

# **A field methodology for participatory self-evaluation of PPP group and inter-group association performance**

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## Introduction

The People's Participation Programme (PPP) has both participatory goals and strategy. It aims to establish self-managed and self-reliant group capacities at the sub-community and community levels so that people can improve the economic and social conditions of themselves and their families through collective action. Such capacities themselves should be developed *in a participatory manner*, not simply as creations of some higher-level body, but through the ideas, action and initiative of group members themselves. Group Promoters (GPs) play a crucial catalytic role in this process, acting not as groups' planners or leaders but as facilitators and supporters of growing group capacity.

Evaluation is a key element in capacity building. The methodology presented here is intended to help Group Promoters assist PPP groups in creating their own participatory self-evaluation capability. Other persons may do separate evaluations of PPP group performance and capacity. There is a role for outside evaluations in any program. But this methodology is designed to become a group's own method for strengthening its own ability to meet its members' needs through collective action.

There has been a tendency to assign evaluation to the domain of experts by making it very quantitative" and "objective." The result has been to take the task of evaluation out of the people's own hands. We recognize that PPP group members often have limited command of numbers and reading skill. So this methodology is constructed to require no knowledge of arithmetic and only basic literacy from one member of the group.

The goal is to place a flexible and practical evaluation methodology in the hands of PPP members. It can and will be useful to Group Promoters and to anyone else working in support of Programme goals but its aim is to strengthen group management capabilities directly. While the initiative to establish this methodology comes from the Programme, the methodology is designed to pass, through a series of steps, into the hands and control of cooperating PPP groups. The methodology can grow and evolve with experience to meet various circumstances and needs.

This means it will have somewhat different content in different countries and for different groups. But the idea behind it will remain the same and will bind far-flung evaluation activities together.

This grassroots-oriented approach was first developed in Sri Lanka in a program to introduce water-user groups in a large, deteriorated irrigation scheme that was being rehabilitated (Uphoff, 1988). Like PPP groups, these groups have 10-20 members and are instigated by organizers who live in villages with rural people much as Group Promoters do. Indeed, the Sri Lanka program (like the PPP) gained inspiration and shape from the FAO-sponsored Small Farmer Development Programme in Nepal (Rahman, 1984). The aim of the Sri Lanka programme was to create self-management capacity among the small farmer members so that improvements could be made in irrigation and other areas affecting their lives. The methodology devised can be used by *any self-help group* that wishes to achieve economic, technical, social and other improvements by establishing its own collective operational capacity.

The methodology described here has been adapted for use within the People's Participation Programme by studying evaluations and reports of PPP group and inter-group association (IGA) activity in Ghana, Sri Lanka, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These documents identified both *problems* that some groups are having and *successes* that various groups are achieving. These problems and successes have been formulated into draft questions that should be discussed and evaluated by PPP groups according to a *simple participatory process* outlined below. The process will help groups to keep track of their progress, first, in solving or reducing various *problems* that they themselves have identified and agreed upon, and second, in moving forward in areas of activity where some degree of *success* has already been seen.

Some of the areas concern the functioning of the group as an organization-- how well are its meetings attended? how productive are meetings? how much cooperation is there among members? how well can the group operate without the Group Promoter? how widely is leadership responsibility shared? and so forth.

Other areas concern the economic and technical performance of the group -- whether increased incomes have been achieved, maintenance of equipment and facilities, whether group savings are being built up, repayment of loans, whether members are acquiring new technical skills, and so forth.

By getting PPP groups to consider *in a systematic way* whichever tasks and capabilities they consider relevant, they should be able to mobilize ideas and agreements that can improve their performance and increase their capacity - no matter what level they are at now.

- The methodology provides a structured way for groups to consider a relevant set of questions and to arrive at a consensus on the group's current situation.
- Reaching agreement within a group on *what set of questions* is relevant to it helps to educate and strengthen the group).
- Then *periodically discussing* what are the *best answers* to these questions is even more educational and strengthening for the group.

