

Organization development of chili farmer groups

Facilitating farmer group learning

October 2010

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Preface

Chili farmer groups all over Kenya's Coastal Province are doing business with Equator Kenya Ltd.. The farmer groups are community-based organizations (CBO's) registered by the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services. Equator Kenya is a registered Kenyan exporter of processed fruits and vegetables. Thousands of small farmers and hundreds of farmer groups currently deliver African Bird Eye chilies to the company, which dries and markets them internationally. The business relation is guided by agreements stipulating the rights and obligations of farmers, farmer groups and the company.

Organization development of chili farmer groups is essential for communicating with the company, improving production and productivity, training of farmers on good agricultural practices and conducting FFS trials, procuring inputs, accessing credits, selling produce collectively, keeping records and managing financial flows. Improving the performance of chili farmer groups is therefore of great importance, both for improving farmer income and livelihoods and for establishing a competitive ABE chili value chain. This is the justification for elaborating training modules on organizational development.

Training on organization development is complementary to technical training. The organization development training material is composed of seven modules :

1. The first module '*Establishing a farmer group*' targets new production areas where farmers are not yet organized as chili farmer groups. When farmer groups face fundamental problems, this module can be used to go back to the basics of farmer organization.
2. The second module '*Laying the foundation of a farmer group*' discusses the constitution and by-laws and the fundamentals of membership participation. This module is relevant for all farmer groups. Recently established farmer groups or farmer groups that have internal problems may be prioritized.
3. The third module '*Putting structures in place and defining roles*' discusses the organizational structure, office bearers and internal division of tasks and responsibilities. It is relevant for all farmer groups and allows to address recurrent operational problems that are often observed in farmer groups.
4. The fourth module '*Ensuring good governance*' is prepared for discussing best practices for leadership, communication and conflict management. It is of high actual relevance.
5. The fifth module is about '*Keeping records properly*'. It discusses organizational, financial and business record keeping, which are essential for internal transparency, external credibility and for the contract relation farmer groups have with Equator. It is also of high actual relevance.
6. The sixth module '*Developing business with partners*' focuses on the external relations of farmer groups have – or may develop - with other economic actors such as buying companies and traders, input suppliers and financial institutions. This module targets mature farmer groups that have a good internal organization, allowing them to be credible business partners.
7. The seventh module '*Participating in business environment improvement*' is envisaged for discussing lobby and advocacy activities. It is also intended for more experienced farmer groups and their higher tiers.

The different modules are geared to the training capacity of Equator Kenya. It is expected that Equator staff will facilitate participatory learning sessions of 2-4 hours, which take place at the level of farmer groups or collection centers. Since Equator staff regularly interacts with farmer groups, follow-up advice can be provided. The basic philosophy of the farmer group training is that the members are in charge of initiating and continuing processes of organisational change. External trainers and facilitators can only support and enhance these processes. The training sessions aim at arriving at concrete action plans defined by the members of the farmer groups. That's why the module titles are phrased in the active tense.

The training material on organization development of chili farmer groups is organized in three documents: (i) Background document; (ii) Trainer's guide and (iii) Facilitating farmer group learning. The latter elaborates on principles and tools for organizing and facilitating participatory training sessions. It provides advice that is of cross-cutting relevance for all training activities.

The purpose of the background document is to provide basic information on organization development of farmer groups. It provides general information that can be used to train primary farmer groups or higher tiers. It can also be used for training specific categories of farmer group members, e.g. office bearers such as chairpersons, secretaries or treasurers or specific functions that are of importance for chilli farmer groups. The background document consists of 7 chapters, which correspond with the seven modules. Each chapter provides input for the preparation of interactive training sessions. The background document is meant to be used alongside with the trainers guide and the note on participatory training and learning.

The trainers' guide suggests training plans and participatory tools for adult training. Training methods and exercises are tailored to the specific context of chilli value chain in coastal Kenya : existing agribusiness relations between farmer groups and Equator, available time and training capacity of Equator staff and the capacities and training needs of chilli farmer groups.

Acknowledgements

The training material on 'organization development of chili farmer groups' has been developed in the context of a project supporting improved and sustainable access of smallholder producers to export markets of processed horticultural products. This project was an initiative of the agricultural attaché of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kenya to support the emerging Equator business model. The support for the project 'Development of smallholders' production and supply chains in Kenya' of the Netherlands Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Safety (LNV) is sincerely acknowledged. The component on farmer group organization development has been implemented by the Centre for Development Innovation (CDI) of Wageningen University and Research Centre (WUR), in collaboration with ETC East Africa and KENFAP. Field work concerned self-assessment of organizational capacities training needs assessment and testing of modules. All activities were conducted in close collaboration with the management and staff of Equator Kenya and many chili farmer groups. The fruitful collaboration with Equator and the active participation of chili farmers has been very useful and is highly appreciated.

