a family than the extra bags of maize would for a richer farmer.

Interventions at **both levels** are important.

Changes in behavior and continued use of a new technology or best practice also depend on the clients' ability to **integrate skills**, understand and use **technologies that meet their needs**, and develop **relationships** with markets and providers of services such as finance and input supplies.

DESIRED OUTCOMES

A project must be defined clearly in terms of the context, the type of client, and the interventions needed. The goals must be appropriate for the client types, and the expected rate of change must be realistic and achievable. For change to be meaningful, positive and long-term, the clients must be able to sustain and manage it.

The targets should be relevant to the group. For example, targets for groups of men and women may be different.

Women and men have different workloads, access and control of assets, ability to make decisions, and access to knowledge. Women may face restrictions in joining a farmers' group or in using a particular skill. The project needs to understand these gender constraints and opportunities and design the intervention to address them so that women and men have equal opportunities to benefit.

For example, women typically have less access to land and farm inputs. They often face restrictions in traveling to distant markets. That may restrict their production and marketing opportunities.

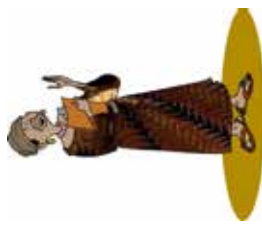
Nevertheless, their enterprises can bring in significant amounts of money on a regular basis. Here is an example:

- **Men's group:** Target = each member increases his yield from 4 to 5 bags of maize per acre. He sells the extra bag for 1200 shillings.
- **Women's group:** Target = each member sells 6 eggs a week at 3 shillings each. She earns an extra $18 \times 52 = 936$ shillings in the year.

In this example, over a year, the women selling eggs earn and save almost as much as the men! Small, regular earnings may end up having a bigger effect on family nutrition and well-being than big, one-off sales. This is because women typically control the income from smaller sales. Research has shown that women are more likely to allocate their income to pay for food and health services than men. Small sales all year around means access to money to buy the items instead of having to save to ensure cash is available when needed.

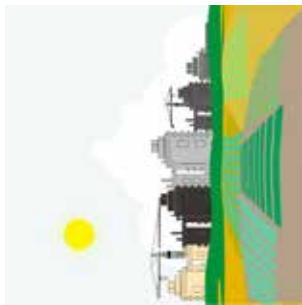


Desired outcomes	
↑	Productivity
↑	Income
↑	Sustainability
↑	Resilience
↑	Diets
↑	Hygiene
↓	Food prices
↑	Growth



Transfer agents

- Government services
- Civil society services
- Private services



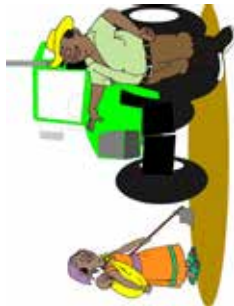
Context

- Demographics
- Local growth trajectory
- Infrastructure
- Market access
- Government
- Investments
- Climate



Behavior change

- Skills integration
- Technology
- Market relationships



Client types

Initial status

- Emergency
- Acute/chronic
- Asset building
- Growth

Segment

- Poverty rank
- Market access
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Gender
- Age

Assets

- None
- Low
- Medium
- High



Types of intervention

Asset transfers

- Technologies
- Food
- Money

Skills training

- Groups
- Savings & loans
- Marketing
- Production
- Innovation

Service linkage options

- Inputs
- Finance
- Extension
- Output markets

Public works

- Roads
- Water
- Watershed
- Communications



Desired outcomes

- ↑ Productivity
- ↑ Income
- ↑ Sustainability
- ↑ Resilience
- ↑ Diets
- ↑ Hygiene
- ↓ Food prices
- ↑ Growth

Projects that rely on the SMART Skills put emphasis on transferring skills. Monitoring and evaluation must measure the clients' ability to use a combination of skills as well as the skills individually.

A MODEL OF CHANGE

A project integrates each of these aspects in a combination that meets the needs of the clients in a particular area.

The SMART Skills approach fits into the “skills training” box in the “**intervention services**” column. The skills approach also influences several of the other columns: in the choice of **client type**, in the use of different **transfer agents**, in the integration of the various skills during **adoption**. The result may be improvements in some or all of the **desired outcomes**.

CONCLUSION

Rural people all over the world need a range of skills to improve their livelihoods. Five types of skills are particularly important: **innovation, natural resources management, marketing, finance** and **group organization**.

People often need a **combination** of these skills in order to be successful during the project and most importantly in being able to sustain their progress when the project ends.

Projects incorporate six aspects: **drivers of change** (or the macro context), **clients** and the local context, **intervention strategies, transfer agents, adoption** of new practices, and **desired outcomes**.

QUIZ 1

Answers at the end of the guide.

1. Which are the SMART Skills areas that small-scale farmers need to improve their livelihoods?

Select **five** of these choices.

- A. Education
- B. Literacy
- C. Finance
- D. Gender
- E. Group organization
- F. Health
- G. HIV/AIDS
- H. Innovation
- I. Marketing
- J. Natural resources

2. Farmers usually need only one of the SMART Skills in order to succeed. So development agents must identify which skill they need and help the farmers learn it.

- A. Correct. Once they have that skill, they will be able to solve their most pressing problems.
- B. Not necessarily. Farmers usually face several different problems, and they need a range of skills to overcome them.

3. Which of these are drivers of change?

Select **two** of these choices.

- A. Assets (the resources that local people have)
- B. Demographics (population growth and migration)
- C. Infrastructure (building new roads and supplying services such as electricity)
- D. Skills training (the skills that development agents can help farmers learn)
- E. Transfer agents (such as development agents, NGOs and private-sector service providers)

4. Match the aspect of the model of change with the correct definition.

ASPECT	DEFINITION
A. Drivers of change	1 The assets, skills and linkages the project provides
B. Client types	2 Progress towards the project's goals
C. Intervention strategies	3 The national context of the project
D. Transfer agents	4 The project's goals
E. Adoption	5 The type of people the project serves
F. Desired outcomes	6 The people who implement the project

5. In which part of the change model does the SMART Skills approach to training best fit?

- A. Drivers of change
- B. Client type
- C. Intervention services
- D. Transfer agents
- E. Adoption
- F. Desired outcomes

6. Who benefits from the SMART Skills approach?

Match the type of benefit with the correct person.

BENEFIT	PERSON
A. Better food security	1 Project staff
B. More effective training	2 Farmer
C. Better sustainability	3 Both project staff and farmer
D. Higher income	

LESSON 2. A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SMART SKILLS

IN THIS LESSON

After this lesson you will be able to:

- Name three detailed aspects of each of the SMART Skills.
- Describe how individual skills reinforce each other.
- Name the three central skills.
- List additional skills that farmers may need.

A CLOSER LOOK

Let us take a closer look at the SMART Skills.

- Group organization
- Natural resources
- Finance
- Marketing
- Innovation.

GROUP ORGANIZATION

For a group to work together over the long term, the members must trust each other, learn to plan ideas together, and make important decisions. They need to decide things like:

- Who is in the group?
- What are the rules?
- What will the group invest in?
- How to resolve disagreements?

To be able to address these issues, it is helpful to learn the basics of good group management.

This includes:

- Selecting members
- Defining the group's purpose and setting goals
- Holding meetings
- Writing a constitution
- Electing management positions and setting timeframes for these positions
- Planning and implementing activities
- Holding officers and members accountable for their actions
- Managing finances
- Registering with local authorities and opening a bank account (in some countries)
- Having learning processes
- Having feedback mechanisms to assess group performance and progress
- Enabling all members to have a voice.



NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Over-exploitation of natural resources results in soil erosion, deforestation and low groundwater levels. Making things worse, changes in the climate mean that droughts and flooding are becoming more common. For farmers to continue to produce food and to raise their production on a sustainable basis, they must learn how to **manage and conserve their natural resources**.

It is possible for **individual farmers** to improve their management on their own farms – for example by:

- Managing their soil better, using methods such as zero tillage
- Using compost and appropriate amounts of artificial fertilizer
- Improving water use by harvesting rainwater and using irrigation
- Reducing agrochemical use and applying them safely
- Growing more suitable crops, rotating crops, and using improved varieties.

Some improvements are possible only if **groups of farmers** (or the whole community) work together. For example:

- Controlling erosion by building bunds, check dams, and diversion ditches
- Replanting vegetation and restricting the cutting of wood
- Protecting springs and building and managing irrigation systems
- Restricting grazing in degraded areas.

FINANCE

Managing money is a vital set of skills for both individuals and groups. Financial skills include calculating costs, understanding cash flow, predicting incomes, planning budgets, saving money, opening and managing a bank account, understanding the cost of borrowing money and using loans. **Basic financial literacy** is important for the household and an essential part of managing a farm enterprise and producing for the market.

Many groups start off with **savings and loans**: members contribute a small amount each week to build up a pool of cash; they can then borrow money from this pool and repay it with interest. Many development agencies use this approach to help local people raise their own capital. By saving and lending money to each other, group members build trust, learn how to work together with money, and understand how to grow their money.

Savings-and-loans groups need many of the same skills as groups that focus on production and marketing: they need to organize themselves and set rules on how to operate. Financial skills include:

- Managing personal and business budgets
- Group establishment and agreement of rules of operation
- Financial record keeping
- Agreements on amount, regularity of saving and payout time



- Loan disbursement – applying for and approving loans, rates of repayment, loan terms
- Loan repayment
- Managing capital over the long term
- Agreements on penalties if members do not conform to group rules
- Registering the group with authorities (in some countries)
- Managing investments.

MARKETING AND AGRO-ENTERPRISE

How can small-scale farmers earn more from their crops and livestock? By organizing as a group, they can learn together, gain from lower input prices by buying in bulk, pool their produce and gain better produce prices by aggregating their goods and selling larger amounts. They can identify buyers who are willing to pay a higher price for bulked goods. They can improve their product quality, or process it to raise its value. They can switch to more profitable products and more lucrative markets.

To understand how markets work and how to work together to increase their incomes, farmers need skills in:

- Organizing groups
- Selecting products
- Analyzing markets
- Calculating the costs, incomes and profits for a new agro-enterprise
- Working with business development services
- Building business plans
- Collective marketing
- Reviewing actual costs, income and profits at the end of the season
- Planning for next season and scaling up.

INNOVATION

Changing markets, rising populations, declining natural resources, and a changing climate are making traditional farming methods more challenging. Many farmers want to test new ideas to improve their situation, but they do not know how to do so systematically. They can learn some relatively simple methods to test new ideas.

Key skills for innovation include:

- Identifying and defining problems
- Exploring possible solutions and finding sources of information
- Designing a practical way to do research
- Collecting and recording observations
- Analyzing and evaluating the results
- Applying the findings and sharing knowledge.



THE POWER OF COMBINING SKILLS



Each of our SMART Skills is valuable in its own right: farmers and other rural people can use them to improve their incomes and livelihoods. But the real benefit comes when farmers combine these skills. The most successful farmers' groups start off focusing on one type of activity, then **add skills** over time. Many get support for the first activity, but have to pay for training in the other skills, or learn them on their own.

Let us look at two examples: a group that expanded **from savings to agro-enterprise**, and one that started with an **enterprise and added savings and financial skills**.

FROM SAVINGS TO AGRO-ENTERPRISE

A group in **India** started as a simple **savings-and-loan club**. Every week, members paid a small amount into a common pool. The treasurer kept careful records of who had paid in what amount. Members could borrow money from the pool, to spend on anything they wanted, as long as they repaid the loan and the interest.

This was so successful that the group started using the money to invest in farming. Their first investment was a failure: they did not know anything about the products or the risks involved. So they decided they needed to learn about **markets** and how to sell products as a profit. After learning a new set of skills and studying their market opportunities, they decided to invest in trading products rather than growing them. They now buy products, such as potatoes and wheat from groups of farmers in the village, store them if required and sell them to buyers in town.



FROM ENTERPRISE TO SAVINGS

A project in **Tanzania** was developing **agro-enterprise** groups to export chickpeas. These groups were successful as long as the project gave them advice and support. But they started to fail after the project support was withdrawn, because the farmer groups were not cohesive.



A follow-up project introduced **savings-and-loans** and **group-organization** skills. Regular meetings to discuss finance, promote joint saving, and to improve group management helped the members to learn how to work together and build a level of mutual trust. Working with regular savings and loans helped the group to understand more about finances, and working together resulted in a more sustainable and expanding chickpea business.

THREE CENTRAL SKILLS

Three types of skills – finance (especially savings), natural resources and marketing – tend to be central to improving livelihoods. Group management and innovation complement these.



ADDING SKILLS

Many development projects focus on developing particular types of groups. The three most common are:

- Savings and loans groups (focusing on finance)
- Farmer field schools (natural resource management and farm production)
- Marketing groups (agro-enterprises).

Wherever people start, projects can then help these groups develop further by training them in the other skills. For example, a savings-and-loan group may want to learn about marketing. A farmer field school may decide to improve its management and ability to innovate. A marketing group may find it needs to improve its production and management of natural resources.

ARE ALL THE SMART SKILLS NECESSARY?

No. Many groups and individual farmers successfully produce and sell goods without all the skills. But a group's chances of long term success are higher if they have all the SMART Skills.

Different people in the group or the community may specialize in different skills. It is not necessary to train every community or group member in all the skills. The important point is the members of the community have access to the skills and knowledge.



Savings and loans group



Innovation group



Marketing group



Skills in

- Group management
- Finance
- Marketing
- Production and natural resources
- Innovation



Groups with all skills

GAINING SKILLS OVER TIME

The skills can be learned in any order. The ability to provide training in several skills will depend on the project resources, types of service providers and timeframe.

Different groups in a community may have different goals and combinations of skills.

- **Single-skill groups.** Some groups may focus just on one skill, such as savings, or may focus on production, managing natural resources or innovation.
- **Multi-skill groups.** Other groups may combine two or more of the skills – such as a savings group that also markets its members' produce. Some groups may have all the SMART Skills.

Different groups in the same community may have many members in common, and these groups can learn and benefit from one another.

OTHER SKILLS

The SMART Skills – group organization, finance, marketing, natural resources and innovation – are important for many rural communities around the world. The needs and approaches are also fairly common, making it possible to use one course in many different countries and situations.

But these are not the only skills that rural people need. They often also need skills in:

- **Literacy.** Low rates of literacy are common in many poor rural communities. Women are often less literate than men.
- **Numeracy.** This is the ability to read and write numbers, do sums, and keep numerical records.



- **Leadership.** This is the ability to inspire a group, make clear decisions and accelerate progress.
- **Production methods for specific crops and livestock.** These depend on the crop or animal raised, the local climate and soil, and the production system.
- **Agricultural processing.** Adding value to a product, for example by drying, milling, cleaning, sorting, grading, canning, packaging, and so on.
- **Nutrition, health and hygiene** (including dealing with HIV). These are practices rural families can carry out to maintain healthy lifestyles and ensure children grow adequately.
- **Non-farm income-earning skills.** This covers a huge range of skills and jobs: labouring on other farms, carpentry, metalworking, driving, hair cutting, vehicle maintenance, electrics, building, computer use, office skills, and so on.
- **Gender issues.** How to work in ways that support the roles of men, women and children.
- **Conflict management.** How to avoid the negative aspects of conflict.
- **Communication, lobbying and advocacy.** How to represent and lobby for the needs and aspirations of the farmers group or community.

Some of these skills depend on the language (literacy), or type of crop grown or livestock raised and variables such as climate and soil. It is not possible to produce courses on all of these skills that can be used throughout the world.

Others (such as gender) are relevant to many different fields, so can be touched on in the relevant courses. This module, for example, stresses the need to ensure women as well as men can benefit from training. As the needs of women and men often differ, these differences should be considered in designing and implementing the training

You may need to make sure that local people have basic literacy, numeracy and production skills before you start teaching the SMART Skills covered here.

FROM SINGLE-SKILL TO MULTI-SKILL THINKING

If your team is used to working with just one type of skill, you will need to change your approach. You and your colleagues will need to:

- Ensure that all team members understand the SMART skills approach.
- Train the team members in the additional skills they will need.
- Determine the skills needs in the communities you serve by engaging both men and women. It might be necessary to engage different types of women (i.e. single, married, mothers).
- Design training programs for clients to learn the multiple skills.
- Design interventions that enable clients to use their skills.



One skill



Multiple skills



- Set up a gender-disaggregated monitoring system to keep track of progress across multiple skills and adjust activities based on client profiles and their opportunities.

Your project team needs members with the right types of expertise, and who can train community members – your clients – effectively. The team may also need other types of expertise, in addition to the SMART Skills outlined here.

Individual team members do not need to master all of the skills. But they do need to understand the SMART Skills approach, and help clients identify and obtain the information they need.

CONCLUSION

This lesson has looked in detail at the main sets of skills that people in rural communities need.

- **Group organization** enables them to work together effectively to improve their lives.
- **Financial skills** mean they can budget, plan, save and invest.
- **Marketing and agro-enterprise** improves their abilities to make a profit by selling what they produce.
- **Natural resource management** helps improve their productivity on a sustainable basis.
- **Innovation** enables them to identify, test and adopt new technologies that will improve their livelihoods.

The skills are **complementary**: each one supports the others. The SMART Skills approach provides groups of people within the community with a combination of skills that they can use to improve their lives.

QUIZ 2

Answers at the end of the guide.

1. Match the individual skill with the skill set it best represents.

INDIVIDUAL SKILL	SKILL SET
A. Building a business plan	1. Group organization
B. Harvesting rainwater	2. Finance
C. Repaying loans	3. Marketing and agro-enterprises
D. Doing on-farm research	4. Natural resource management
E. Holding effective meetings	5. Innovation

2. Which are the three central skills?

Select **three** choices.

- A. Group organization
- B. Finance
- C. Marketing and agro-enterprises
- D. Natural resource management
- E. Innovation

3. The men in the village are interested in the project, but the women are not. What should you do?

- A. Go ahead with the men: they are clearly the more promising group of potential clients
- B. Go ahead with the men, and hope that the women join in later
- C. Find out why the women are not interested, and explore what types of initiative they might prefer to do
- D. Halt the project: you want to reach both men and women, and it is clearly not going to work in this village

4. Which of the following statements is correct?

- A. It is best for groups to learn all the SMART Skills so they can deal with the problems they face.
- B. It is not necessary for groups to learn all the SMART Skills: one or two may be enough.
- C. It is best to learn the skills in a particular order, starting with group organization.

5. People must learn all the skills and find out how to pay for additional skills. "Everyone in the project team needs to become an expert in all the SMART Skills," says the project manager.

Choose the best response.

- A. Yes, boss! This is so each project team member can train the farmers and respond to their questions.
- B. I disagree. Everyone in the team needs to understand the SMART Skills approach, but they do not need to be experts in everything.
- C. Not at all. It is enough for team members to specialize in their own subject areas. Other team members can fill in in their own areas of expertise.