If the process of self-evaluation is carried out regularly and openly, with all group members participating, the answers they arrive at are in themselves not so important as what is learned from the discussion and from the process of reaching consensus on what *questions* should be used to evaluate group performance and capacity, and on what *answers* best describe their group's present status.

What the methodology can achieve as well as the method for introducing it and what problems should be anticipated and addressed are more easily understood once readers know the system. First, some examples are given of how the methodology works (Section I). Potential benefits are discussed in the next section. The third section outlines a process for introducing the system, and a fourth section deals with various issues. Then in Part II, sample questions are given, based on the experience of PPP groups in four countries. Group Promoters can select from these questions, modifying any in ways that might make them more appropriate. A set of questions that is relevant to the particular country and to the PPP groups being assisted should then be field-tested with these groups to ensure applicability of the system.

## **Part 1. A methodology for participatory self-evaluation**

### **1. The process of participatory self-evaluation**

When groups engage in participatory self-evaluation, the result should be that groups recognize and know better their strengths and weaknesses and become

motivated to build on the first and to minimize the second. One problem with non-participatory outside evaluation is that the criteria used are often not known by the group or are not accepted by them as realistic and valid. As described in more detail below, the first step for participatory self-evaluation is for the group to decide what things it thinks it should be accomplishing and how it should be carrying out its activities. These constitute a basis for a kind of self-evaluation which has some chance of improving capacities and performance. The methodology introduced here covers over 80 different activities or modes of operation from which a group may choose as *being relevant to its own situation and goals*.

As few as a half dozen might be chosen, or possibly several dozen. The number can be increased as new questions are selected by the group for evaluation, or decreased as previously-selected ones are dropped by agreement of the members. Once the questions concerning performance and capacity have been agreed upon, the most important thing is the amount and honesty of discussion that is devoted to each question, to arrive at a shared understanding of how well or how poorly the group is doing in that particular regard. This is best shown by taking an example. Let us assume that the group has agreed it wants to have *active participation* from all members in its meetings and group activities. (This is seen by the Programme as not only contributing to group success in the short-run but also to the group's long-run survival.)

Whoever is leading the discussion will ask the group: Which of the following statements *best describes* members' participation in the group?

- (a) All members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Everyone feels free to speak up and play an active role.
- (b) Most members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Most feel free to speak up and play an active role.
- (c) Some members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Some feel free to speak up and play an active role.
- (d) Few members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Few feel free to speak up and play an active role.

This pattern of four alternatives is repeated for all of the self-evaluation questions. The first (a) represents a *most satisfactory situation*, with *little or no room for improvement*. The second (b) describes a *satisfactory situation*, but with *some room* for improvement. The third (c) characterizes an *unsatisfactory situation* with *definite room* for improvement, while the fourth (d) presents a *very unsatisfactory situation* with *very much room* for improvement.

For the sake of giving some simple scores to the answers, the first answer is counted for 3 points, the second for 2 points, the third for 1 point, and the fourth is zero. Three points is considered an excellent score; two points is very good but can be improved; one point is not very good, with much room for improvement. Zero indicates abysmal performance and should seldom occur.

*The numbers are not the most important result of self-evaluation.* More important is the *discussion* that goes into agreeing on them. Groups would like to think that their performance is top-rate. But before they can achieve the top score (3 points), all members have to agree that everyone is participating actively in meetings and group affairs. If anyone thinks otherwise, the group needs to resolve any differences of opinion. Members can give examples of when everyone participated or when they did not, when some skipped meetings or did not turn up for group work. If a top score cannot be justified, can it be said that most members are actively participating, or only that some are? This is a matter of judgment as no strict numerical standards are possible. In a weak group, the disagreement will turn on whether some participate actively, or only a few do.

Simply discussing this question will bring to everyone's attention *the extent and quality of members' participation in group affairs*. Whoever is not satisfied with the current situation is legitimately entitled to say so during self-evaluation so that the group can carry out this exercise properly and constructively. Any persons who have been shirking may be named. It may become known that the group has not communicated its expectations adequately to all members. Maybe some members do not know when and how hard others are working but at different times. All this can and should come up when trying to decide which of the four statements "best describes" the group. If persons who thought only some are participating become satisfied that most are participating, that will help group morale. If those who insist only some but not most are participating can persuade the rest of this, the group's level of participation has been made an issue for all.