1. Introduction on participatory training and learning

1.1. Participatory training and learning

The training sessions on 'organisation development of chilli farmer groups' focus on participatory learning. There are important reasons for this orientation:

- The trainees are not students but adults with a profession (farming) and a lot of experience.
- The training topics are of direct concern to the participants: it is about their farmer groups;
- The training sessions are not organized to prepare people to pass an examination or to get a diploma, but strive towards practical action plans for improving the performance of farmer groups.

The focus on participatory training and learning has important implications, both for the trainer and for the learners.

- The trainers are first of all facilitators of learning. They ensure an effective flow of information within the group, so that participants share information, think about their group's performance, arrive at lessons learned and take decisions about how best to move forward.
- The participants of the training session are active learners, and not just mere trainees. In participatory training and learning, the participants are encouraged to assume active roles; they are not mere trainees that sit all the time in a classroom-like situation.

Participatory training and learning lead to intensive exchanges of knowledge, skills and experiences. All participants - including the trainer !! - learn from each other. Focusing on participatory learning does however not exclude that the trainers bring in new information. From time to time they 'teach' or 'lecture' to introduce a certain subject, to explain an exercise or to summarize the major elements to retain.

Some differences between school teaching and participatory learning

School teaching	Participatory learning
- Teacher starts from its own knowledge	- Facilitator starts from the knowledge and experiences of the group
- Information mostly flows in one direction: from teacher to students	- Exchange of ideas: between facilitator and learners and among learners
- Teacher brings extensively knowledge of the subject	- Facilitator builds on the knowledge and experiences of the group and knows where to find further information on the subject
- Teacher is concerned with students giving the right answer when doing examination	- Facilitator is concerned with the practical use that the group decides to make of lessons learned.

1.2. Trainer skills for facilitating learning

Training on the subject of organization development of farmer groups requires commitment and tolerance. On the one hand, the trainer must have a strong motivation strengthen the capacities farmer groups to improve their performance. On the other hand, the trainer should accept that the farmer groups are autonomous and that he cannot force members to do things as would like them to do.

A good trainer on 'organization development' must therefore have many skills: asking questions and probing further, listening and observing, respecting other opinions, providing feedback, managing group dynamics, making summaries of group discussions etc. The box below presents some essential skills of good trainers.

Good trainers / facilitators of learning:

- Are well prepared (organisation of the training session, training plan and anticipation on the training process with the farmer group).
- Are flexible. They take the needs and interests of the farmer group members as the reference and change their plans whenever necessary.
- Are energetic and think positive. If trainers want others to be energetic, they have to be enthusiastic and excited themselves. A positive attitude towards the training session influences the motivation of the participants to actively learn and work together.
- Acknowledge they do not know everything and are not afraid to make mistakes. Trainers do not know everything and facilitators sometimes make mistakes. When shortcomings and mistakes are acknowledged, they can be turned into valuable learning opportunities.
- Are sensitive. A facilitator needs to keep a constant lookout for people's moods and feelings. They need to observe both verbal and non-verbal communication.
- Use a variety of techniques, methods and activities. Variety keeps everyone involved and reinforces learning.

2. Preparations

2.1. Planning for good learning conditions

It is important that training sessions take place in a good learning environment. Proper planning creates good conditions for learning :

- Agree on a convenient venue, time and duration of the training session
- Timely invitation of participants.
- Appropriate group composition. Groups of learners should be adapted to the learning objective. When it is about internal organizational issues (module 1-3) it is good that the training concerns farmer group members. It is advised to avoid groups that are too large (not beyond 25 people).
- Proper estimation of the time that is necessary for developing the topic. This requires realistic planning that takes the available time of trainers of participants into account. Too ambitious plans are to be avoided.

2.2. Preparation of the trainer

A good preparation ensures that the trainer is confident and that the likelihood of a successful training session is high.