6. A group of farmers in Malawi raises chickens to sell. They know how to keep chickens, but they cannot not get a good price. As a result, many farmers are considering switching to another type of enterprise. What type of training will you recommend for them?

Choose the best response.

- A. A course on poultry production and disease control
- B. Training on marketing
- C. Training on how to keep goats
- D. Guidance on savings and credit

LESSON 3. ORGANIZING THE TEAM

This lesson is meant to be used by the entire program team, not only the field agent!

IN THIS LESSON

After this lesson you will be able to:

- Describe how a typical development project team is organized.
- Assess the skills of team members.
- List four participatory training methods.
- Describe the advantages of participatory training compared to traditional training methods.
- Describe how to adapt training for illiterate people.
- List the major types of training materials and equipment you will need.



GETTING ORGANIZED

This lesson covers the following:

- Organizing the project team.
- Evaluating the skills of team members and partner organizations.
- Participatory training methods.
- The types of training materials and equipment you will need.

ORGANIZING THE PROJECT TEAM

Many projects are managed by a small team of people from a lead organization and perhaps one or more partners. This team works with many other people: supervisors and field agents; traders, processors and retailers; business and financial services; farmers and community leaders.

The team has a **project leader**, who coordinates the project direction, investment and progress.



The team may have several **theme leaders** who coordinate activities and provide training for a specific objective such as production, marketing, and finance.



These theme leaders train and coordinate **field staff** from the lead agency, who in turn coordinate **staff of local partner organizations**.



Field agents from these local organizations work directly with **groups of farmers**.



The project team needs to be organized so people in each of these positions work effectively together.

FIRST MEETINGS OF THE PROJECT TEAM

Before starting to work with a new community, the project team should meet and prepare for the implementation phase. These first project meetings are an opportunity for the team members and partners to meet and discuss how a new project will address key challenges faced by the community and how it can complement existing activities and projects. During the meetings, participants will also learn about each other and find out about their strengths and weaknesses.



Before the first meeting:

- Be sure that the team has a clear understanding about the project
- Provide sufficient time for the community to be prepared
- Have prepared a clear agenda
- Have discussions about the local culture and any important background information regarding culture, recent history and local achievements.

Tasks for the first meetings:

- Hold sessions and workshops to reinforce the key goals and objectives of the project. Make sure the goals and objectives meet the needs of the client
- Make sure that the community and the partners know the approach and the steps to follow in implementing the project
- Determine how the project team and community will work together

- Draw up an organogram with names of each staff member
- Prepare clear scopes of work for each staff member
- Discuss training plans and plan according to the needs and views of the people in the community.

EVALUATING PROJECT TEAM EXPERIENCE AND SKILLS

Do the team members have all the skills they need to achieve the project's goals?

Many people in the team may need new skills. The managers should assess the team members' skills and arrange training needed to build their capacity. See Staff Exercise A for how to do this.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AND YOUR TEAM

What experience does each person have in:

- Group management
- Finance, savings and loans
- Natural resource management and sustainable production
- Marketing and agro-enterprise
- Innovation?

Does the person's lack of capacity affect the work with the clients?

What additional skills and experience do the members of the team need? How can they get these?

WORKING WITH PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Large projects often involve several partners, each with its own functions and capabilities. These may include local NGOs, church organizations, government agencies, research institutions, financial institutions and private companies.

Some things to discuss with potential partner organizations:

- **Skills.** Review the skills of the partner organization in the same way as with your own team. What can the partner offer the project group? Does the partner have the skills needed? Are its staff trained in using participatory multi-skill techniques? If not, will it agree to training?
- **Commitment.** Is the partner's management committed to support the project for



24–36 months? How will they contribute and support the project? Is the partner interested in a long-term commitment to a multi-skill approach?

- **Specialization.** Is the partner able and willing to support only one of the skills? Is this acceptable and helpful?
- **Location.** Does the partner work in the same geographical area?
- **Resources.** Does the partner have the resources to engage in the project, or is funding required?
- **Reporting.** Does the partner agree to link field data and financial reporting into a single routine reporting process?

The SMART Skills approach will probably be new for some of the partners. The lead organization should provide training to partners when the project begins. You should also check the quality of the service delivery on a regular basis.

The partners should discuss conditions for their collaboration. Once agreement is reached, prepare a formal memorandum of understanding between the partners that outlines their roles and responsibilities and any financial arrangements.

REPORTING

Technical reporting is as important as good financial accounts. Financial support for program activities requires clear rules for **both** financial accountability and technical reporting. Both are required to maintain payments.

All financial transactions between project partners should be tied to technical reporting, using agreed formats, and timetables. It is particularly important that field based agencies provide clear data on the financial and gender-disaggregated social and production-based performance of the farmers' group.

The regular project payments should be based on an agreement of **no data –no payments!**



FIELD AGENTS

Much of the information up to this point, has involved the full team, i.e., the project managers, the supervisors and field agents. However, much of what follows is specifically aimed at the field agent. This is the person who actually works with the community members on a day to day basis.

If the partners are to provide field agents, they should be selected carefully. The field agents should:

- Be dynamic and interested in their new role
- Have strong participatory skills
- Reflect the gender and ethnic composition of the clients, where possible and appropriate
- If possible, have some background in the core skills areas.

It may be necessary to hire new staff with these attributes.

Provide training to all new staff of partner organizations to ensure they have the necessary skills and a clear understanding of why the skills are key to project success.



TRAINING PROJECT AND PARTNER STAFF

Once you have determined the skills and experience of the lead team and partners, you can design a training program to upgrade their skills as needed. This may include:

- Giving the staff the **training materials** for the SMART Skills.
- Arrange **face-to-face workshops** for staff.
- Arrange for staff to take **online training courses**.
- Enable staff to **learn on the job**, perhaps by being coached by a more experienced staff member.
- Hire **new staff** with the missing skills.
- **Ask partners with specialized skills** for help. Many agencies support training in key areas. Consider looking for trainers from the private sector.



TRADITIONAL TEACHING

In many countries, teaching is traditionally a **one-way** process. The teacher stands in front of the class and delivers a lecture. The students are expected to listen and learn. They often have to memorize and then repeat what the teacher has told them. Discussion and disagreement are discouraged.

This is **not** a good way to teach the SMART Skills!

- Learners are **adults**, not children. They have their own experiences and know many of the problems they face.
- For many problems, there is no one right answer. There may be **many solutions**, and it is a question of finding the best one to suit the situation. Often, it is not a question of learning a ready-made solution, but of **discovering** a new solution that fits a particular situation.
- Plus, people learn best not just by **listening**, but by **seeing** and **doing** things for themselves.



PARTICIPATORY TRAINING

Participatory training is a better approach for the skills set method. It means encouraging the learners to **share** their experiences, **suggest** ideas, and **debate** solutions. It also means trying things out in a **practical** way – through exercises and experiments. Trainings may need to be gender-disaggregated to get full female participation.



TABLE 1 TRADITIONAL VS PARTICIPATORY TRAINING

TRADITIONAL TEACHING	PARTICIPATORY TRAINING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher tells the students what they need to know. • The teacher is more knowledgeable and experienced than the students. • The teacher shares his or her knowledge by lecturing. • The students are passive, just listening and taking notes. • The students learn from the right answers given by the teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trainer asks questions and facilitates discussions. • Both trainers and trainees are knowledgeable and experienced. • Everyone reflects on their own, then shares their ideas, experiences and expertise. • Trainees are active and analytical, asking questions and exploring alternatives. • Trainees develop their own answers. Indeed, there may be many different answers.

FREE AND FEE-BASED TRAINING

In the past, virtually all training was given free, and many communities still expect free services. However, free services are limited to the duration of the project, and there is now a trend towards fee-based training services. The project should make a clear decision on which skills to offer training on as a free service, and which to offer for a fee. In some cases all training may be for a fee. Whatever the situation, the project team must discuss the method that will be used and then stick to this approach. The major advantage of fee-based services is that a local service provider can be trained to deliver a skill, such as savings and loans, and market this service as a business. When the project ends, the fee-based service will continue to be provided.

WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH LITTLE EDUCATION

Many people in rural areas have had little or no **formal education**. They may find it hard to:

- Read and write.
- Do arithmetic.
- Understand symbols like the plus sign (+) or arrows (→).
- Understand diagrams and maps.
- Understand line drawings (people, crops or animals).

Plus, remember that many people – including the better-educated – have poor eyesight or may be **color-blind** (so cannot see the difference between the colors in your beautiful color-coded diagram).

In addition, schooling helps us learn to think logically, understand abstract ideas, and remember what has just been said. People with less formal education may need more time to understand an idea, though they often have very good long-term memories.

It can be hard to tell if someone is illiterate or has difficulty seeing or understanding what is written or drawn on paper. In some places illiteracy is seen as a stigma, and people get skilled at hiding the fact they cannot read. They may sit at the back of the group, pretend not to be interested, not take part in discussions, or defer to better-educated people. As a result, a project cannot take advantage of their knowledge and experience, their opinions are not heard, and decisions are made that may not be in their best interest. The result may be a bigger, not smaller, gap between the well-off, better educated elite in a village and the less-educated poor.

But illiterate people have just as much to contribute to their own development as better-educated people – and they have just as much right to do so.

Fortunately, many of the things that make it easier for educated people to understand also help people who have difficulties with reading, writing and arithmetic.

TIPS ON WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH LITTLE EDUCATION



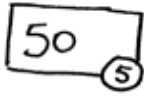









Here are some tips on how to help people and these may help with educated people too!

- Say things **clearly**, and repeat if necessary. Do not use technical jargon.
- **Ask people questions** to find out if they are following the conversation.
- **Make the learning fun!** Try to keep the group members interested and engaged. Keep them happy.

- Use lines or dots rather than **numbers** if people are having difficulties following figures. For example, instead of

$3 + 5 = 8$ you can write $||| + |||| = |||||$

- Use **objects** (such as sticks and stones) as counters, rather than numbers.
- Use **leaves or seeds** to represent different crops and trees.
- Use **pictures** as well as words. For example, instead of just “maize” (corn), draw a picture of a maize plant or corncob. Your pictures do not have to be professional – you can use stick drawings.

 Farmer	 Trader	 Money, treasurer	 Records, secretary
 Chicken	 Cow	 Sheep	 Camel
 Maize cob	 Maize plant	 Sack of grain	 Onion

- When **drawing** something (such as a house or a cow), ask people what they think the drawing represents.
- Rather than drawing things yourself, get a **group member** to do the drawing.
- **Simplify** numbers and tables. Use round numbers (3,000, not 3,056). Reduce the number of rows and columns in a table to a minimum.
- **Check** which participants can read and write, and who can do arithmetic (but avoid embarrassing people in front of others). If necessary, find a way to discreetly test people to be sure they have the skills needed to do what they are asked to. For example, at the end of a meeting take one or two individuals aside and give them some assignments to write or read, that is related to the meeting. Either wait until they have finished or check back with these individuals before the next meeting, to find out how they have done. Engage these people in a conversation to get an idea about general literacy levels.
- Ask people how **they** want to deal with low levels of literacy. Perhaps you can arrange some lessons in reading and writing for them.
- Make sure that **someone** in each group can read and write – but make sure that they do not dominate the group.
- If no one in the group can write, consider bringing in a **younger person** to keep records.

- Make **exercises** practical and real. If you want to make a point about the soil, don't just talk about it. Take them into the field and get them to dig a hole so they can see what you are talking about.
- **Repeat ideas** several times in a lesson. In the next lesson, go over again what they learned the last time to remind them.
- **Get people to repeat key ideas back to you!** Many people learn or retain ideas through repeating a sentence or idea out loud. When people say things out loud, they think about them. But only use this method if it fits the local culture.
- Do not **talk down** to people.

A GOOD FACILITATOR

A good facilitator...

- Structures the sessions and guides activities.
- Presents information in an interesting and lively way.
- Stimulates participants to share their own ideas and experiences.
- Ask questions, gets people to feel comfortable and engaged.
- Poses problems and encourages the group to analyze them.
- Provokes people to think critically and motivates them towards action.
- Guides participants towards reaching conclusions and making decisions, and accepts decisions reached by consensus.
- Creates an atmosphere where all participants feel included and able to contribute.
- Is sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal communication and the feelings, attitudes, culture, interests, and any hidden agenda that may be present in the group.



PARTICIPATORY TRAINING METHODS

You can use a variety of methods in training and to gather and analyze information. Choose those that best fit your situation.

Presentations. Useful to introduce a topic and to present information or give assignments. Keep them short, make them interesting! Presentations may be given by the facilitator, by a guest speaker, or by one of the participants.



Plenary discussions. Useful to ensure that participants have understood the presentation and to enable general questions and comments.



Group discussions and exercises. Best for detailed analysis of a topic. Divide the participants into groups and give them a topic to discuss, a task to perform or a problem to solve. Go around the groups to make sure they have understood the assignment and to help them if necessary. When they are finished, bring the groups back together to present and discuss their findings.



Focus groups are a kind of open-ended group interview. They are a good way to gather information about a particular subject, identify challenges and opportunities, and explore interest in possible solutions. Consider holding separate focus groups for men and women, and for young men and women, to learn about their situation and make it easy for everyone to share their views. See Lesson 4 for how to conduct a focus group.



Maps and diagrams are a good way to gather information, to get participants to identify and analyze problems, and to present information to others. They can be drawn with a stick on a piece of sandy ground (use leaves, stones or seeds as markers), with colored chalk on a concrete floor, or with marker pens a large piece of paper.



Games and role plays are a fun way to start talking about project work and to start people thinking about more complicated issues such as money, sustainability, marketing and business. They also get people to think about their own skills in issues such as entrepreneurship and marketing.



Individual or pair work. Give individual participants (or pairs of participants) an assignment – such as filling in a form or drawing a map of their farm. Go around to make sure they understand what to do. At the end of the assignment, ask one or two to present their results to the whole group.



Practical assignments. A practical assignment may last from several hours to a whole season. Examples include organizing market research, participatory appraisal exercises such as transect walks and seasonal calendars, and registering a savings group with the authorities. Make sure that the participants make the decisions and do as much of the work as possible! Remember that you should facilitate instead of doing things for them.



Coaching. Some activities are complex, and they require intensive or repeated guidance. For example, you can visit a new group to advise members how to get organized and draw up a constitution.



Field visits, cross visits. You can organize visits to other villages, research organizations, or markets. Participants can study particular aspects of a topic and learn how others solve a problem.



Demonstrations and experiments. These are often done in the field rather than the classroom. You can prepare the demonstration yourself, or ask a group of participants to do so. A demonstration or experiment may be quick and simple (such as digging a hole to look at the soil profile), or take a whole season (such as an experiment to compare the yields of several varieties of a crop).



Field days, fairs, posters, theatre, exhibits. These are good ways for the group to share their findings with other local people and outsiders.



IN THE CLASSROOM OR UNDER A TREE?

Where possible, hold sessions with farmers **in the field** rather than in a formal classroom. For some activities, you can choose a suitable venue beforehand. For example, if you want to discuss soil erosion, find somewhere where participants can see several types of evidence of erosion.



It is better to have people **sitting in a circle** rather than in rows facing the trainer. That makes it easier for participants to discuss among themselves.



For group activities, arrange participants in groups of **four to six** people.



MAKE SURE WOMEN CAN PARTICIPATE

It can be especially difficult to ensure that women can participate in training.

- Encourage women to join groups and to attend the training.
- Hold training sessions at times that women will be free from their household duties.
- If necessary, hold separate training sessions for women.
- In joint sessions with men, make sure that the women are not seated right at the back.
- Invite women to speak up and contribute their ideas. Do not allow the men to dominate!



- Make sure that women are adequately represented on committees and in official positions.
- To support women's involvement, allow their children to attend or better, arrange for someone to look after the children.



WHO SHOULD BE THE TRAINER?

Most field staff have a background in one or two skill areas, not all of them. So it is unlikely that they will feel qualified enough to teach all of the modules. Do not assume that all field staff can teach all of the modules straight away.

- **Assess the training needs** of each staff member and arrange courses for them to learn the extra skills.
- Arrange for less-experienced staff to attend training courses with local people, or to work alongside a skilled trainer to **learn the ropes**.
- Assign skilled trainers as **mentors** for less-experienced staff.
- Do not try to train all staff as trainers in all areas. Instead, designate certain staff to train groups in their own **specialty subjects**.
- Train staff in **participatory training methods**.



TRAINING MATERIALS

The training materials for the SMART Skills are available as:

Printed training guides	Online books	Distance-learning courses	Software applications	Exercises that you can laminate for use in the field

Projects will always make some provision to train staff through **face-to-face courses**.

They can complement this...

- With training that uses additional printed manuals for staff to study **on their own**.
- By enabling staff to study **online**.
- Some **combination** of these.

FORMS: PAPER, ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Some of the modules use forms that participants can use to help them learn, record and report observations, make calculations or analyze information.

- **Paper forms.** You can photocopy these forms to use as hand-outs, or copy them onto a flipchart or blackboard to use with a group.
- **Online forms.** Electronic versions of these forms are included in the online versions of the modules. If you have a computer connected to the internet, you can fill these in online.
- **Offline forms.** You can also fill in digital forms in the field while offline, and upload them when you return to the office and get online.



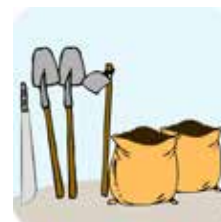
EQUIPMENT NEEDS

You will need some simple equipment to teach the modules in this series.

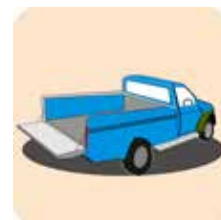
Large sheets of paper, marker pens and cards. You will need these for many of the class-based exercises in the modules.



Hoes, spades, other farm tools, seed, etc. You will need items like these for some of the assignments in the modules on natural resource management and innovation.



Transport. You may need to arrange transport for visits to markets and service providers.



Computer. A computer may be not necessary to teach the modules, but it is very useful to plan courses, and to gather and report data. If your project uses some form of electronic mobile information device, such as a smart phone, laptop, or tablet computer, make sure that staff know how to use them. The project may need to hire someone to maintain the computers and train staff how to use them.



CONCLUSION

A SMART Skills approach needs a **well-organized team** with the right experience and skills. It is necessary to **assess** the skills of the team members and give them the **training** they need to apply the approach in the communities.

A good facilitator uses **participatory training** methods such as group discussions and exercises, role plays, practical assignments, field visits, videos and field demonstrations. These methods, and the content of the courses, should be **adapted** to suit the local situation.

QUIZ 3

Answers at the end of the guide.