- It goes without saying that the trainer must know the subject, the audience and its learning style and capacity strengthening needs. Before a training session, the trainer should therefore (re)-examine the background information and trainers guide. This allows for having a clear training plan, pursuing clear objectives and employing appropriate learning methods.
- It is also quite evident that the trainer ensures that (s)he has all necessary materials. For most sessions it is important to use blackboard and/or flip charts. A good trainer always has chalk, felt pens (markers) and cards. Although they can be useful, it is generally not necessary to use powerpoint presentations or to have written hand-outs. It is however essential that the participants have note books and pens for taking notes. Own capitalization of lessons learned is important.

2.3. Adapting to local realities

Equator buys chilies with many farmer groups in different coastal Districts (Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi, Malindi, Tana delta and Lamu). There are important difference in the history of settlement, cultural values, agricultural specialization etc. Farmer groups also have different backgrounds. Some have a farmer field school or other background, while others are specifically established for chili production and delivery. The assessment results of 2009 suggested a rough characterization of the different production areas and farmer networks (cf. box below). These need to be taken when strategizing and preparing for training and advising farmer groups.

Rough categorization of production areas and farmer groups

- Kilifi: agricultural practices oriented at perennial tree groups, orientation on external funding because of donor funding background of many farmer groups and proximity to Mombasa, member views that organization needs to apply professional management modalities (self-assessment 2009).
- Lamu : settler area, donor funding background of most farmer groups (cf. FFS), moving toward economic autonomy mode especially of newly established chili farmer groups.
- Witu : economic orientation of primary groups that are not networked, member view that the basics of organizational management need to be put in place.

3. Starting training sessions

3.1. Setting the stage : learning objectives and norms

Starting a training session includes the following elements: presentations, focusing the subject and objectives of the training session and defining the 'rules of the game'. These elements set the stage for a respectful, focused and orderly training session.

- *Presentations.* Introduction of trainer(s) and participants (when needed of course)
- *Focusing the subject of the training session.* It is advised to write the central topics of the day on the blackboard / flipchart or on cards. After having stated the objectives of the training session, it is important to make sure that the learners understand the purpose of the training and that they have a clear picture about the session.
- *'Rules of the game'.* Any group activity has to abide to some rules. In the context of a training session it is important to set the learning norms. It is advised to discuss the following issues in a participatory manner:
 - o Mobile phones (switching off, putting in silent mode, ...)
 - o Respect of trainer and participants (avoiding unnecessary movements when sessions are going on,)
 - o Respect of time (punctuality/time keeping)
 - o Respect of other people's opinions (no interruptions, giving the floor to everyone, being concise in bringing points forward,)

3.2. Building on participants' knowledge and experiences

Participatory learning generally starts off with sharing of experiences on the subject of the training session. This acknowledges that the trainees – who are all adults and members of farmer groups - have knowledge, skills and experiences. It is also good practice to ask participants' about their expectations in relation to the topic at hand. This allows to tailor the training session to the needs of the learners.

3.3. Explaining why the training subject is important

In addition to building on participants' knowledge and experiences, it is often good to give examples or do simple exercises that allow the participants to really get to grips with the subject. This can be part of trainers' presentations (cf. 4.1) or can be done at a very early stage of the training.

An example is the exercise on record keeping (cf. trainers' guide module 5): capturing and retrieving information. This exercise shows in a very short time that secretaries (who wrote recorded information) can much better reproduce information than other participants who only listened.

4. Training methods and techniques

4.1. Trainers' presentations

When introducing subjects or explaining exercises, it is important that the trainer uses language that is understandable to the audience. This not only means that (s)he has to be audible and clear, but also that (s)he uses words and expressions that are used in the local language and environment. It is very useful to use examples, stories, pictures and images (etc) to clarify explanations. These serve as 'cliffhangers' that help participants to remind of a subject even long after the training event took place. It also stimulates exchange and discussion after the training session (cf. 'dancing' as an image for a contract farming relation).

When talking, there is always a risk of monotony which draws participants' attention away. The following advice may be useful:

- Limit the time of presentations. It is best not to go beyond 15-20 minutes at a time.
- In any case it is important to have 'something' that recaptures attention. It is therefore good to ask questions to the group or to actively involve the learners by other means (story, example, picture, ...).
- When asking for participants' views or when asking questions, it is important to build further on what was brought forward, this is a 'reward' on active participation.
- The use of gestures and movements attracts the attention of an audience. It is also important to keep eyes and attention on the group and to change the tone of your voice. During presentations, it is important to reinforce key points.
- At the end of a presentation, it is good to summarize what has been presented. A participatory way of doing this is to ask the audience to make a summary of what was just presented.
- When relevant, handouts and other materials can be distributed at the end of the presentation.

4.2. Group work

In participatory training and learning, participants are activated by all kinds of group work: brainstorming, participate in question and answer sessions, working groups, leading plenary discussions, writing participants' contributions on flipcharts, do role plays, It is important to indicate all kinds of group work possibilities in the trainers' guide. According to the dynamics of the group, time availability and subjects, the trainer can then use the most appropriate group work modalities. It is often good to change the composition of sub-groups so that participants mix. This could also be a strategy for dealing with dominant and shy people (cf. 5.3). When relevant, group work can however be organized according to existing FFS sub-groups.

4.3. Using real-life examples and exercises

Examples and exercises are most relevant when they are close to the livelihoods of the farmers and the realities of their farmer groups. It is important that the trainer's guide suggests subjects for question & answer sessions or for group work assignments that are likely to be close to the reality of the chilli farmer groups. The trainer's guide can also suggest real-life cases to be discussed, for instance cases relating to the election of committee members, financial management, organisation of collection centres or non-

payment of membership dues. As a trainer, knowing the field realities, it is important to adapt the exercises and cases whenever necessary.

The box below presents some examples of real-life cases. For tailoring the training sessions to the situation in the field, it would be good to make this list much longer and to relate them to the different modules. The field experiences could be used as cases in training sessions. The first example in the box could be used for module 3 (Ensuring good governance and active member participation'). Examples 2, 3, 4 and 5 are well suited for module 4 ('Improving group functioning: leadership, communication and conflict management). The sixth example can be used for module 5 (Keeping records properly).

Examples of real-life cases

1. In many farmer groups, members that do not come forward to present themselves for leadership positions whereas they are fully involved in the chilli growing and collection activities. Why this reluctance: feelings of inferiority, wealth differences, social status in the community, time ? How to mobilize and valorise the human resources of the farmer groups ?
2. Tensions within farmer groups because leaders, who themselves do not grow chillies, do not facilitate the transfer of company payments from the group account to individual accounts. What to do if this situation arrives ? What if leaders ask favours or payments for transferring the funds?
3. In many areas, Farmer Field School groups and networks have been the entry point for introducing chilli production to farmers. The successful introduction has led to a growing membership base of many groups. Some FFS groups continue to receive significant financial support from the government or donors. In some cases, new members (chilli growers) are made to leave the FFS group so that the original FFS members only benefit from the external funding. Is this legal ? What is the orientation of the group: mobilization of external resources or focus on own economic activities?
4. Along the coast there are some other buyers of ABE chillies. Although the contract agreement engages a farmer group to exclusively sell to Equator, side selling occurs: individual members sell to other buyers. This affects both fellow farmers (getting lower price because certain volumes are not attained) and the company. When side selling takes place, people in the community and especially group members know about it. How could/should farmer groups handle this contract breach ?
5. In many cases appointments for meetings are not respected. Often people trickle in one by one during farmer group meetings, trainings and collection centres. How to improve time management ?
6. Correct payment to chilli producers requires good record keeping. In many groups, deliveries and payments are difficult to check because of insufficient record keeping at farmer group level and bad filing of delivery overviews of the company. How can the delivery data be better recorded and archived so that cross-checking of delivery data are done as soon as possible ?

It is suggested to broaden the inventory of real-life experiences: these are good cases for exercises and they can even orient the need for certain training modules.

4.4. Visualizing : rich pictures

A rich picture is a drawing of a certain situation. It illustrates the elements and relationships that need to be considered when trying to improve that situation. It is called a rich picture because it illustrates several elements that need to be taken in to account. It is also often said that a picture tells more than a thousand words. And in the case of farmer communities, the rich picture is also a manner to capitalize (in drawing, not in writing) the analysis that is made of a situation.

Developing a rich picture is a good group exercise. Everyone can contribute to it. It is advised to have 4-8 people around a rich picture. A rich picture can also be a non-threatening way of illustrating different perspectives and show eventual conflicts.

How to facilitate the drawing of a rich picture ?