1. Which of these is NOT a participatory training technique?

- A. Focus group discussion
- B. Lecture by a visiting expert
- C. Group exercise
- D. Role play

2. Which of the following are characteristics of participatory training?

Choose the best option in each pair.

- A1. The trainer tells the students what they need to know.
- A2. The trainer asks questions and facilitates discussions.
- B1. Both trainers and students are knowledgeable and experienced.
- B2. The trainer is more knowledgeable and experienced than the students.
- C1. Everyone reflects on their own, then shares their ideas, experiences and expertise.
- C2. The trainer shares his or her knowledge by lecturing.
- D1. The students are passive, just listening and taking notes.
- D2. The students are active and analytical, asking questions and exploring alternatives.
- E1. The students develop their own answers. Indeed, there may be many different answers.
- E2. The students learn from the right answers given by the trainer.

3. Three of these statements are by an experienced facilitator who works successfully with villagers. Which three?

- A. "There's no point in working with illiterate people. They don't have the skills needed to learn about agro-enterprises."
- B. "Working with illiterate people can be a challenge, but it's perfectly possible to help them to learn the skills they need."
- C. "Drawing pictures to help people understand? Not for me: I can't draw well enough."
- D. "If people don't understand written numbers, it's possible to use sticks and stones instead."
- E. "People with low education often have excellent memories."

4. It is best to hold training sessions...

Choose the best option in each pair.

- A1. Under a tree or in the field...
- A2. In a classroom...
- B1. With the students sitting in rows...
- B2. With the students sitting in a circle...
- C1. So they can hear the trainer more easily.
- C2. So they can discuss with each other more easily.
- D1. For group work, the groups should have about 10 members each.
- D2. For group work, the groups should have 4-6 members each.

5. Women in your villages find it hard to take part in training. How do you respond?

Select all that apply.

- A. There is no point in having women participate in training. It is the men who make all the decisions, then they tell the women what to do.
- B. If necessary, hold separate training sessions for women.
- C. Hold training sessions at times when women can attend.
- D. Make sure that women are represented on committees and in official positions.
- E. Do not allow small children to attend meetings: they can be noisy and distract attention.

6. What is the best way to teach one of the exercises in this manual?

Select the best response.

- A. Follow the instructions exactly, and you can't go wrong!
- B. Adapt the approach to suit the situation, but make sure the participants understand the main points.
- C. Teach it the same way as you have seen it taught by someone else.

STAFF EXERCISE A. ASSESSING THE SKILLS OF THE FIELD STAFF

This exercise enables the project team to assess the skills of each team member and identify their strengths and gaps in their knowledge, and hence their training needs. It can also be a good team-building exercise as it allows members to get to know each other's skills and experience.

OBJECTIVE

After this exercise you will be able to:

- Assess the skills of potential team members
- Identify the team members' training needs in the SMART Skills.

PARTICIPANTS

- Team leader, team members

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Skills set assessment forms (Table 3) (one per person)

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- A list of skills of each team member; a list of training needs for the team members

TIME REQUIRED

- 30 minutes

PREPARATION

- None

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

1. Ask each of the team members to fill in the skills-assessment form (Table 3). They can do this individually or in pairs, with each person asking the other about their skills and experience and filling in the form accordingly. Tell them that they should be honest in evaluating their own skills!
2. Ask the team members to calculate the overall score for each row by multiplying the number or score by the figure given. For example, if someone has established four farmers' groups, multiply 4 by the number given (2) to get a score of 8 for that row.
3. Collect the forms and collate the results (see Table 2 for an example).

If a team member scores highly (e.g., more than 40), he or she can be considered to have strong multiple skills that are well suited to this development approach. If the score is low (say, less than 15), then the person would benefit from additional training, perhaps in specific areas, and may need some expert assistance. You can identify the specific types of training needed from the responses to each of the questions.

TABLE 2 EXAMPLE SCORES FROM TRAINING NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF TEAM MEMBERS

NAME	SUBJECT AREAS (FROM PART 1 OF TABLE 3)					OVERALL SCORE (Parts 1-3)	STRONG IN	NEEDS
	Group management	Finance, savings and loans	Marketing, agro-enterprise	Innovation	Natural resource management			
Adrian	4	1	1	2	4	25	Natural resources, groups	Finance, agro-enterprise
Beatrice	5	5	2	1	1	20	Finance	Natural resources, marketing
Conrad								
Dexter								
...								

TABLE 3 ASSESSMENT FORM FOR SMART SKILLS

Name			
Male or Female			
Organization			
PART 1: SUBJECT AREAS			SCORE
For each of these subject areas, give yourself a score from 1 (beginner) to 5 (very strong)			(1 to 5)
Group management			
Financial management and savings and loans			
Natural resources management, farmer field schools			
Marketing and agro-enterprise			
Developing and promoting innovation			
Computers			
PART 2: EXPERIENCE			
How many years of experience do you have in development? (number of years)			
What is your level in your organization? (5 for management level; 3 for senior field technician; 1 for assistant)			
PART 3: SUPPORT FOR GROUPS			
For each of these questions, write a number in the space provided	Number	Multiply by...	Score
Group management How many farmers' groups have you established?		2	
Financial management How many savings and loan groups have you set up and supported?		2	
How many farmers groups have you linked to a microfinance institution or bank and have secured an agricultural loan?		2	
Natural resource management How many natural resource management groups have you supported?		2	
Marketing and agro-enterprise How many market value chain surveys have you completed?		2	
How many farmer group business plans have you facilitated?		2	
How many farmer agro-enterprises have you supported?		2	
How many collective marketing groups have you set up and supported?		2	
Innovation How many innovation groups have you supported?		2	
Overall score			
PART 4: ABILITIES			
What skill areas are you strongest and most confident in?			
What skill areas do you think you need to strengthen further?			

LESSON 4. WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY

IN THIS LESSON

After this lesson you will be able to:

- List the things you need to explain to local people when you start a project in a new village.
- List the types of information you need to collect in the village.
- Describe four categories of people your project may target.
- Describe how to sort people into these categories.

INITIAL MEETINGS

You should not go into a community with a fixed plan. Rather, discuss ideas with the community and negotiate according to the needs and views of the people in the community and what you as a team can offer.

You will need to hold a series of meetings with the community to find out what the situation is, explore their needs, and introduce them to the idea of building their capacity in agricultural development using multiple skills. These meetings will draw on the overall project design to develop a detailed implementation schedule. Table 4 shows how the project team could organize a series of start-up workshops to do this.

Between the workshops, the team members will need to gather information through participatory appraisals, rapid surveys, and discussions with key informants, partners and community groups. At the workshops, the project partners will need to analyze the information, make decisions and plan the next field sessions.

These initial project set-up meetings give the team a chance to learn about the communities' resources, assets, skills and ambitions, as well as organizing themselves to plan the most appropriate interventions.



THINGS TO EXPLAIN

The purpose of the project. Explain that the project aims to help members of the community improve their livelihoods by improving how they produce and market crops and livestock, manage their money, and organize among themselves. People may not fully understand all the ideas you are trying to put across. Keep your language simple! Be sure to ask community members if they understand the idea of the project. One way of doing this is to ask them to explain the project ideas back to you. If they have not understood well, take time to go over the information again.

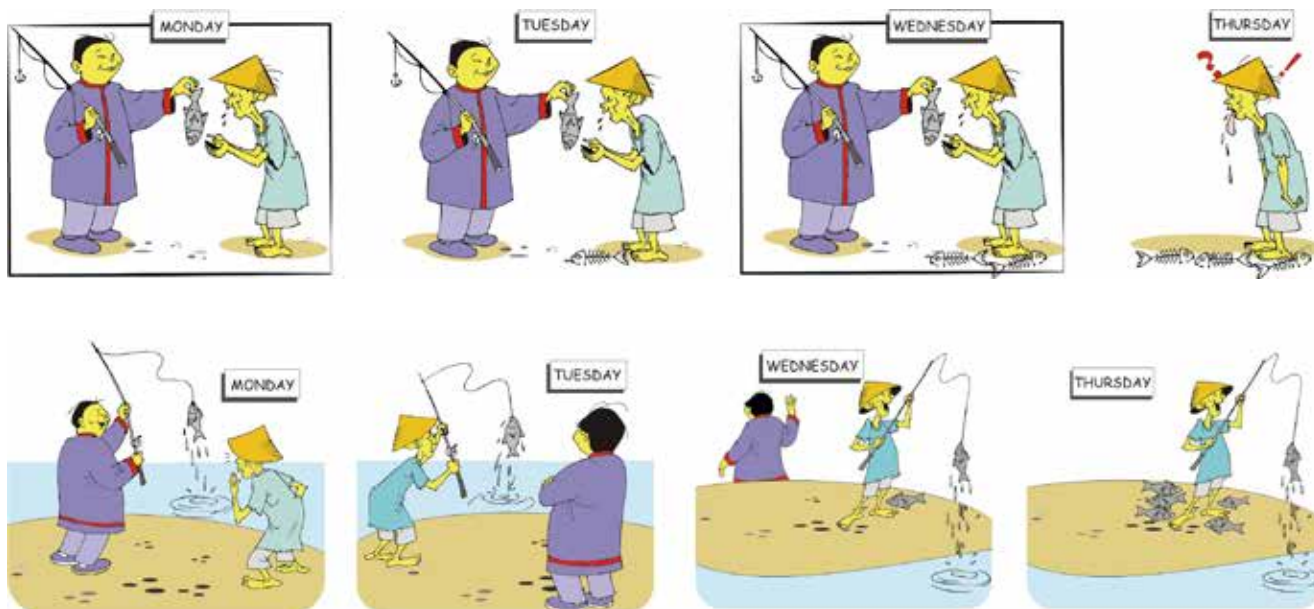


The multiple-skills approach. Describe the approach the project will use and why you think it will interest them. Explain that the proposed project is about group support, production and marketing. You will help them work in groups, learn about finance, manage the natural resources they rely on, improve their marketing, and test innovations. The process consists of multiple steps, some of which may last several months.

Giving people skills rather than assets is a bit like the story of the fisherman:

- **The question:** Is it better to give people fish, or to teach them how to fish?
- If you **give them a fish** today, they will want another one tomorrow, and the day after. They will come to depend on you for the fish you give them.
- But if you help people **learn to fish**, they can continue to catch fish when the project is over.

Explain that this project is like teaching them to fish: they will quickly learn to do it for themselves.



The roles of the project team and community members. Explain that the project will work **with** local people, not **for** them. The community members will do the work; it is your job to give them the skills they need and to facilitate their activities. You can use the “crossing a river” exercise (Exercise 4b) and visioning (Exercise 4c) to introduce them to the overall process. Consider repeating this exercise at various stages during the project to remind people of progress and the actions still to be taken.

Gather information about the community. You will need to gather information about the community, the problems local people face, and the opportunities that are available. This includes finding out what assets the community members have: their land holdings, houses, livestock, and other basic assets. Talk to both men and women of the target households separately to get better results. Knowing the wealth differences between people in the community helps in matching the right people with the right type of support.

Decide who to work with. The project will work mainly with certain people in the community, but it is helpful to be clear that everyone can benefit. Explain the type of people who should be directly involved: poorer people, women, young people, landless, etc. (This will depend on the particular situation and the donor objectives.) Be clear that you are interested in working with people who want to increase their savings and food production for their families, and who also want to find ways to increase their income by selling produce to markets.

POSSIBLE START-UP MEETINGS

Table 4 shows one way of organizing a series of start-up meetings with the project team and the local people. Some of these meetings involve the members of the project team; others include community members in orientation, information gathering and analysis, and decision-making.

TABLE 4 POSSIBLE START-UP MEETINGS AND FIELD WORK WITH COMMUNITIES

TOPICS	SUBJECT MATTER	LEAD	PARTICIPANTS	ACTIVITIES	TIMEFRAME
Workshop 1	Project orientation workshop	Lead agency	Project team	Establish basic ground rules for the project, staffing plan, capacity analysis, orient project team	3 days
Field work	Participatory appraisal, rapid market survey, sensitize communities	Field agents	Field staff and community leaders. (To avoid bias, hold small group meetings with men and women, with and without leaders)	Gather initial project information from target communities and markets, start forming groups	1-2 weeks
Workshop 2	Project planning based on results of participatory appraisal	Lead agency	Project team	Review participatory appraisal results, identify important food crops and income sources, plan groups for skills	3-4 days
Field work	Visioning, registration of groups, design monitoring	Field agents	Field staff and community	Register farmer groups, select products	1-2 weeks
Workshop 3	Project implementation schedules	Lead agency	Project team	Agree on entry points, method for implementing project and reporting responsibilities	3-4 days
Project work	Start implementing	Field agents	Field staff and community	Training and implementation	Ongoing

GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT THE TARGET AREA

In order to advise the local community, you and the other members of the project team must gather information from both men and women, to gain a clear understanding of the situation the community faces. Here are some things to look for:

- **Geographic context.** General information on the target area, topography, roads and rivers, nearby towns, climate.
- **Social context.** Demographics, types of farmers, who are considered farmers, social groups, social hierarchies, and administrative processes.
- **Natural resources.** Information on soils, water, major farming systems, food and cash crops and livestock, planting and harvesting seasons, and any major assets in terms of natural resources. Major agricultural challenges faced, such as severe erosion, droughts, floods, diseases, etc.
- **Local production resources.** Average farm sizes, typical farming equipment used, livestock production, access to irrigation, transport systems, market infrastructure, etc.
- **Financial services.** Savings groups, money lenders, microfinance agencies, formal banking services, and access to mobile money. Find out challenges to accessing financial services, such as lack of knowledge, culture, local laws which may prevent women from borrowing etc.
- **Business and market organization.** The main market options, types of marketing systems, major products and services traded, availability of input supplies, local food processing plants, major business challenges and opportunities.

You may already have much of this information from previous work in the area, from reports and from the project design documents. Make sure to collect only the data that will help you to support your target communities to achieve the project goals.

BASELINE STUDY

You may need to do a formal gender-disaggregated **baseline study**, especially if your organization is new to the area. This gives you information about key indicators of wellbeing, which includes things like:

- Demographics
- Assets
- Food security (access and utilization)
- Access to services
- Health status of family members
- Average income
- Group memberships.

During the project lifetime you will **monitor** these indicators to assess whether the project is improving the wellbeing of the target beneficiaries, and that it is on track to meet specific targets.

When the project finishes, you will normally do an **end-of-project study** to measure changes since the baseline study, to see what changes the project has had on the target community.

The combination of a baseline study, regular monitoring, and a final study enables the project to find out if the interventions made a difference to the people you worked



with. Did things get better, worse or stay the same? We recommend that a follow-up **impact study** is done 12 or 24 months after the project ends to see which elements have been sustainable.

PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL

Consider conducting a participatory appraisal or rapid market appraisal to fill in gaps in your knowledge. See the various modules in this series for how to do this. For example:

- **Information on markets:** Interview traders, support agencies, NGOs, extension workers, business services and those who buy food for the household. See the module *Seven steps of marketing* for ideas on how to do a market survey.
- **Information on natural resources:** See the module *Managing natural resources* for how to collect information on natural resources.



UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE

It is vital to understand the social structure in the community and how the community defines who is a farmer.

Decision makers. It may be important to get the approval and support of the local authority, village chief, or council of elders in order to work in a community. They may also be able to point to farmers who are particularly innovative, who are sources of traditional knowledge, or who act as traders. Community leaders may also wish to be involved in the project work, even if they are not members of the target group. Many projects now include village leaders in the regular evaluation activities, to give more voice to the community. At the same time, work with the leaders to avoid reinforcing the concept of who a suitable client farmer is, and to avoid favoring one particular group over another.



Elites versus the poor. Some societies are strongly divided by wealth or caste. Be careful that the project does not merely reinforce the existing elites in the community.



Women and men. Women do most of the farm work in many countries, but it is often the men who make the important decisions. Plus, women are often neglected in development efforts: they cannot attend meetings because of their other duties. The project should help women gain more status and equality in their communities.



Where possible aim to select times that allow women to actively participate in meetings and training sessions. Provide support if necessary for watching children during the session, and understand that information given to the male head of household may not be transmitted to the women in the household.

Ethnic groups and language. Some ethnic groups may dominate others. Different groups may have different interests, and disagreements may turn into open conflict. Try to avoid this by making sure that all groups are adequately represented.



ENTRY POINTS FOR STARTING A PROJECT

Projects very rarely start from zero. Your entry point may already have been chosen. Maybe your organization is already working with savings groups in the community. You could help such groups expand into agricultural processing and marketing.

If there are no suitable groups to work with, you may have to help local people get organized. See the module *Organizing and managing farmers' groups* for ideas on how to do this.

WHO TO WORK WITH?

Projects usually aim to reach specific types of people. Some support the poorest farmers in a community. Others are designed to assist women or young people. Still others aim to upgrade middle-income farmers.