1. Decide on the central subject
2. Prepare : have flipcharts and markers
3. Brainstorming : participants (4-8 per group) think about the key elements to answer the lead question(s) and the elements to put in the drawing
4. Make the outline of the picture
5. Develop the rich picture
6. Comment on the rich picture



5. Working with farmer groups

5.1. Dealing with group dynamics

A trainer has to be prepared for working and dealing with groups. Knowing the farmer groups is thus a huge advantage. Below there are some group phenomena that are likely to emerge and some suggestions for dealing with them:

- *Social interaction.* Socializing, joking or telling stories are a natural part of how people behave in groups. A good trainer allows for socializing but at the same time knows how to focus the meeting on the objectives of the training session. A good trainer participates in group interaction, he or she may tell jokes or use energizers to create group energy.
- *Agreement and consensus.* It often takes long before group members reach a consensus. When developing subjects, it is however not necessary to have agreement on everything. The trainer can put emphasis on harnessing the ideas that exist in the group. This requires attention for fostering participation of group members that are shy and to manage group members that are dominant.
- *Action planning.* Most, if not all training sessions on organization development of chili farmer groups seek to arrive at group action plans. For action planning it is important to reach at agreements within the group. It is therefore important to anticipate on the necessary discussion time that may be needed to reach consensus. Sometimes, it is good that the facilitator agrees to come back to action planning during another occasion (which is possible for Equator staff).
- *Unequal commitments.* Not everyone in the group will be committed to the same level in carrying out group tasks. It is important to check commitment and anticipate on the risk that action points are not implemented. Implementing action plans is however the responsibility of the farmer group.
- *Conflict management.* In any social group, including farmer groups, people are not necessarily going along well together. Conflicts may overtly or latently exist. Anticipating on managing potential conflict is important (see also chapter on conflict management in background document; strategies also apply for handling conflicts during training sessions).

5.2. Dealing with difficult questions

Dealing with participants' questions can be difficult. As a trainer you have the feeling that you need to be able to answer all questions. This is not always possible, even if you are very well prepared and have even anticipated on possible questions. What can a trainer do in such a situation ?

- Be honest. Open communication requires transparency. If you don't exactly know, it is better to acknowledge this right from the start. Be not afraid to say that you do not know the answer and remember that participants will easily observe that you are not comfortable or that you are making up an answer.
- Involve the group. In participatory training, learning is a collective effort. If Mr. John or Mrs Jeannette asked a difficult question, the trainer-facilitator can seek support in the group to answer the question. The trainer may of course also contribute to the joint effort by suggesting some elements that seem to be important for answering the question.
- Encourage participants to look for more information. Going to the information instead of waiting for information to come is an important characteristic for entrepreneurship. Where could answers be found ? Could a resource person come to tell more. The trainer could also promise to look for more information. It is however important to keep the promise; credibility is easily lost.

5.3. Dealing with dominant and shy people

A good trainer/facilitator needs to make sure that all participants have the opportunity to speak. Sometimes there is one person who dominates the discussion. They do so because of their character (confidence they always the answers) or because of their higher social status. Sometimes people may be very shy or afraid to express their views in a group.

<i>Tips for dealing with dominant people</i>	<i>Tips for dealing with shy people</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Give them responsibility within the group - Use other facilitation and learning techniques than group or plenary discussions - Place them with other similar types - Limit the number of times each person can speak, so that each member is treated equally. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encourage them individually, within and outside the group - Establish reasons for their silence - Divide people into smaller groups or ask people to discuss questions first in pairs - Give notice of the topic before the discussion, so that they have time to prepare - Use participatory methodologies/tools that involve everyone e.g. mapping, ranking, seasonal calendars etc. - Give them responsibility for note taking and feedback - Place them in a supportive group - Give them time - Use role plays to build confidence and skills

6. Preparing for action

6.1. SWOT analysis

To move towards action-oriented results, the analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) can be very useful for the analysis and identification of solutions for improving the performance of farmer groups. SWOT is a simple tool for brainstorming. Strengths and Weaknesses refer to the internal functioning and performance of a farmer group. Opportunities and Threats relate to the external environment of the farmer groups. SWOT analysis is most useful when applied to a particular subject (for instance 'leadership' or 'financial record keeping').

The main strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are described in the form of key words or short sentences. For this brainstorming process, the following matrix can be used:

<p>Strengths (Internal / positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<p>Weaknesses (Internal / negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •
<p>Opportunities (External / positive)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • 	<p>Threats (External / negative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • •

In a second step, possible solutions and activities are identified. The improvement of the situation is reached by activities to enhance the strengths, to eliminate or reduce the weaknesses, to build on the opportunities in the external environment and to prevent the effects of possible threats.