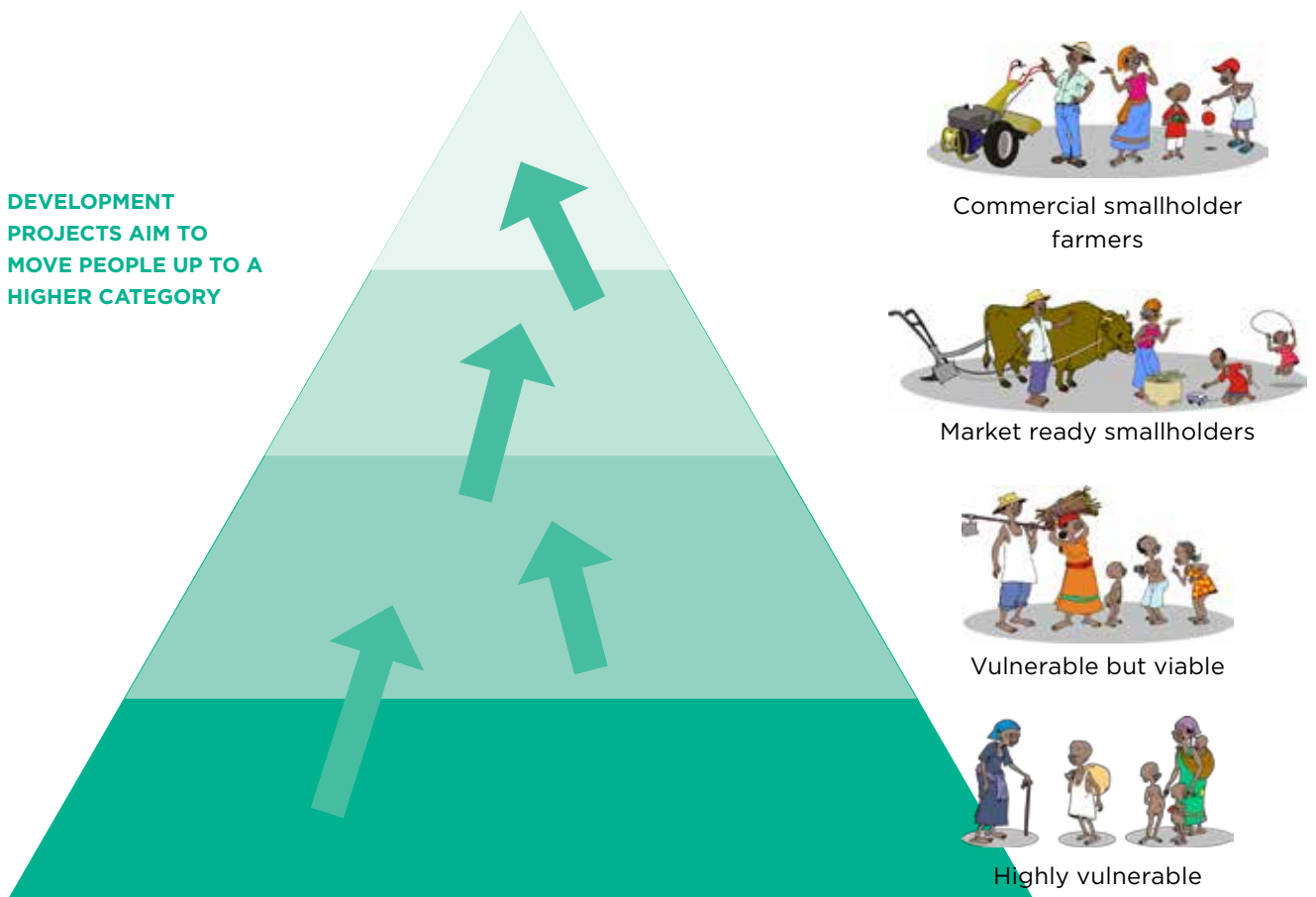
Many communities have a large number of poor people, a smaller number who are slightly better off, and an even smaller number who are reasonably well off.

The diagram below shows an example of a community where there are four such levels. Development projects generally aim to help people in each level in this pyramid move up to a higher level (or at least to help them avoid falling down to a lower level).

The development strategies are different for each level. Let us look at each of the four levels in turn, starting at the base of the pyramid. We will use a village in southern Africa as an example; communities in other parts of the world are likely to have different amounts of assets and have different needs.



DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS AIM TO MOVE PEOPLE UP TO A HIGHER CATEGORY



Commercial smallholder farmers



Market ready smallholders



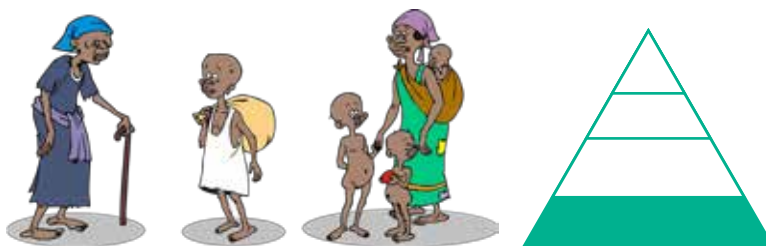
Vulnerable but viable



Highly vulnerable




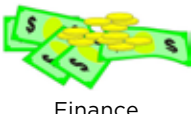







HIGHLY VULNERABLE

These are the poorest and most vulnerable people in the community. They include households with little (less than half a hectare) or no land, single women and their families, orphans, the elderly, sick and disabled. They may also be refugees fleeing war or people recovering from a natural disaster. These people cannot grow enough food, so often do not have enough to eat for the whole year. They usually need off-farm sources of income, for example as laborers on other larger farms, and regularly rely upon community charity.



Emergency / development strategy. Depending on the severity of the situation, people in this category often require emergency relief. Once their immediate needs for food and shelter are met, development organizations try to quickly shift from a relief to a development mode, helping them to stabilize and diversify their assets, grow more food, and ensure they have enough to eat year-round.

Interventions. Once the immediate food needs have been overcome, the next step is to help this group to improve their **productivity**, learn about their **financial** options, form savings groups and access small loans, diversify their **production** (for example by keeping chickens or growing vegetables), and ensure they have **clean water** supplies.












CLIENT PROFILE		STRATEGY	
Highly vulnerable		Recover: Recover assets, stabilize income and consumption	
 Land	Very small plots or landless Households often headed by women	 Markets	—
 Production	No surplus staple food for sale	 Finance	Financial education Savings groups Small loans Vouchers
 Food security	Food insecure for > 6 months	 Production, natural resources	Input subsidies Training to boost staple food productivity Income diversification Intensive backyard production Clean water
 Income, assets	< \$0.50/day No savings	 Group organization	Production groups Savings groups
 Education	Little education	 Innovation	—
 Markets	Not engaged		

VULNERABLE BUT VIABLE

This is a large group, ranging from slightly better off than the previous group to still-poor but less vulnerable. They farm a little more land: perhaps 1 to 3 hectares and earn \$0.50–2.00 per day. In most years they produce enough food for up to 12 months of the year (though some people may still go hungry for several months). They may use some fertilizer and other farm inputs. They sometimes sell surplus produce after harvest, but buy food at other times of the year. They may also try to make money in other ways, such as growing fruit or vegetables to sell, or by raising a few livestock. But they have few other assets. They rely on family labor and use virtually no improved productive technologies.



Development strategy. Development organizations help these people protect and build their assets. They help them find ways to improve their productivity, stabilize their incomes, and build their skills in working together to market their surpluses better so they can earn more regular income. They try to set these households on a sound business footing and provide the key elements for household and community-based resilience.

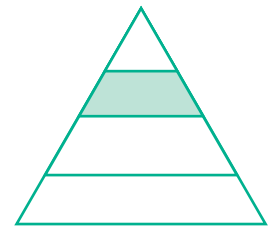
CLIENT PROFILE		STRATEGY	
Vulnerable but viable		Build: Protect assets, build resilience, skills and market linkages	
 Land	Small plots, poor to medium-quality land	 Markets	Awareness raising, market visits, link to service providers
 Production	Occasional surplus Use some fertilizer	 Finance	Savings groups, small loans
 Food security	Food insecure for less than 1-2 months	 Production, natural resources	Enhance productivity, diversity to raise income, improve natural resource management, backyard intensification, health and nutrition
 Income, assets	\$0.5–2/day Limited savings	 Group organization	Savings, innovation and production groups, cooperatives
 Education	Some education Mobile phone	 Innovation	Test new ideas in innovation groups
 Markets	Limited, opportunistic sales		

Interventions typically include helping these people grow more staple foods, produce dual-purpose crops (that can be eaten or sold), **intensify production** (e.g., by growing a second crop on the same land), build **alternative enterprises** such as raising vegetables or livestock. Creating and strengthening **organizations** for production, marketing, savings and innovation is an important part of these interventions. As these people often work on marginal lands, other important interventions include working to **control erosion, manage water** better, and learn how to manage their **finances** by forming savings groups, so that they are more economically resilient and can invest more in their farms and in their children's education.

There is always a risk that people in this group fall back into poverty because of bad weather (drought or flood) or a family emergency (ill-health or death of a breadwinner). Interventions aim to help them improve their **resilience** (so they do not slip back into deeper poverty), build their assets so they can withstand future shocks, and help them **rebound** if they are subject to a shock.

MARKET-READY SMALLHOLDERS













This group is still poor, but suffers from food insecurity only during extreme weather events. They have larger farm plots, perhaps up to 5–10 hectares, or have access to labor, or can rent more farm land. They usually have farms on better soils, in more fertile regions and some may have traditional irrigation. They regularly produce a small surplus of staple foods and other products, and they have regular access to markets, but their market engagement is periodic or inconsistent. They are better educated than the other groups, and where there is a signal, this group will typically have mobile phones that they use to get market information and strike deals with buyers. Some will already be using mobile money to transfer and receive funds.



Development strategy. Development organizations usually try to help this group to become more organized, learn basic business strategies and develop more consistent relationships with identified buyers. This type of farmer is typically seeking opportunities to work with stronger organizations to access new technologies. They are keen to engage with market opportunities but need support in developing more robust marketing strategies. This group generally requires support in improving their financial skills, in learning how to use their capital more effectively, and in accessing loans to shift from periodic market linkage to consistent investments and market sales.

Interventions. This level of farmer needs support to improve their **business capacity** and strengthen both their **organization** and **access to services** for marketing, financial services and technology. With more land, these farmers have the potential to specialize in larger areas of crop production and livestock that will attract larger or more formal buyers. To be successful in these endeavors they need support in **leadership** skills, **natural resource management**, the **scaling up** of individual operations, and links to local public and private **service providers**.

These types of farmers are often in basic, first-level groups, but need help to organize or upgrade their **second-tier groups**, such as associations or cooperatives. This will help the farmers to improve their ability to market larger amounts of more standardized produce and to access business services and markets. It is important to consider both how **women** and **young people** can become active members of these groups and what is needed to empower them. These farmers may need help in **innovation** (to identify and test new technologies) and **finance** (to make them more competitive).

CLIENT PROFILE		STRATEGY	
Market-ready		Grow: Market-oriented production	
 Land	Access to large plots, labor, good soils, and irrigation	 Markets	Train in use of market information, improve trading relations, and certifications
 Production	Uses fertilizer and improved seed, tends to specialize	 Finance	Access to financial services
 Food security	Usually food secure	 Production, natural resources	Specialization to improve water use efficiency, watershed management
 Income, assets	\$3+/day, with savings	 Group organization	Associations of cooperatives
 Education	Good education Mobile phone	 Innovation	Innovation groups
 Markets	Sells surplus		
 Innovation	Actively seeking new technologies		

COMMERCIAL SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Well-off or commercial smallholder farmers or local business people are not normally the targets of development projects. These farmers are often referred to as “lead farmers,” and it is a good idea to include them in project planning and guidance, involving them in testing and demonstrating technologies to support market linkage opportunities. There are many reasons to do this:

- To ensure their **support**. Development efforts may fail if powerful local people are not involved and oppose them.
- To provide **role models** for poorer community members.
- To benefit from their **expertise or inputs**. For example, you might want to work with a wealthy trader to ensure that poorer farmers have a market for their produce. A commercial farmer may be able to link the poorer farmers to a larger trader, let a group store their grain in her warehouse, or to train her neighbors in a particular farming method.



- To benefit from their **business relations**. Better off people are often in privileged positions and have deep business networks that help them succeed in their business ventures. Many poorer farmers, or farmers with less land, can benefit from introductions and linkages to these business partners. In some cases, organized farmers can add their goods to the shipments from more commercial farmers to increase the volume of sales.

TARGETING GROUPS

Some projects serve the entire community: they accept everyone who is interested in taking part. If there are big differences within the community, you may need to design different interventions for each category.

Other projects target specific categories, such as the highly vulnerable, women, young people, or those who farm 1 hectare or less.

Some projects target groups other than the poorest people. For example, projects may want to help market-ready farmers who lack the organization and trading relationships to sell their produce at a profit. In this case, the project may set up criteria like this:

- At least 4 hectares of land
- Regularly sell more than 50% of their produce to the market
- With access to irrigation.



HOW TO IDENTIFY CATEGORIES?

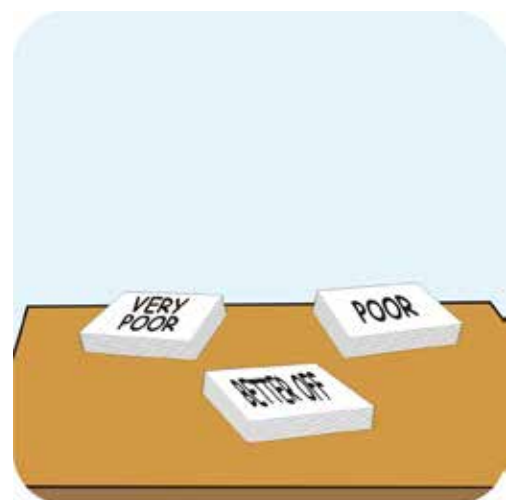
Development projects do not usually have the time or resources to do a detailed survey to identify who is in which category. It is important to reach the right people, and to weed out richer people who merely want free handouts, people who mainly work off-farm, or those without any land.

Here are some ways to sort people into categories quickly:

Ask the authorities. Local governments and village leaders often have a list of people or households who are most in need of assistance. Even if there are no formal records, community leaders generally know who are the richer and poorer households, and who are likely candidates for the project. You can use this local knowledge to form your first list of potential project clients for further screening. Be careful to avoid favoritism in local records and try to identify a mix of male and female farmers, where possible.

Wealth ranking. Call one meeting in a village, or a series of meetings in larger villages, with a number of the candidates proposed by the local councils. Explain the purpose of the project to them. Ask the candidates to group themselves according to certain criteria. The best criteria will depend on the location and the purpose of the project. Box 1 gives some ideas for questions to ask to categorize people. Choose the questions that are most appropriate to your area.

Once you have categorized people into different segments, take their names, get an idea of where their houses or farms are, and ask them to attend a follow-up meeting. In some cases, you can ask for telephone numbers and send them SMS messages to arrange meetings. All subsequent meetings should be held with local leaders to make sure your categorization was valid.



BOX 1 QUESTIONS TO HELP WITH WEALTH RANKING

How much land do you cultivate?

Ask farmers from a household to stand in groups with different land allocations, such as:

- Less than half a hectare
- 0.5–2 ha
- 2–5 ha
- 5–10 ha
- More than 10 hectares.

Is your land irrigated?

How many cows do you own?

- None
- 1 or 2
- 3–10
- More than 10.

How many rooms are there in your house?

How many months a year do you have enough food to feed your family?

- Less than 6 months
- 6–8 months
- 9–10 months
- 11–12 months.

Do you earn most of your money working outside the village?

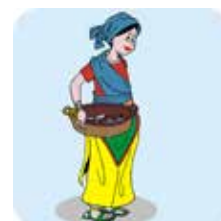
Self-selected groups. Ask people to gather in groups who want to work together, this process of self selection often brings together people of similar socio-economic groups.

Card sorting. If it is not possible to call a meeting with all the candidates, write the names of all the households in the communities on cards (one name per card). Then ask a group of local people to sort the cards into piles according to your criteria. You will then need to send out a team member to contact these candidates to verify the card sorting

SPECIFIC GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY

Your project may target specific groups in the community. Some examples:

Women. Widows and households that are headed by women are particularly vulnerable. Consider targeting women specifically or forming women-only groups.



Young people. Young people are a majority in all developing countries, but few development efforts target them. They have little say in decisions, and see no future in rural life. Projects can help them gain the skills they need to earn a decent living in their communities.



People living with HIV. People who are infected with HIV face additional problems: they may appear healthy, but they need nutritious food, and are often too weak to do heavy farm work. They are often stigmatized by other people in the community. Their families have to support them and must pay for medical expenses. Work with the community to navigate specific sensitivities that avoid exacerbating any negative situations.



Orphans and vulnerable children. Many children have lost one or both their parents due to HIV/AIDS, conflict, or other reasons. Many households in conflict areas are now headed by children: instead of attending school, the older ones have to earn a living and take care of their younger brothers and sisters.



Production types. You might target groups such as landless people, pastoralists, or farmers with irrigated land.



Vulnerable farmers. You might target farmers with less than 2 hectares.



SERVING SPECIFIC GROUPS

Projects can be designed to address the needs of these specific groups. They should:

- Identify key challenges faced by these groups by interviewing both men and women within the specific group.
- Design customized solutions to meet the needs of men and women in these groups.
- Integrate support measures for specialized groups within the project design.
- Allocate sufficient budget to support specific groups, allowing for higher costs than for general groups.
- Hire staff with training and experience in dealing with the target groups and use gender based policies to support gender balanced hiring.
- Hire women and younger people as staff and make sure they have the skills needed to work with the clients.

HELPING PEOPLE FORM GROUPS

Sometimes suitable groups already exist in the community. If so, you may be able to work with them.

If no suitable groups exist, you should help get them organized. See the module on *Organizing and managing groups* for some ideas on how to do this.



CONCLUSION

When you start work in a community, you should explain the **purpose** of the project and how the **multiple-skills approach** will assist both men and women now and in the future. You should make sure the community members understand what their and the team members' roles will be.

You will need to gather information about the community and the local area. You may need to do a formal gender-disaggregated **baseline study** so you can keep track of the project's impact. Part of this may be a **participatory appraisal**, where you facilitate local people (men, women, orphans and vulnerable children, and others with special circumstances) to gather and analyze information about their community.

It is important to select the **target groups** carefully. Wealth ranking is one way to do this. Your project may decide to focus on one level, such as the highly vulnerable or the "vulnerable but viable." Or it may aim to serve particular groups, such as women, orphans or people affected by HIV. The approach you use will depend on the characteristics and needs of this group.

QUIZ 4

Answers at the end of the guide.

1. “You should always go into a community with a ready-made plan for what you want to do,” said Professor Shaun. Do you agree?
 - A. “Yes, prof. Having a plan means the team can start work quickly and get things done. Quick visible impacts will attract people to join in and support the project.”
 - B. “Sorry, professor, I disagree... What the project does depends very much on the local situation and the clients’ needs and interests.”

2. “A development project does not necessarily have to target the neediest people,” Professor Shaun continues. Do you agree?
 - A. “I agree. A project may target certain groups, such as farmers who can grow enough to sell some of their produce.”
 - B. “I have a different opinion. Projects should always aim to help the poorest people. After all, they are the ones who need our help the most.”

3. “We can divide a community into four groups according to their wealth,” says the professor, writing the categories on the board. Help him put them in the right order.

Match each category with the correct example.

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
A. Highly vulnerable	1 Subsistence farmers
B. Vulnerable but viable	2 Sell occasional surplus
C. Market-ready smallholders	3 Refugees, handicapped people, AIDS orphans
D. Commercial smallholders	4 Produce and sell for market

4. “If a farmer has more than 2 hectares of land, we can put him or her in the ‘market-ready’ category,” says Professor Shaun. Is he right?
 - A. Yes. We need to have fixed wealth categories to make it possible to compare across different countries and communities.
 - B. No: the categories depend on the local circumstances.

5. “Three good ways to quickly identify the poorest people in a community are wealth ranking, card sorting, and, er...”

Which important method has Professor Shaun forgotten?

- A. Participatory rural appraisal
 - B. Checking with the authorities
 - C. Doing a detailed household survey
 - D. Using satellite photographs
6. “Here are some approaches to help farmers with marketing,” says the professor, dropping his notes. Help him put them back in the right order.

Match each category with the appropriate approach.

CATEGORY	APPROACH
A. Highly vulnerable	1 Train in use of market information, improve trading relations, and certifications
B. Vulnerable but viable	2 Awareness raising, market visits, links to service providers
C. Market-ready smallholders	3 They do not need our help, so they are not a target for this project
D. Commercial smallholders	4 Not appropriate for this group

EXERCISE 4A. FOCUS GROUPS

A focus group is a small group of people who discuss a subject, gradually focusing on specific areas that need to be explored in detail.

OBJECTIVE

After this exercise you will:

- Have key information about the current situation and farmers' interests to incorporate into the project's activities and objectives.

The participants will be able to:

- Explain their production and marketing system and constraints.

PARTICIPANTS

- Community members

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Large sheets of paper, marker pens

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- Information about farmers' conditions and priorities

TIME

- 1-2 hours

PREPARATION

Identify 10–15 farmers who are interested in the marketing project, for example by asking lead farmers, traders and village elders. Arrange a meeting with these farmers. You may wish to have a focus group of only men and another focus group of only women to understand their different views.

You will need a moderator to guide the discussion and an assistant to help you take notes.

Prepare some questions that you need to have answered.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

1. Explain the goals of the project to the participants.
2. Ask the participants about themselves, the local situation and their interests. Make sure that the participants realize that you are helping them find solutions to their problems, and provide a comfortable environment where everyone is invited to participate. Ask a colleague to note the responses, using the sheets of paper.
3. Start off with general questions, and then gradually focus on more specific subjects. For example, you might start out asking about general farming problems/ constraints, then focus on a particular men-crop and women-crop, and then discuss the marketing of these crop.
4. End the meeting with a clear summary of what has been discussed, your conclusions, and some final thoughts from the participants. Thanks the group members for their time and support.

QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION

- What are the main crops or livestock that you and your neighbors grow for food? For income? How many farmers grow these crops in your village?
- What crops or livestock are you and your neighboring farmers interested in?
- Who grows and sells these products? Who knows best about production and marketing questions?
- What are the yields, prices and marketing channels for these products?
- What challenges do you face in producing and selling these products?
- What do people want to buy?

NOTES

Consider holding separate meetings if a lot of farmers are interested, or if it is advisable to talk to different groups (e.g., women, young people) separately.

EXERCISE 4B. CROSSING A RIVER

This exercise illustrates the field agent's role to empower and guide the community.

OBJECTIVE

After this exercise the participants will be able to:

- Explain the roles of the field agent and group members in developing an agro-enterprise.

PARTICIPANTS

- Community members

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Two pieces of rope or branches
- Several sheets of A4 paper (or a piece of chalk)

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- The participants understand the role of the field agent, and their role in learning the skills they will need.

TIME

- 1 hour

PREPARATION

Lay out the ropes or branches parallel to each other, 6–8 meters apart. These represent the banks of a river.

Scatter the pieces of paper on the ground between the “river banks” 1–2 meters apart (or draw large circles on the ground with chalk). These represent stepping stones.

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

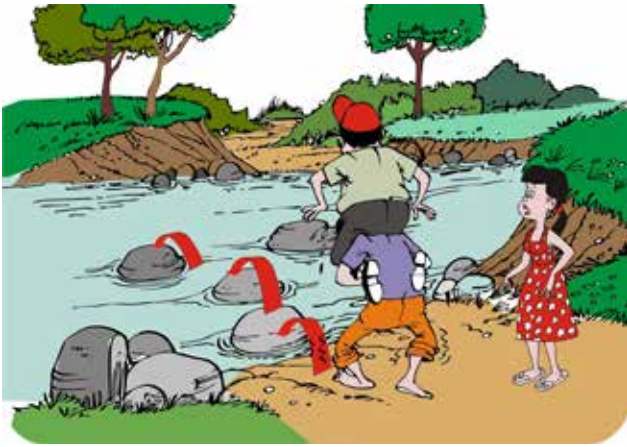
1. Take aside three members of the group and instruct them for a three-act role play (see below).
2. Explain to the audience that the rope or sticks are the river banks and that two people are trying to cross the river. They want to find something better on the other side.
3. Invite the three actors – a “field agent” and two “farmers” – to act out the play in silence to the rest of the group.
4. **Act 1:** Starting on the near bank of the river, the field agent and one of the farmers try to cross the river using the stepping stones. The field agent tries to carry the farmer across the river on his or her back.
5. But the field agent gets tired.
6. So he or she leaves the farmer in the middle of the river and goes back to the near bank. The farmer who was being carried is abandoned, and the field agent leaves the scene, complaining about being tired.
7. **Act 2:** The field agent tries to cross the river with

the second farmer. This time, he or she does not carry the farmer, but instead holds his or her hand and shows where the next stone is positioned.

8. The field agent and second farmer take time to cross the river but in the end they succeed in reaching the far bank. They celebrate when they reach the other side. The field agent then waves goodbye and leaves the play. The second farmer returns to the near bank of the river.
9. **Act 3:** The second farmer takes a member of the audience and shows him or her how to cross the river. The person does not hold hands with the audience member, but leads him or her to the near bank and then shows where to step. The role play ends when the two people have finally crossed to the far bank.
10. Lead a discussion about what the play represented.
 - The river represents a challenge: **the work needed to find a new market opportunity**. The near bank is where the community is now. The far bank is where the community would like to be. To achieve their goal, community members must cross the river.
 - In **Act 1**, the field agent brings everything to the farmer. In reality, this means supplying the community with free seeds, tools, fertilizer, credit, transport, and links with traders. But after some time, the field agent gets tired of continuing – and the project ends. When this happens, the farmer is left behind because he or she cannot get free seeds, tools, fertilizer, credit, or transport without the project, so does not know how to get to the other side of the river. That is, the farmer was being “carried”, and when support was withdrawn he or she was unable to continue along the same path.
 - In **Act 2**, the field agent empowers the farmer by guiding him or her across the river, clearly showing the stepping stones to use to get to the other side. This time the farmer is slower to cross, but gets there by working with the service provider. At this point, the field agent leaves. However, the farmer has learned how to cross the river and can now return to where he or she was and, most importantly, help others cross (**Act 3**).

QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION

- Who are the three characters in the story? What is the river? What are the stepping stones? Who did what?
- Which approach (carrying or guiding) took longer? Which approach was more effective?
- What happens next? Can everyone now cross the river?
- How does this relate to ideas on enterprise skills, learning, and community empowerment?



EXERCISE 4C. VISIONING

Visioning asks community members to imagine what they would like to achieve in the long term, then decide what steps to take in the short term to achieve their goals.

OBJECTIVE

After this exercise participants will be able to:

- Describe the future they desire for their community group
- Identify the steps they need to take to reach this desired situation.

PARTICIPANTS

- Community members

EQUIPMENT NEEDED

- Large sheets of paper, marker pens

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

- A long-term goal for the enterprise, and a series of concrete steps to achieve this goal

TIME REQUIRED

- 2 hours

PREPARATION

- None

SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

1. Ask the farmers to summarize their **current production situation** (types and amount of product produced) and their key challenges. See the list of questions below for ideas on what to ask.
2. Ask the farmers about their key challenges they face in the areas of organizing as a group, production, gaining access to finance, marketing, and learning about new technologies.
3. Ask the farmers to imagine what they would like their farming enterprise to be like in the **long term**, in 10 or 15 years' time. What will they be producing? How much of the product? How will they be producing it? How will they finance their work and market the output? Who will buy their produce? How will their incomes change? List these goals on a second sheet of paper under the same headings.
4. Ask them to think of the **long-term activities** they will need to do in order to reach this goal. For example, will they need to bring more land into cultivation, get bank loans, test new technologies, install irrigation, expand the group membership, and build a processing shed or storage warehouse? List these activities on another sheet of paper.
5. Ask the farmers to repeat this exercise, but this time to think of **activities in the medium term** – say, 5 years from now. Get them to be more specific and realistic about their suggestions. Their suggestions should lead them towards the long-term goals they have just set out. Record their answers on another sheet of paper.
6. Now get them to repeat the exercise for **short-term activities**, to do in the next year or the next production cycle. This time they should be very specific and realistic about what activities they will undertake, who will do what and when, and what types of support they will need. Record their ideas on another sheet of paper.
7. Mark which activities they can do themselves with their existing resources, and which will require external support.
8. Summarize the results of the discussions and notes (see Table 5).

QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE DISCUSSION

These questions are about the current situation. You can rephrase them to ask about the future. These questions should be asked to both male and female farmers and recorded by gender. The number of male and female farmers asked should represent the proportion of male and female farmers in the population.

Groups

- Are the farmers already in groups to produce and sell key crops or livestock products?
- Do they have any savings groups in the village?
- What groups are in the village?
- How many of the participants are members of these groups?

Production

- What is his/her most important food crop or type of livestock?
- What area of land does each farmer usually plant? How many animals does each farmer keep?
- What are the main management practices that farmers use to produce this crop or animal?

Finance

- Do you get a loan to produce your main crops? (These should be answered based on the individual and not a perception of the village)
- If yes, where do they get these loans?
- Do farmers save? If yes, as individuals or groups?

Marketing

- How do they identify buyers? How do they market the product? Who negotiates prices and delivery details?
- What transport do they use? What is the delivery schedule?
- What price range do we negotiate for? What are the payment terms? Do they have a bank account? Who are the signatories for the account?
- What happens to the money? If they form a group, how will it be shared?
- How much of the profit do they invest, and what in? How do they save money to invest?

Innovation

- Has there been any new equipment, support or technologies that have really helped the farmers to improve their production in the last 5 years? (such as mobile phones, mobile money, loan operators, new varieties, NGOs providing support, new government initiatives)
- Do farmers test new technologies to increase their production?
- If yes, where do they get these new technologies?

TABLE 5 FORM FOR CONVERTING A LONG-TERM VISION INTO SHORT-TERM ACTION

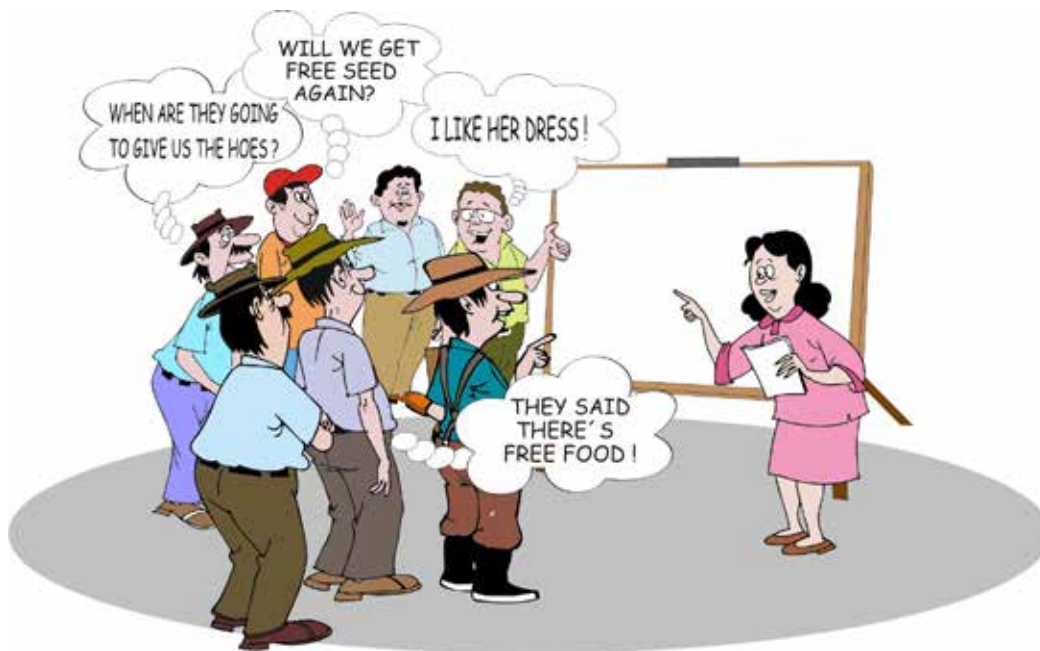
	CURRENT SITUATION	SHORT-TERM ACTIVITIES	MEDIUM-TERM ACTIVITIES	LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES	LONG-TERM GOAL
	Where we are now	In next year	In next 5 years	In next 10-15 years	Where we want to be in 10-15 years
Groups					
Production					
Finance					
Marketing					
Innovation					

LESSON 5. ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

IN THIS LESSON

After this lesson you will be able to:

- Explain why handouts are generally not a good idea
- List three categories of assets and skills, and put different assets into these categories
- Describe how to manage the transfer of assets and skills to increase the likelihood that the project will be sustainable.



WHY DO THINGS STOP AFTER A PROJECT ENDS?

Many community groups perform well during the project's lifetime, but fail soon after it ends. This is often because the project provides inputs and services for free.

- **Unwillingness to pay for inputs.** Used to getting things for free, people may be reluctant to start paying for them.
- **Free inputs as reason for participating.** The main purpose of some groups is to get free inputs. Once these disappear, the group has no reason to exist.
- **Lack of alternative suppliers.** Local people have nowhere else to go for the inputs and services they need.



PLANNING FOR THE LONG TERM

To avoid the entitlement problem and help with sustainability of project work, it is necessary to plan for the long term. Here are some ways to do this.

Start with a business mindset. Tell the project participants that you want to help them over the long term but that they must help in the process right from the start, so by the end of the project they can continue working together. The community must want to do, and whenever possible, co-invest in the project activities.

Don't pay people to participate. Do not pay people to come to meetings and implement activities that the project has decided. They will not continue such work without payment!

Reinforce that the knowledge or information received will help them improve their income or production.

Don't give free handouts. Like everyone, poor people enjoy getting free goods and services. They love field agents who give away free assets. **But remember**, everything that you give away now will not be available free when you leave. If you try to change conditions by giving away the things that people need, the project will not be sustainable. Some of the best development projects work to improve a lot of poor farmers but give **no free handouts**.

**THE BEST
DEVELOPMENT
PROJECTS GIVE NO
FREE HANDOUTS**

Don't try to move too fast. Some projects try to achieve very rapid results by providing free goods and services. They do so to “prime the pump.” But when the pump is over-primed or the project supports ends, the initial rapid gains fall away quickly.

Don't provide free credit. Instead, help farmers to test new technologies with small amounts of a new seed type (for example) and get them to first produce enough for commercial production. If you are dealing with hybrid seed and they want more seed, give them vouchers to spend with local input suppliers that cover a part of their needs. The use of vouchers may start by supporting 75–80% of their needs, but the level of voucher support should be reduced rapidly during the project. In this way, the farmers are co-investing in a process and the project is supporting local business services.

Charge for inputs and services. Where feasible, charge people for inputs and services. For example, do not give away tree seedlings. Sell them to farmers, or link them to local entrepreneurs who are selling trees – if possible at the real market price.

Include the hidden costs. Many successful community enterprises fail when hidden costs are revealed when the project ends. A project may fail to count the cost of providing things like advice on crop production, testing new technologies, and links to traders. But these require staff time and expertise that cost money. Without them, the enterprise may be unprofitable. Likewise, the farmers need to consider all of their costs including costs of accessing services and marketing produce. It is better to calculate in these costs so you know whether the enterprise has a chance of being profitable.

Build local businesses. Instead of providing inputs and services through the project, do so through local businesses. That will help develop the private-sector providers that the community will need in the future. Instead of setting up your own tree nursery, get a local farmer to do so, and help her sell seedlings to farmers.

Provide training in core skills. Farmer groups often lack the skills to work with new appropriate technologies and link with markets when key project staff withdraw. Make sure that they have all the skills they will need so they can continue without such support.



Help the community prepare. Community members need to prepare for what will happen when the project ends. Make sure they know what to expect so they can plan accordingly.

KEEP HANDOUTS TO A MINIMUM

In reality, many projects still provide goods and services for free. For example:

- When farmers need some assets for the project to have a measurable effect within a short project timeframe.
- When people do not have the initial funds to buy improved technologies and require some financial assistance to get them started.
- When farmers need improved seeds or other inputs to begin improving their productivity, but can continue use the improved seed for many years.
- When communities need to repair irrigation schemes or other vital infrastructure.

In such situations, keep free handouts to a minimum. Here are some ways to **avoid or reduce giving free handouts**:

- Work with the community and make agreements on co-investments for building physical structures. This may include in-kind contributions to the activities, or food or cash for work schemes.
- Survey business services and identify where local services are weak or do not exist (see the module on the *Seven steps of marketing*).
- Plan how to strengthen existing services or encourage them to extend their support to smallholders. Integrate such services into the project’s overall program.
- Rather than giving inputs directly to farmers, provide them with vouchers to buy inputs from local dealers. This helps link farmers to input suppliers and also avoids putting local entrepreneurs out of business!

HOW TO MANAGE SKILLS TRANSFERS AND DIFFERENT TYPES OF ASSETS

We can divide the goods and services provided to rural communities into three types:

- **Skills transfer**, such as a new planting technique.
- **Consumable assets**, such as seeds and fertilizer.
- **Durable assets**, such as buildings and equipment (Table 6).

TABLE 6 SKILLS AND ASSETS OFTEN USED IN MULTIPLE-DISCIPLINARY PROJECTS

SKILLS TRANSFERS	CONSUMABLE ASSETS	DURABLE ASSETS	
Savings group training	Seed	Checkdams, terraces	Drying floors
Production training	Fertilizer	Tools (hoes, plows, machetes)	Mills
Demonstration plots	Agrochemicals	Lockable money boxes	Storage buildings
Farm visits	Safety equipment (masks, etc.)	Mobile phones	Processing equipment
Market studies	Airtime for phones	Draft animals	Road rehabilitation
Business planning	Vouchers for services	Plows	Bridge and culvert construction
Implementation planning	Contracts	Mini-tractors, tractors	Vehicles
Working with microfinance	Financing through banks	Irrigation equipment	
Extension support			
Learning to innovate			
Childcare provision			

SKILLS TRANSFERS

Skills refer to the knowledge, capacities and attitudes required to carry out a particular activity. For instance, in order to plant maize one needs to know about tilling, sowing, spacing, and irrigation. These are skills necessary for farmers. People with skills increase the knowledge and organization of group members and the community as a whole.

Most skills can be transferred relatively easily to other people depending on who is trained and what the local culture is.

Examples:

- A member of a savings group helps set up another savings group in a neighboring village.
- A farmer trains her neighbors on how to grow and manage seeds of a new crop variety.
- A farmer shows his friends the best time to apply fertilizer.

For the support agency, training is usually a significant cost. Be aware that communities are willing to pay for some types of skills training such as setting up savings groups, or scouting for pests.

Many NGOs now charge fees for training, or they train local community-based agents who can continue providing technical services at a fee after the project ends. For many projects it may make sense to offer training through local service providers rather than directly.