6.2. Self-assessment and ranking

At regular intervals, it is useful for farmers and their organizations to think about the progress that has been made (or has not been made) in their organization. Are we really a member-governed and controlled organization? Is internal communication well developed? Are members happy with the services that are provided? What results have been obtained? Where are we now and where are (or should) we heading for?

Self-assessment : looking in the mirror







After a night sleep, most people look in the mirror in the morning? Do I wash myself correctly? Did I nicely comb my hair? Do I need to shave (men)? Do I need to put up make-up (ladies)? Looking in the mirror helps while brushing teeth or doing your hair. An organization cannot look in a mirror like a person can do. That's why a 'special mirror' is proposed, supporting farmers' organizations to have a look at itself. The mirror is a (short) list of statements on the organization. By giving scores on the statements, the members of the organizations communicate how they perceive their organization. By combining all the scores (of different members), it is possible to draw pictures showing how the members perceive the organization. By so doing, it becomes clearer what points are considered as the strong or the weak points of the organization.

Self-assessment is a useful tool that can lead to the identification of practical follow-up action. Short self-assessment sessions can be organized during trainings. Self-







assessment is likely to be most useful near the end of a training session, e.g. the action-oriented steps of each training plan.

How to go about ?

- Think of some subjects for scoring (between 3 and 10, depending on the subject of training). For the training on record keeping, a trainer could for instance think of a self-assessment of the way minutes are kept, official documents are filed, contributions of members are recorded, delivery overview of the company are filed etc.
- Ask participants to score the statements on a scale from 0 to 3 (cf. explanation in table below). The self-assessment could be done in a plenary session or in subgroups.
- Draw the following self-assessment form on a flipchart.

Subjects	We are not good at all	We are not so good	We are quite good	We are very good	Total Score
	 			 	
	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points	

- Put the scores of respondents on the flipchart, by putting an <I> or <x> on the scoring form
- After the assessment, the ranking can be established. For a group of 15 participants assessing six subjects, this could look like this:

Subjects	We are not good at all	We are not so good	We are quite good	We are very good	Total Score	Rank
	 			 		
	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points		
A	III = 0	IIII = 5	IIII II = 14		19	4
B		IIII = 4	IIII I = 12	IIII = 15	31	2
C			IIII II = 14	IIII III = 24	38	1
D		IIII = 5	IIII III = 16	II = 6	27	3
E	IIII IIII = 0	IIII = 4	I = 2		6	6
F	II = 0	IIII IIII = 10	III = 6		16	5

This exercise would show that subject E scores the by far the lowest and that subjects A and F are also relatively low ranked.

Discussion of assessment results

It is important to discuss the results of the self-assessment and to put them on the table of the farmer group. Analysis of the reasons for low scoring may induce discussions on what activities could be undertaken to improve the situation. Understanding of the reasons for high scoring is helpful for identifying best practices.

It is up to every organization to analyze the results of a self-assessment and discuss follow-up action. The trainer can however ask the following questions:

- What is the image you see in the mirror?
- What are the issues that need attention ?
- What can be done ?
- What needs to be done in the first place ?

In that manner, “burning issues” can be identified. The self-assessment helps a farmer group to **CARE** about it’s functioning and performance. It helps to

C
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A
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R
eact

E
valuate

6.3. Towards action plans

The aim of the training sessions is to contribute to improved functioning and performance of farmer groups. Practical action plans are therefore an important outcome of the training sessions. The implementation of the action plans, e.g. practical activities that improve the functioning and performance of the farmer groups, is an important indicator for the success of the trainings.

The testing of modules has shown that it is very possible to wind up a training session with some very practical points for action. It is recommended that these points are stressed during the trainer’s and participants’ summaries of the training sessions (closure words).

More systemic organizational development action plans could take the form of the following “Action Commitment Form” in which farmer groups indicate the follow-up steps they intend to take for strengthening their organizations. The contract farming relation between farmer groups and Equator would then make organization development efforts explicit. It seems most realistic to combine ‘organizational’ and ‘technical’ issues in this form. It would be possible to attach these to annual contracts. These would then show that the relationship goes well beyond the delivery and purchase of chillies.

Possible outline of performance improvement agreement:

Name of farmer group:	
Farmer group < name > will <u>address the following problem(s)</u> in the next 12 months: a) b) c) d) For that purpose, Farmer group < nam > will undertake the <u>following activities</u> in the next 12 months: a) b) c) d)	
Equator Kenya Ltd. will facilitate the following training activities in the next 12 months: a) b) c) d)	
Date and signature farmer group :	Date and signature Equator Kenya Ltd :