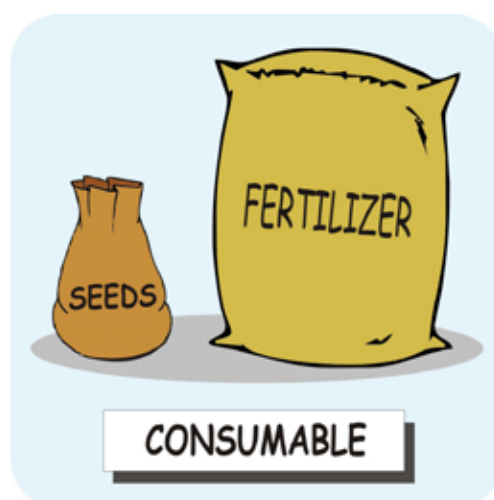
- **Consider charging fees** for certain types of training to cover all or part of the cost.
- **Provide other types of training in skills for free**, but ensure they are spread to the whole community.

CONSUMABLE ASSETS

Consumable assets are things that get **used up**. Examples include fertilizer, seed and medicines for livestock. These assets are typically used within a production season. Where markets are functioning normally, they can be purchased locally from market linkages such as traders, input suppliers, moneylenders, banks, extension services, and so on. If the markets are not working well, try to re-establish such links so farmers can get the goods and services they need.

- **Charge the full cost** if possible. Where possible, use vouchers via local service providers, rather than providing the service yourself.
- **If you provide free consumables**, do so in small test amounts with farmers, under the understanding that this is a temporary demonstration. Whenever possible, shift from free to paid-for.

Important: The principle of “do no harm” is at risk if we simply hand out free goods to poor farmers. We’ll harm the local business that would have otherwise provided those goods. In return, farmers will expect those free goods in the future creating a vicious cycle of dependency.



DURABLE ASSETS

Durable assets are things that **do not get used up** – or they get used up only slowly. Examples include machinery, buildings, land. These durable assets can be purchased or rented from local businesses and other providers. As with consumable assets, the project should try to make sure that groups buy from such businesses.

- **Charge the full cost** if possible. Require the community to **co-invest** – for example by providing materials and labor for construction work, or by loaning repayments for equipment. Provide such assets only on the basis of an agreed **business plan**.
- **Take care in deciding the terms of transfer** for physical assets that go to individuals or groups. Give clear guidance on how to manage and maintain the assets, and make sure they are not “captured” by a small number of individuals or type of individual
- **Insist on a business plan.** Durable assets should be provided only if a clear business plan has been developed to show how the asset will be managed, repaired, and financed over the long term, that is, beyond the life of the project.



MANAGING ASSET TRANSFERS

Here are some ways to manage the transfer of assets in ways that are sensitive to local marketing structures and that support communities to rebuild and improve their market linkages.

Short-term asset delivery linked to a plan. In some cases, farmers need direct support in the form of seeds, fertilizer, and tools so they can start producing. Very poor farmers may also need such support to produce enough food to eat, before they can think about marketing anything. In such cases, make it clear that the support will be short-term, and that it will help them build the assets they need so they can restart their businesses.



Vouchers for consumable assets. Vouchers are a market-based way of providing consumable assets such as fertilizer. The project gives vouchers to the client farmers, who can then use them instead of cash to buy certain types of goods or services from a reliable local service provider, with sufficient stocks. The vouchers can take the form of paper, scratch cards, or mobile phone codes. The service provider then returns the voucher to the project in exchange for cash.

This system lets the farmer choose the type and amount of goods or services that he or she wants. It prevents the farmers from spending the vouchers on unrelated items. It also lets you direct business towards local service providers, rather than having to deliver the goods or services yourself. You can give different numbers or types of vouchers to different clients.

Over time, you should rapidly reduce the value of the vouchers – and make it clear to the farmers that this will happen. For example, perhaps the vouchers will cover 90% of the value of the asset in year 1, 60% in year 2, 30% in year 3, and nothing in year 4.



Cash. To avoid the management cost of using vouchers, NGOs often give farmers cash to buy inputs. This is especially the case when farmers can use mobile money, as this reduces the costs of managing the process. When cash is used, the farmers should be clear about the purpose of the transfer.

Co-investment with durable assets. “Co-investment” means that the community contributes a significant part of the investment. For example, the farmers may be asked to provide free labor and materials such as sand and rocks to build terraces and small dams, while the project provides cement and food for the workers.

A similar approach can be used for equipment such as tillers, mills and drying floors. A local entrepreneur may agree to contribute part of the costs and co-invest with the project to access a mill. A farmers’ group may be able to invest some of its savings. Or a microfinance institution may lease the equipment to the farmers in return for regular repayments.

Co-investment combined with vouchers. For example, a local storekeeper and the project may invest in a flour mill. The storekeeper charges farmers to mill their grain. The project gives vouchers to the poorest people in the community so that they can use the mill to get their grain milled at a subsidized rate. This enables the mill to be operated as a business.

The co-investors should have a say in the type of product they wish to invest in. Projects sometimes tend to buy expensive, imported goods, when cheaper local equipment, or second-hand equipment, is more appropriate. In all cases, there needs to be a plan to maintain the asset and ensure that there are local people who can repair the equipment and spare parts that are available.

Managed assets. One way to administer expensive assets such as a drinking-water system, an irrigation scheme, or a rice or flour mill, is through a management committee. This committee manages the operations as a business, and charges a fee for using the asset. For a rice mill, for example, the fees go to pay the individuals running the mill, to pay for spare parts and repairs, and to invest in a savings fund to buy a new mill when the old one wears out.

A similar system can be used for livestock. The project may help a group of farmers buy some animals. When these breed, a management committee decides who should get the offspring and how the clients should pay for them.

FROM EMERGENCY TO DEVELOPMENT

Emergency projects give people a safety net. They replenish assets and services that people have lost in a disaster. For example, after a flood, donors distribute seeds, tools and assistance to help people start farming again. They may also give people building materials, livestock and other assets so the community can get back to a basic level.



But what happens **after the emergency is over**? The transition to the more modest and longer-term development phase is rarely smooth.

After years of free handouts, communities come to think they are **entitled to free support**. Many development organizations continue to work on handout principles long after the emergency has subsided. Projects may even compete with each other: one organization may want people to co-invest, while another one still gives stuff away for free. If an agency is involved in both emergency and the transition to development, the two teams should work to minimize the “free handout” approach.

SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES

If the project provides goods and services for free, people will not be interested in paying the private sector for the same services. Existing businesses will lose money, and new businesses will not be able to start. The project will “crowd out” the private sector.

Wherever possible, avoid having the project provide services. Instead, **encourage existing businesses** to supply these services, or help local people build businesses that do so. That ensures that once the project ends, the community will still be able to get the services.

Table 7 gives an example of how a project might ensure that farmers can get fruit-tree seedlings.



TABLE 7 EXAMPLE OF PROVIDING FRUIT-TREE SEEDLINGS

	OPTIONS	WHY
DON'T	Provide farmers with free tree seedlings. Set up your own nursery to sell seedlings to farmers.	Existing nurseries will not be able to produce and sell seedlings.
DO	Introduce them to an existing nursery where they can buy seedlings. Persuade existing nurseries to start raising the types of seedlings the farmers need. Help farmers get organized to set up their own nursery.	These approaches all encourage businesses to produce tree seedlings.

CONCLUSION

Plan for the long term. When designing and implementing a project, always think of what will happen after the project ends.

Always have a plan for assets. Do not provide assets to people that they may not need or cannot afford. Be sure that each asset – seed, livestock, irrigation, or a store – comes with a clear business plan. Assets are part of a business strategy. They need to increase profits and/or reduce costs. They must be maintained and financed by the farmers when the project ends.

Require co-investment. Requiring people to co-invest is one way of avoiding them saying “yes” to anything that is offered for free.

Be clear about asset transfers. Never simply give assets to a community without clarity of ownership, a business goal and an operational or maintenance plan. **To do so is irresponsible.**

QUIZ 5

Answers at the end of the guide.

1. The best development projects...

- A. Give the project clients the help and resources they need to improve their livelihoods
- B. Give clients things for free at the beginning, but then gradually switch to charging fees so people become used to paying
- C. Give away no free handouts
- D. Sell things to clients so the project can make a profit

2. Why are free handouts not a good idea?

- A. They encourage dependency
- B. They are costly and cannot be sustained
- C. They destroy local businesses
- D. They attract people who are interested only in the handouts, not in the project goals
- E. All of the above

3. In what situations might it be OK to provide assets for free?

Select all that apply.

- A. As a demonstration to introduce farmers to a new idea
- B. Through a voucher scheme to ensure that farmers purchase certain goods and services from a local dealer, and to link the farmers to the dealer
- C. In an emergency, for example for refugees or people who have had their homes and farms flooded
- D. If the project budget can cover the cost

4. Match the type of assets and the correct definition and the examples.

TYPE OF ASSET	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Skills	A What people know and do	1 Rice seed
Consumable assets	B Things that do not get used up	2 A rice-planting method
Durable assets	C Things that get used up	3 A rice thresher

5. You are working with a group of maize farmers who need a machine to thresh their crop. Which of these options are acceptable solutions?

Select all that apply.

- A. The project buys the thresher and gives it to the farmers
- B. The project buys a thresher and leases it to the farmers. They pay a fee for every sack of maize they thresh to cover the purchase and running costs
- C. The project helps the farmers negotiate a deal with a local entrepreneur who owns a thresher
- D. The project does nothing. It is up to the farmers to solve the problem themselves

6. You are helping a group of fisherfolk get organized. They say their biggest problem is getting their boat engines repaired. Which of these options should you choose?

Select the best option.

- A. Say you can't help them: unfortunately it is not part of your project's responsibilities
- B. Set up an engine-repair workshop and train the staff
- C. Find a local entrepreneur and arrange for training in engine repair
- D. Get the field staff to take the engines to a workshop in the nearby city

LESSON 6. BUILDING A TRAINING PLAN

IN THIS LESSON

After this lesson you will be able to:

- Describe how to design a training plan
- Create a training calendar
- Describe how to monitor training activities
- List some exit strategies for the project.

PLANNING TRAINING

Using the methods in Lesson 4, you now know the community and the partners you will be working with. You also have helped the farmers form groups that have a clear understanding about the project.

It's now time to build a training plan for the farmers' groups. This lesson gives you some ideas on how to go about this.

You are probably working with several communities at the same time. This lesson also describes how to provide training for them all in an efficient way.



STEPS IN PLANNING TRAINING

Before you begin to build your training program, gather and review information about your project. Key activities to prepare include the following:

- Review the project design
- Check the project timeframe
- Assess the farmers' training needs and decide which skill to start with
- Determine the training targets and sequence of skills training to be given
- Map the training locations
- Update the project organogram
- Review the time required for each course
- Work out how many field agents are needed
- Build a monthly training schedule
- Build an annual training timetable.

REVIEW THE PROJECT DESIGN

Work with the partners to review the project documents, checking especially the targets: the services to be delivered, locations, staff roles and responsibilities, the order of training the skills, and training schedules.

Training is one of the most expensive investments, so it is important to have clear tasks and targets in designing the training process. These targets must be realistic, and the field agents and their supervisors must have a clear understanding of the expected outcomes. The proposal should provide the general targets: the types and numbers of client to be trained, the locations for the training, and the partners that operate in specific areas.

CHECK THE PROJECT TIMEFRAME

Set up a project calendar in a spreadsheet program, making sure that the dates take the farming seasons into account. Have one row in your spreadsheet to show the rainfall: blue for the rainy season, with darker blue for the period of most rain. Have another row for the main crops: green for when the crops are in the field; yellow for harvest time.

You can use the start date and seasonal production times to identify when to program specific types of training. The wet season may be a good time to do training on crop production: you can time activities to fit into when the crops are at a particular stage in the field. The dry season, when there are no crops to tend, may be a good time to do training that is not tied to the time of year – such as on savings and credit.



Put the major project milestones on the calendar: the starting date, end-date and the most important deadlines (Table 8).

TABLE 8 CALENDAR SHOWING KEY PROJECT DATES AND SEASONS

Year 1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Design										Start	Planning	
Rain							Main rains					
Crops							Planting	Growing		Harvest		

ASSESS THE FARMERS' TRAINING NEEDS AND DECIDE WHICH SKILL TO START WITH

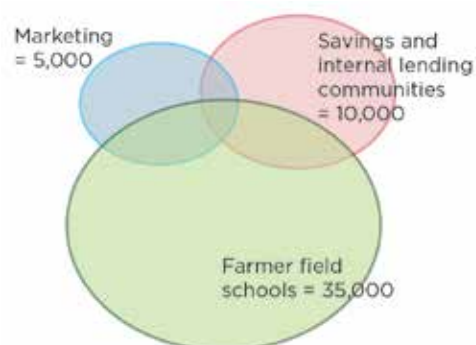
Farmers in different areas have different needs. Depending on location and season, some will need support on production, while others need help with marketing. If the farmers are not yet organized into groups, or if the groups are weak, it is advisable to start the training program with savings and loans. People in many communities will already have received some sort of training. Perhaps they do not need training on certain topics, or a short refresher course is all that is needed.

You can find out what types of training to offer by doing a needs-assessment survey. See Lesson 4 and the manual on *Organizing and managing farmers' groups* for more on choosing entry points.

DETERMINE THE TRAINING TARGETS AND SEQUENCE OF SKILLS TRAINING TO BE GIVEN

Work out the number and types of client groups and the types of training they should receive. Depending on the project design and farmers' training needs, you might decide to train all the clients in all the skills. Or you might decide to offer certain skills to different sub-sets of clients.

At this stage, keep the information general. The diagram to the right gives an example: this community received three types of training: savings and internal loans communities, farmer field schools, and marketing.



The majority of clients, 35,000 people, learned about production-based natural resource management through farmer field schools. The project also trained 10,000 clients on savings and loans, and another 5,000 on marketing. There was some overlap in the skills training, but only a few clients received training in all the skills.

You might decide to support different levels of skills training for various reasons: the resources and time available, and the clients' needs. In the diagram above, the majority of farmers were food-insecure and rarely had surplus grain to sell. The project therefore focused on upgrading their productivity before training them in marketing. For those farmers who already had the assets and organization to produce regular surpluses for sale, the project trained them on marketing straight away.

REGISTERING CLIENTS TO KEEP TRACK OF TRAINING

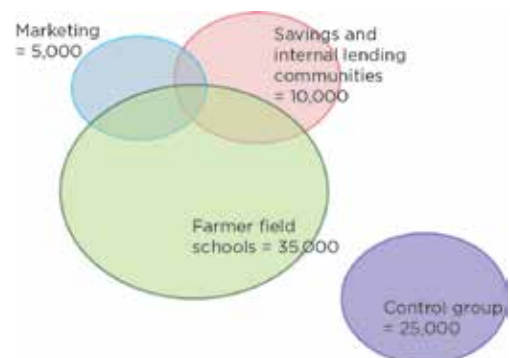
The diagram above does not show how many farmers were trained in more than one skill. This was because the project did not register individuals with unique identification numbers that could be used to check across the courses. This was a mistake. When you plan for multi-skills training, make sure you assign identity numbers to members and groups so that you can analyze the effects of multi-skills training.

Make sure that the project has systems to identify and track individual clients or groups from the start. The field agents need to give each client a unique identification number. They can use this information to plan and monitor who in a household receives what type of training. That avoids duplication and ensures that the right people get the right sort of multi-skill training.

It is possible to set up a registration and tracking system using paper forms. But such systems become difficult to administer for a large number of clients. Instead, it is better to create digital records that the field agents can update using a mobile devices such as a mobile phone, tablet or computer. Having the information in digital form makes it easy to locate the groups on a map or monitor them over time. It allows you to assess the effectiveness of different combinations of training events on outcomes such as food security, income and profit.

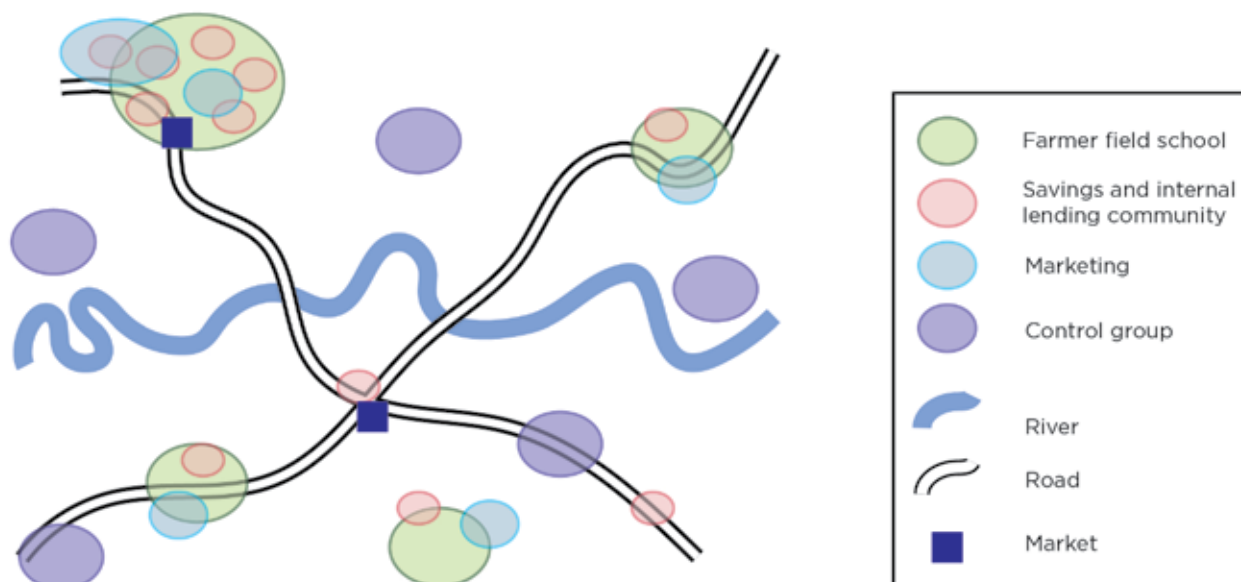
CONTROL GROUPS

One way of evaluating the effectiveness of a specific intervention is to use a **control group**. This is a group of people who do not receive any interventions from the project. If the project aims to use control groups, consult with a statistician first to make sure that there are enough control groups and **treatment groups** (the clients who do receive interventions) to show a statistically significant difference when the data are analyzed. Typically, there should be as many people in the control groups as in the treatment groups.



MAP THE TRAINING LOCATIONS

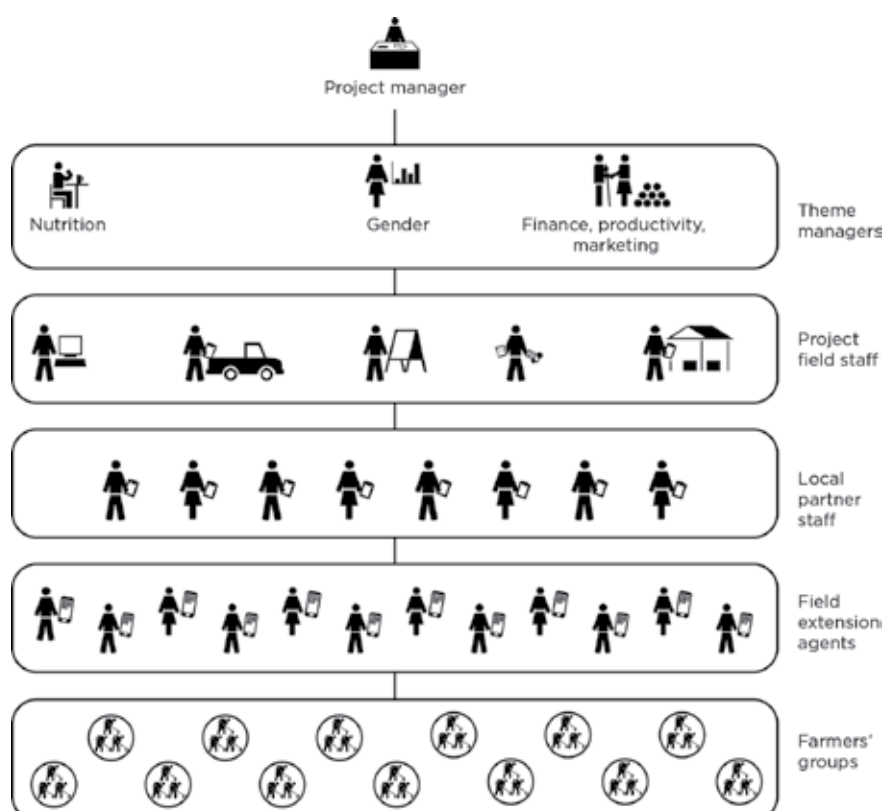
You will also need to identify the locations of your clients and group to indicate where the trainings will take place. Putting these on a map will help you to co-ordinate the training efforts, plan the budgets and manage monitoring activities. This map will become an important management tool: it can show the partners' areas of responsibility, the locations of farmers' groups and or training events, and the sites of markets, infrastructure and project activities. It will let you work out logistics, see how long it takes to get from one place to another, and monitor the distances and costs of delivering services. You can include numerical information on the map to give you an overview of the project.



Previously, projects used paper maps to show this information. Now they can use digital mapping or GIS (geographic information system) methods. Standard GIS tools such as Google Earth and ESRI's ArcView can be used to plot, analyze and share spatial information.

UPDATE THE PROJECT ORGANOGRAM

Review the staffing chart or organogram and decide who will be responsible for each type of activity, and where they will be located. This is also a chance to review the staff members' tasks and responsibilities. Evaluate the capacity of staff members so you can plan any extra training they may need or hire extra staff.



Make sure you have the right balance between male and female supervisors and field staff. It may be important to have female field staff to work with women in the community.

BUILD A MONTHLY TRAINING SCHEDULE

A field agent should be able to deliver two or three sessions to a group each month, depending on the travel time between the locations of the groups. Draw up a plan like that shown in Table 9 for a field agent. In this example, the agent visits two groups a day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. He or she can train 10 groups in all, for 9 hours per month each. In this example, in the fourth week, the field agent comes back to the office for debriefing, reporting and refresher training.

TABLE 9 MONTHLY SCHEDULE FOR TRAINING BY A FIELD AGENT

	WEEK 1					WEEK 2					WEEK 3					WEEK 4						
	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F		
Group 1	3					3					3					Office debrief, reporting and training						
Group 2	3					3					3											
Group 3		3					3					3										
Group 4		3					3					3										
Group 5			3					3					3									
Group 6			3					3					3									
Group 7				3					3						3							
Group 8				3					3						3							
Group 9					3					3							3					
Group 10					3					3							3					

3 Number of hours taught

REVIEW THE TIME REQUIRED FOR EACH COURSE

Get the team of managers and field agents to familiarize themselves with the training manuals in this series. They will need both to know the contents of the lessons, and to be able to run the exercises in each course. Consider giving them training in-house before they start working with farmers (see Lesson 3 for how to assess their skills).

The exercises in the SMART Skills courses typically last from 1 to 3 hours. These are estimated times; the actual times will vary, depending on the situation, the capacity of the field agent and the nature of the groups.

It may be possible for a field agent to do more than one exercise in a single visit to a group. For some exercises (for example, those involving participatory appraisals), more time and several field staff may be needed.

Add up the time needed to deliver each course. This will enable you to plan your timetable.

Training a group in a single set of skills may take between 3 and 15 months. For example, the savings and loans training is expected to take 12 months in all if the groups meet once a week:

- A **preparatory period** of 1-3 weeks
- A **training period** of 2 weeks to 2 months
- A **monitoring phase** of up to 11 months.

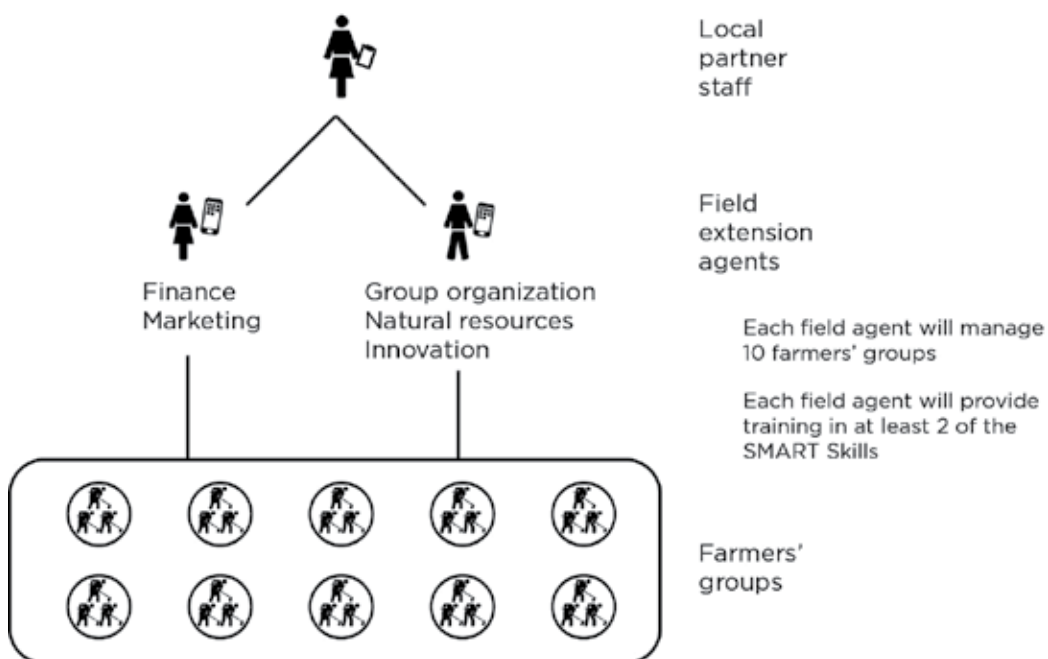
The lengths of training required for the other skills depend on the needs and abilities of the groups. It may be possible to skip certain lessons, or it may be advisable to spend more time on specific subjects where the group has special interest or needs more guidance. Refer to the manuals on each set of skills for details.

WORK OUT HOW MANY FIELD AGENTS ARE NEEDED

You know how many farmer groups you have to reach. You know what types of training you and your colleagues will need to provide. How many field agents will be needed to deliver the training?

Write a clear **scope of work** for the field agents showing details of their training tasks and the target numbers of farmers over the life of the project. Indicate whether one agent will train clients in all skills, or whether certain agents will specialize in training on specific subjects (such as finance or marketing).

You can start by working out the training capacity for one field agent, and then multiply this basic unit to reach the required project targets. On your organogram, show the number of field agents and the types of training that each field agent will deliver.



If they specialize, they will have to cover more farmer groups. If local volunteers will be part of the training team, show this in the organogram too.

Create a table showing the numbers of clients or farmer groups that each field agent is responsible for training over the course of the project (Table 10). This table shows that over the 3-year project, each partner is responsible for five field agents within a specified district.

- In **year 1**, each field agent will start with an intensive training of five groups of approximately 25 farmers each.
- In **year 2**, each field agent will work with five additional groups.
- In **year 3**, the field agent will provide only maintenance support to the first-year groups, which will free up sufficient time to support five new groups.

TABLE 10 SPREADSHEET SHOWING NUMBERS OF FIELD AGENTS AND FARMERS TO BE TRAINED

	Districts	Field agents	New farmer groups/agent	New farmer groups/year	Farmer groups/agent/year	Cumulative # of groups	New farmers	Cumulative # of farmers
Year 1	District 1	5	5	25	5	25	625	625
	District 2	5	5	25	5	25	625	625
	District 3	5	5	25	5	25	625	625
	District 4	5	5	25	5	25	625	625
Total				100		100	2500	2500
Year 2	District 1	5	5	25	10	50	625	1250
	District 2	5	5	25	10	50	625	1250
	District 3	5	5	25	10	50	625	1250
	District 4	5	5	25	10	50	625	1250
Total				100			2500	5000
Year 3	District 1	5	5	25	15	75	625	1875
	District 2	5	5	25	15	75	625	1875
	District 3	5	5	25	15	75	625	1875
	District 4	5	5	25	15	75	625	1875
Total				100			2500	7500

This means that at the end of the three years, each agent will have provided training support to 375 farmers; the five agents in each district will have supported 1,875 farmers. Over all four districts, that means training 7,500 farmers.

As the project progresses, you may have to adjust the numbers of the groups each field agent serves, for example if the distances are too great or if the farmers need more support. Update the tables to show these changes.

THE SEMESTER SYSTEM

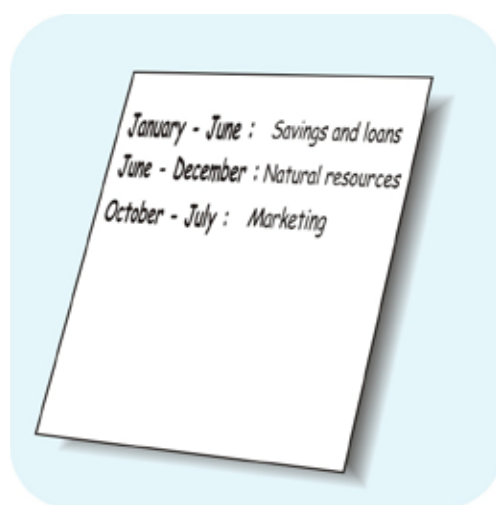
If the field agents are very experienced, they may be able to offer different types of skills training to each of the groups. But in practice this may not be possible. They may not have the right skills and experience, and for logistical reasons it may not be practical to offer each group a different type of training.

It may be more practical to offer all groups the same type of training at the same time. In some cases different types of training can overlap. For example:

- **Months 1-6 intensive:** All groups have 2-3 hour training sessions per week in savings and loans.
- **Months 6-12 monitoring:** All groups receive 30-minute sessions per week as follow up meetings on savings and loans.
- **Months 6-12:** All groups have 1- to 2-hour training sessions in natural resource management. (Time this training to match with seasonal production.)
- **Months 10-24:** All groups are trained in intensive 3-hour sessions on marketing.

This “semester” system means that the field agents offer one (or maybe two) courses at a time, and these are the only courses offered during this period. There are several benefits in this approach:

- **One thing at a time.** Field agents can focus on one skill, and they can learn the next skill before they have to train farmers.



- **Streamlined management and feedback.** Managers have to monitor only one or two courses at once. They can follow field agents more closely and provide more meaningful feedback.
- **Comparing progress.** Field agents can compare results across an entire project for a particular subject, and get better support from each other and from their supervisors on a particular subject.
- **Monitoring results.** It is easier to monitor the progress being made in a single skill. The project can measure knowledge uptake across the entire project or area, rather than group by group.

DECISIONS ON SPECIALIZATION OF FIELD AGENTS

Who does what? It is unlikely that one field agent will provide training in all the skills. You will need to decide which field agents will train specific types of skills.

For example, the project team may decide that one group of field agents only focus on financial skills. In this case, the financial field agents will train client groups in:

- Savings and loans, followed by
- Financial education linkage to formal financial institutions
- Business management.

To complement the financial field agents, another group of field agents will focus on:

- Group management
- Natural resource management and production
- Innovation.

Yet another group of more specialized set of field agents will focus on:

- Marketing basics
- Market engagement with the “seven steps of marketing.”

This specialization may also focus on other areas, such as livestock, irrigation, input supply linkages, etc.

Certain types of field agent may be fee-based while others provide services for free. When a project works alongside government research and extension agents, these services are generally provided free to farmers. However, most financial services are now provided on a fee basis. It is most likely that services in marketing and veterinary services will also be given on a fee-based approach.

The sequencing of skills training, the type of field agent and the means and cost of delivery of a training program should all be carefully planned at the start of the project with the project team.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The decision on which courses to offer also depends on the local situation and the season.

- **Natural resources first.** The land may be so degraded that farmers have to solve natural-resource problems before they can start work on production and marketing. For example if the irrigation system no longer works, the farmers need to fix it before they can grow crops effectively. If so, the training should focus on rehabilitating farm land. Once this is done, the farmers might organize into groups to focus on three key issues: savings and



loans, productivity enhancement and marketing.

- **Seasonal issues.** Farming usually depends on the rain. Crop planting, management and harvesting happen only at certain times of the year. Livestock production is also seasonal. Plan your training on natural resources management and marketing around this calendar, choosing the times of the year when farmers have less work.

BUILD AN ANNUAL TRAINING TIMETABLE

Once you have worked this out, you can slot the training activities into your annual calendar (Table 11).

If the project begins with training on savings and loans, develop a timetable for these lessons first. After (say) three months of intensive training on savings and loans, you can begin to work on the next set of skills. For subjects that have to be covered in certain seasons (such as natural resource management), make sure you cover them at the right time. For example, you should discuss how to control erosion during the dry season, when it is possible to build dams and dig trenches - not during the rainy season when the gullies are full of water, the fields are full of crops, and farmers are too busy to do any soil-conservation work.

DEVELOP THE DETAILED TRAINING CALENDAR FOR EACH FARMERS' GROUP

You can now start planning the training timetable for each farmers' group (Table 12). This shows the courses and the number of hours the agent will cover each week with that group.

You can use a spreadsheet program like Microsoft Excel to build the timetable. Make 52 narrow columns, one for each week of the year. Label them with the names of the months. In one row, color in the cells that correspond to the **rainy season**. Use a dark **blue** for when most rain falls, and a light color for when there is less rain.

Then do the same for the **cropping season**. Use a dark color to show when people are busiest with plowing and planting. Use a light **green** to show when the crops are growing, and there is less intensive work to do in the fields, such as weeding and applying fertilizer. Use another color to show the harvest time.

TABLE 11 OUTLINE ANNUAL TRAINING TIMETABLE

Year 1	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Design										Start	Planning	
Rain								Main rains				
Crops							Planting			Harvest		
Finance	Savings and loans intensive training				Less intensive			Monitoring				
Agro-enterprise					Intensive		Less intensive					
Natural resources							Less intensive		Intensive			
Innovation	Less intensive											

Decide when to have the regular meetings with field staff in the **office** – perhaps every 4 weeks. Mark this in **gray**.

For the first of the skill sets you plan to cover, type in the number of hours the field agent needs to spend each week with one group. For intensive training, this will be 3 hours a week, for less intensive training, allow 1 or 2 hours. Color the cells accordingly: dark for 3 hours, medium shade for 2, and light color for 1 hour.

In Table 12, the first skill set is **finance**, shown in **pink**. This starts off with 3 hours of training once a month, then becomes more intensive in March and April as the field agents visit the farmers' group every week. Later on, in May to November, the finance training is less intensive as the visits focus on monitoring.

You can then add another row to plan the second set of skills (**agro-enterprise, purple**). This begins in May with intensive training, then becomes less intensive during the cropping season when farmers are busy, and gets more intensive in October and November when they are ready to sell their produce.

The third set of skills is **natural resources (green)**. This training is most intensive during the cropping season because that is when it is possible to see what is happening in the field with growing crops.

The two columns on right side of Table 12 show the number of hours of training on each topic, and the number of visits needed.

The bottom two rows in Table 12 show the **number of hours** the field agent spends with each group, and the total number of hours the field agent spends (= the number of hours with each group multiplied by 10, since each field agent serves 10 groups in a week). These two rows show you when the field agents are likely to be busiest, and when they may have free time that they can use to catch up with activities that they have had to skip.

Make sure there is enough time to do all the training. Leave enough gaps to allow for holidays and unexpected problems such as impassable roads and vehicle breakdowns.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Many projects conduct detailed household surveys to monitor their progress and evaluate their results. The evaluation surveys are typically done at two or three times during the project life, at the beginning, mid-term and at the end of the project. The survey at the beginning of the project is generally called a **baseline**. Many projects have a **midline survey** and a final, **endline** or end-of-project survey.

Sentinel surveys focus on the changes of a selected number of households and groups. They allow the field agents to monitor progress of these groups every year.

The evaluation surveys are often complex. Collecting and analyzing data from many households takes a lot of time.

EXPERT TIPS

Use Excel's **conditional formatting** function to change the shading of a cell automatically when you type a value in.

Use Excel's **SUM** function to calculate the total **number of hours of training** for each row.

Example: The formula =SUM(B8:BA8) adds up all the numbers in the cells B8 to BA8.

Use the **COUNTIF** function to calculate the number of **individual training visits** for each group.

Example: The formula =COUNTIF(B8:BA8,">0") counts the number of individual visits in the cells B8 to BA8.



TABLE 13 FORM FOR EVALUATING THE SKILLS OF FARMERS' GROUPS

GROUP ORGANIZATION		SAVINGS AND LOANS		NATURAL RE-SOURCE MGMT		MARKETING		INNOVATION	
0	Group not formed	0	Group has no savings scheme	0	Group has no natural resources plan in place	0	Group has no specific marketing skills	0	Group is not testing new technologies
1	Group members receive training in group formation	1	Group receives training in savings and loans	1	Group receives training in improved natural resources	1	Group receives market training	1	Group receives training in innovation
2	Group of 15-30 members registers with support agency or other body	2	Group establishes rules of the savings and loans	2	Group reviews critical natural resource issues for production	2	Group elects a marketing agent	2	Group identifies a problem to resolve through experimentation
3	Group defines clear purpose or vision	3	Group begins to save on a regular basis	3	Group has plan for upgrading productivity and sustainability	3	Group conducts market visits / study	3	Group agree on type of technology for testing
4	Members have a written constitution or "set of rules"	4	Group maintains records and completes training	4	Group implements plan to upgrade natural resources on pilot basis	4	Group agree on selected product(s) for marketing	4	Group has established trial with treatments and control
5	Members elects committee posts, chair, secretary, treasurer	5	Group agrees on interest rate for loans and loan rules	5	Group reviews progress of natural resources pilot	5	Biz plan and implementation plan written	5	Final result of innovation trial shared with group members
6	Group meets on a regular basis	6	Group initiates internal loans and maintains records	6	Group develops plan to adopt natural resources system	6	Profit and volume of sales recorded for selected product	6	Plan for sharing technology agreed
7	Group keeps records of meetings	7	Group shares out savings	7	Group members invest in new natural resources technology	7	Farmers have good links with a buyer; collective marketing recorded	7	Adoption of new technology by >50% of members in their fields
8	Group's formation skill audit approved by field agent	8	Group's savings skill audit approved by field agent	8	Group's natural resource skills audit approved by field agent	8	Group's marketing skill audit approved by field agent	8	Group's innovation skill audit approved by field agent
9	Elected members are performing tasks well	9	Group savings increase on an annual basis	9	Natural resources technology is linked to technology / input supplier	9	Group scale marketing activities in same product	9	Innovation group links farmers to business services supplier of new technologies
10	Group is stable for more than 2 years	10	Savings and loans used for re-investment in agro-enterprise	10	Group scales natural resources upgrading across group member farms	10	Group use marketing skills in second product	10	Technology scaled to at least 80% of group members

These surveys are done by a specialist monitoring team and regular staff are often not involved.

It is better to look at new ways of collecting less detail but to do monitoring more frequently, and to get the **field staff and community** involved. That way they can learn from the process and improve what they do. Farmers can also give feedback on what they like and what is not working.

USING COMPUTERS TO GATHER DATA

The project will need simple forms that the field agents can use to collect data as a part of their regular work. These forms can be on paper – or better, the field agent can type them into a computer or tablet in the field.

Using a computer has several advantages:

- The data can be entered in the field and do not have to be **retyped**, so avoiding mistakes.
- The data can be used to calculate **benchmark information** for farmers, such as production levels, skills levels, amounts of savings and loan levels, and profitability.
- This information can be **shared** with the farmers easily.
- The data can be **uploaded** automatically, avoiding the need for messy and time-consuming reporting procedures.
- The data can be **backed up** automatically, avoiding the risk of losing valuable information.
- Staff and managers can instantly see how the project is **progressing**. That makes it easier to detect and solve problems before they become too serious.



MONITORING CHANGES IN SKILLS

It is important to keep monitoring simple and easy. You can use Table 13 to check on a group’s progress regularly – say, every 6 months. Just circle (or click on) the most appropriate number in each column. Easy, simple, and quick!

COLLATING DATA

Using a computer makes it easy to collect and analyze data over time, and from different field agents. Table 14 shows the scores in a 0-to-10 point rating scale for one farmer group over five years of a project’s life.

Be sure to set up data collection systems so that you can also analyze and present this type of data by gender, age group, and wealth rank.

TABLE 14 EXAMPLE OF SCORES FOR A FARMER GROUP’S SKILLS OVER 5 YEARS

	GROUP ORGANIZATION	SAVINGS AND LOANS	NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT	MARKETING	INNOVATION
Year 1	1	1	0	0	0
Year 2	1	3	3	4	2
Year 3	3	4	5	5	2
Year 4	5	7	5	7	3
Year 5	6	8	8	9	3

**WEB DIAGRAM
SHOWING
CHANGES IN A
FARMER'S GROUP
SKILLS OVER TIME**



PRESENTING DATA

Presenting information in an easy-to-understand form is almost as important as collecting data. A web diagram is one way of presenting the data in Table 14. It shows immediately that:

- The group has made good progress over time from a very humble beginning. It is strong in marketing, natural resource management, and savings and loans.
- A weak point is in innovation. The group has made little progress in this since the second year.
- Group organization is also relatively weak.

This type of presentation makes it easy to check progress and detect problems. Here, the manager, field agent and the farmer group should check why there has been little progress in innovation. Perhaps it is not necessary? Or perhaps there is a problem with the leadership of the group's innovation committee?

MONITORING ENTERPRISES USING FARMBOOK

CRS's **Farmbook** software makes it easy to monitor group enterprises. The field agent enters data into a computer. The data are then uploaded to a central database on the internet, where field staff and managers can check it and analyze it.

Farmbook covers a range of topics:

- Registering individuals and groups
- Preparing a business plan
- Calculating the profitability of an enterprise
- Keeping track of training and the transfer of assets
- Scheduling production.



Once the information is entered into Farmbook it can be processed and shared with a number of people associated with the project. The information can be used immediately by community members and farmers. The software lets field agents and farmers assess progress by checking figures against a benchmark and compare farmer groups with each other and across gender. They can use the information to see how to manage their business more effectively, and to help them make more informed decisions.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE PROJECT?

You need to think what will happen to the groups and their agro-enterprises when the project ends. Will local people have learned the key skills they need to manage a robust group?

- Have they learned the skills to plan and manage a profitable agro-enterprise?
- Will they have access to sufficient financial resources to invest in the activities?
- Do they know how to save to support their agro-enterprise?
- Will there be local services and service providers to supply essential services?

EXIT STRATEGIES

Development projects are full of risks and uncertainties. So it is difficult to predict what will happen over a period of several years. Despite this, it is important to plan right from the beginning what will happen when the project ends. How long is the project expected to last? What will happen to the groups that the project has established and trained?

Planning early on will help make sure that the groups will have the skills and capacity to continue without further support from the project.

EXAMPLES OF EXIT STRATEGIES

Here are some examples of some exit strategies.

Support by existing service providers. During the project lifetime, farmers' groups build up agro-enterprises. You link them to private-sector service providers such as input suppliers, traders, mobile banks, microfinance institutions and research agencies. The groups pay for the inputs and services that these provide. At the end of the project, the groups have firm ties with the service providers, and no longer need your help.

Helping community mobilizers set up services. The project starts by training gender-appropriate community mobilizers to provide services to farmers. At first, the project subsidizes part of their costs, but gradually the subsidy is reduced, and the mobilizers start charging larger fees. By the end of the project, the farmers are paying the full cost, and the mobilizers have established viable businesses to provide such services.



START YOUR PROJECT WITH THIS THOUGHT... WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PROJECT ENDS?

Activities	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Start of project	█				
Activity 1		█			
Activity 2			█		
Activity 3				█	
Activity 4					█
Activity 5					█
End of project					█



Continued support to service providers. The project stops providing support directly to farmers' groups, but continues to work with and support private-sector service providers. It supplies subsidized inputs via these providers for a designated period. The subsidy is reduced over time as the farmers learn to reinvest their profits in their enterprises.



Use of mobile money. Mobile phones and mobile services are spreading rapidly. In many countries, farmers use their phones to transfer cash, and can get new financial services such as micro-insurance and life insurance. Development organizations may consider using mobile phones to support credit and extension services. However, it's important to understand who has access to mobile money and how this will affect different target groups.

Note that all these exit strategies depend on careful planning beforehand. Do not start thinking about the exit strategy when it is too late!



CONCLUSION

You need to **plan training** carefully. You need to consider:

- The **aim of the project**: What has the project signed up to provide, do you have the skills and funds to do this at the target levels?
- The **needs of community group**: what types of training do the various target audiences (men, women, mothers, elderly, OVC, etc) want and need?
- The **right set of field agents**. Do you have the right types of field agents to deliver the skills, and do you have the right number of agents to reach the target number of clients?
- The **practical considerations** of delivering training to several groups: what is practical from the project's point of view?
- What types of training have to be offered at **certain times of year** – for example, during the dry season when farmers can work on soil-conservation measures?

It may be necessary to compromise by offering certain types of training to several groups at the same time.

You should develop a **calendar** to guide the training activities. This calendar may cover the training to be delivered over the next two years.

A good **monitoring system** is easy and quick to use. It provides the field staff, project managers and community members with the information they need to monitor project performance. It enables them to detect problems early and make any changes necessary.

Baseline surveys should be done at the start of the project before any work has been implemented. The baseline survey should collect key information that will be used

as a benchmark to measure change over the project period and in some cases many years after the project has ended.

Mid- and endline surveys are a repeat of the baseline survey. These surveys are done to find out if the project work led to any measurable behavioral changes in the target communities after the project has closed.

Sentinel surveys follow a selected number of households and groups over the project life, allowing you to monitor progress over time.

Large surveys can be complicated to administer, analyze and interpret and writing impact reports often requires specialized staff.

You must have a clear idea of the **exit strategies** right from the beginning.

QUIZ 6

Answers at the end of the guide.

1. It is best to train groups...

- A. On one subject at a time, to make it easy for the groups to absorb and apply their new knowledge.
- B. On several subjects at a time, because they will need several types of skills to solve problems.

2. When is it best to train farmers on natural resource management?

- A. During the dry season, when the farmers have more time
- B. During the rainy season, when the farmers are dealing with the problems you are covering in the course
- C. During harvest time, when farmers are thinking about selling their crop
- D. At weekends, when they are not at work in the fields

3. What are some of the advantages of using a computer for monitoring progress?

Select all that apply.

- A. It is not necessary to retype information
- B. Computers can be used for playing games and keeping in touch with your friends
- C. The information can be shared with farmers and with headquarters easily
- D. It is easy to detect and solve problems

4. Farmbook is a computer program that...

- A. Enables farmers to keep records about their own farm
- B. Enables you to calculate the profitability of an enterprise
- C. Helps farmers decide where to build irrigation facilities
- D. Provides information about markets and prices

5. When should you start thinking about what happens at the end of a project?

- A. Before the beginning of the project, during the design stage
- B. At the beginning of the project, when the first activities are being implemented
- C. About halfway through, when it is clear how effective the project will be
- D. Towards the end, when phaseout is about to start
- E. It is not necessary for field agents to think about such things: the project designers will have specified this in the project design, and it cannot be changed anyway

6. You are planning a training calendar. A field agent can visit each farmers' group once a week. How many times can she visit each group in one month?

- A. Three
- B. Four
- C. Five
- D. Ten

Answers to quizzes

Lesson 1

1. Which are the SMART Skills areas that small-scale farmers need to improve their livelihoods?

Correct answers: C (finance), E (group organization), H (innovation), I (marketing), J (natural resources). The other areas may also be important, especially in particular situations. But these five are those that research has found to be most important worldwide.

2. Farmers usually need only one of the SMART Skills in order to succeed. So development agents must identify which skill they need and help the farmers learn it.

Correct answer: B. Most smallholders face several problems at the same time. They need to use several types of skills if they are to improve their lives.

3. Which of these are drivers of change?

Correct answers: B (demographics) and C (infrastructure). Both these are large-scale changes that set the framework conditions for a development project.

4. Match the aspect of the model of change with the correct definition.

Correct answer: A3, B5, C1, D6, E2, F4

5. In which part of the change model does the SMART Skills approach to training best fit?

Correct answer: C. The SMART Skills approach is part of an intervention service. It also influences several of the other aspects of the model.

6. Who benefits from the SMART Skills approach?

Correct answers: A2, B1, C3, D2

Lesson 2

1. Match the individual skill with the skill set it best represents.

Correct answer: A3, B4, C2, D5, E1

2. Which are the three central skills?

Correct answer: B (finance), C (marketing and agro-enterprises, D (natural resources management).

3. The men in the village are interested in the project, but the women are not. What should you do?

Correct answer: C. It is best to find out what the women are not interested, then adjust the project accordingly.

4. Which of the following statements is correct?

Correct answer: B. Many groups and individuals successfully produce and sell goods without all the skills. But the group is more likely to be successful if it has all of them.

5. People must learn all the skills and find out how to pay for additional skills. "Everyone in the project team needs to become an expert in all the SMART Skills," says the project manager.

Correct answer: B. It is unrealistic to expect all the team members to become experts. But they do need to have a good understanding of the multiple skills approach so they can design and implement agro-enterprise projects.

6. A group of farmers in Malawi raises chickens to sell. They know how to keep chickens, but they cannot get a good price. As a result, many farmers are considering switching to another type of enterprise. What type of training will you recommend for them?

Correct answer: B. For this group, marketing seems to be the most appropriate skill.

Lesson 3

1. Which of these is NOT a participatory training technique?

Correct answer: B. Lectures are not a participatory technique. If you do invite a visiting expert to speak, brief him or her carefully so they are familiar with the group and its needs. Leave plenty of time for questions and discussion.

2. Which of the following are characteristics of participatory training?
Correct answer: A2, B1, C1, D2, E1
3. Three of these statements are by an experienced facilitator who works successfully with villagers.
Correct answers: B, D, E.
4. It is best to hold training sessions...
Correct answer: A1, B2, C2, D2
5. Women in your villages find it hard to take part in training. How do you respond?
Correct answers: B, C, D.
6. What is the best way to teach one of the exercises in this manual?
Correct answer: B. Feel free to adapt the exercises to suit the local situations.

Lesson 4

1. "You should always go into a community with a ready-made plan for what you want to do," said Professor Shaun. Do you agree?
Correct answer: B. It is a good idea to have some options in mind, but you should not plan everything before you start.
2. "A development project does not necessarily have to target the neediest people," Professor Shaun continues. Do you agree?
Correct answer: A. While many projects target the poorest people in a community, this is not the only way to support development. It may be more effective to help slightly better-off people to improve their lives. That will help other, poorer, people in the community too."
3. "We can divide a community into four groups according to their wealth," says the professor, writing the categories on the board. Help him put them in the right order.
Correct answer: (poorest) A3, B1, C2, D4 (better off)
4. "If a farmer has more than 2 hectares of land, we can put him or her in the 'market-ready' category," says Professor Shaun. Is he right?
Correct answer: B. In one country (or in areas with poor soils), someone with 2 hectares of land may be very poor; in another country (or where the soil is more fertile), it is quite a lot of land.
5. "Three good ways to quickly identify the poorest people in a community are wealth ranking, card sorting, and, er,..."
Correct answer: B. The authorities (such as the local government or village elders) often have a list of particularly needy people in the community.

6. "Here are some approaches to help farmers with marketing," says the professor, dropping his notes. Help him put them back in the right order.
Correct answer: (poorest) A4, B2, C1, D3 (better off)

Lesson 5

1. The best development projects...
Correct answer: C. Everyone loves free handouts, but giving away things for free does not encourage sustainability.
2. Why are free handouts not a good idea?
Correct answer: D. Free handouts are not a good idea for all these reasons.
3. In what situations might it be OK to provide assets for free?
Correct answers: A, B, C. In some circumstances, free handouts can be used. But they should be limited, and phased out quickly.
4. Match the type of assets and the correct definition and the examples.
Correct answer: Skills: A2; Consumable asset: C1; Durable asset: B3
5. You are working with a group of maize farmers who need a machine to thresh their crop. Which of these options are acceptable solutions?
Correct answers: B, C. Both of these options solve the problem in a sustainable way
6. You are helping a group of fisherfolk get organized. They say their biggest problem is getting their boat engines repaired. Which of these options should you choose?
Correct answer: C. This is the most sustainable option

LESSON 6

1. It is best to train groups...
Correct answer: A. It is also easier logistically to train people on one subject at a time.
2. When is it best to train farmers on natural resource management?
Correct answer: B. It is probably best to teach things close to the time when people will use the skills.
3. What are some of the advantages of using a computer for monitoring progress?
Correct answer: A, B, D. It is true that computers are very versatile (and can be fun to use), but do not waste your time playing games on them!

4. Farmbook is a computer program that...

Correct answer: B. Farmbook is a program used by CRS to enable project managers and field agents to monitor group enterprises.

5. When should you start thinking about what happens at the end of a project?

Correct answer: A. Both project managers and field agents should think about such issues during the project planning stage, and should design and implement the project accordingly.

6. You are planning a training calendar. A field agent can visit each farmers' group once a week. How many times can she visit each group in one month?

Correct answer: A (three times). Remember that the agent will need to spend the fourth week in the month in the office for debriefing, reporting and refresher training.

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WEBPAGES AND RESOURCE INSTITUTIONS

- Agriculture for basic needs.** (Agricultura para necesidades básicas). Development project based on the multiple skills sets with success stories, handbooks and other materials in Spanish. www.alianzacacao.org
- Alianzas de aprendizaje para el desarrollo empresarial rural en América Latina.** A learning and knowledge space on rural enterprise development for Spanish-speaking countries. www.alianzasdeaprendizaje.org
- CRS agricultural program quality publications** www.crsprogramquality.org/publications/tag/agriculture
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).** The Rural Infrastructure and Agro-Industries Division supports the development of entrepreneurship in agricultural support services. FAO member countries are assisted with appropriate policies, strategies and methodologies for strengthening agricultural support systems and the delivery of services as well as technologies for production and post-production activities. FAO has a dedicated web site on "Linking Farmers to Markets." www.fao.org/ag/ags/agricultural-marketing-linkages/en/
- microLINKS.** A knowledge-sharing family of applications and tools designed to improve the impact of USAID microenterprise programs and activities. The latest information on microenterprise: best practices; proven approaches from USAID missions, partners, and practitioners; a library of documents, reports, and tools; and an environment that supports and enriches communities of practice. <http://microlinks.kdid.org/>
- Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services.** Extension systems in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Central America need to undergo significant change if they are to effectively serve the food security and economic development needs of resource-poor men and women farmers. New approaches must draw on full breadth of resources in public, private and civil society organizations and utilized available advanced information and communications technologies. MEAS is a Center of Excellence that seeks to promote and support such endeavors. www.meas-extension.org/home



Introduction to SMART Skills for rural development

A SMART SKILLS MANUAL

Farmers in developing countries need a range of skills in order to improve their livelihoods. They need to get organized into groups, understand how to use their natural resources in a sustainable way, and market their produce profitably and effectively. They also need to manage their finances, save money and organize credit, all while identifying, testing and adopting innovations. Together, these are Skills for Marketing and Rural Transformation (SMART Skills). They enable a group of farmers to make the most of their resources.

This manual introduces field agents, extension workers and program managers to the SMART Skills approach. The six lessons cover the following topics:

- Using a skills-based approach
- A closer look at the SMART Skills
- Organizing the team
- Working with the community
- Ensuring sustainability
- Building a training plan.

Each lesson includes guidelines, exercises to do with team members or with a group of farmers, and quizzes to test your understanding.

This is one manual in a series on SMART Skills. Other manuals in this series cover individual skills in detail.

<http://www.crsprogramquality.org/smart-skills-for-farmers/>