If it is not possible for everyone in the group to agree on one answer, it can take a vote and record the majority view, or even better, it can agree on some compromise score for a particular question, such as 2.5 or 1.5. That way both majority and minority viewpoints get reflected in the score, which will be compared with scores decided on in future self-evaluations.

As stated before, the number a group arrives at for any particular question in its self-evaluation is not so important in itself. What is important is that all members come to understand and agree on what are the group's *areas of strength* and what are its *areas of weakness*. An example of a capacity or performance question in the technical area concerns the maintenance of any equipment, machinery, facilities or buildings the group may have - is adequate provision made for this?

- The group carries out excellent regular maintenance work so that there are no or very few breakdowns and no avoidable deterioration of equipment, machinery, facilities, etc. (3 points)
- The group does reasonable good and thorough maintenance, but there are some breakdowns and some avoidable deterioration which could be reduced by better maintenance. (2 points)
- The group does some but irregular maintenance, that is, there are breakdowns and there is avoidable deterioration. (1 point)
- The group does no maintenance at all. Breakdowns and deterioration are common. (Zero)

A group could be proud if it did at least (b), but it could aspire to (a), getting 3 points instead of just 2 on this item. If the group's performance is only (c), the group should recognize a need to make improving its maintenance a priority for the immediate future. If there is consensus on (d) as the best description of current group capability, there would be reason to attach great urgency to making improvements. Of course, if the group used and had no equipment, machines, buildings or facilities of its own, this question would not be relevant. Then, no maintenance would not be a black mark against it. But then also, this item should not have been chosen as one for self-evaluation. Each group will have its own set of questions that reflect its own needs and functioning. These questions should be considered on a regular basis, usually once a year. Communication among members and getting decisions made to take appropriate remedial action will be



facilitated by group discussion of each question and reaching conclusions about *how well or how poorly* the group is dealing with the functions it has agreed should be assessed.

When groups have gone through the agreed-upon questions, they should review the scores they have assigned themselves on the various items. On questions where all agree that a 3 is appropriate, the group need only try to maintain this high standard of performance. Where a 2 is decided upon, the group should consider what it could do to improve its performance so it would deserve a 3 in the next self-evaluation. A score of 1 should be regarded as a challenge to make big improvements, whereas zero on any item is a real warning sign.

The group should select a number of priority areas for making an effort to improve capacity (or to maintain it). These would be chosen by members because the area is very important, and falling below a 3 is regarded as undesirable by the group, or because improvement could be made quite easily or quickly. By having an agenda for action that emerges out of the group's own self-evaluation, available resources will be used more effectively, as discussed below. Here we point to the importance of establishing an agenda for making improvements in group performance as part of the process of self-evaluation.

## **2. The benefits of participatory self-evaluation**

This field methodology has several advantages over conventional evaluation methodologies.

- This approach should be self-educative. It helps to inform groups and IGAs of what is expected and what is possible through the People's Participation Programme.
- It can be self-improving because once shortcomings have been identified by consensus, they are more amenable to group action to remedy them.
- It enables higher levels of the Programme to monitor progress. It will inform IGAs of member groups' performance and capabilities, and also show PPP staff where IGAs and groups are strong and where they are weak. It will point out which are strong and which are weak (how and why).

- It should improve training and support efforts by directing these at deficiencies the groups and IGAs themselves have identified. Remedial initiatives are more effective where a problem has been openly recognized and acknowledged by the persons who are to receive the training or other assistance. Also, more successful groups and IGAs that are identified with this method can be enlisted to help train and advise less effective ones.

Each of these benefits will be discussed in turn. Only the third overlaps substantially with standard kinds of evaluation, as the first, second and fourth are specifically related to the methodology of self-evaluation proposed here.

**Self-Education.** With this approach to evaluation, groups' performance is not assessed simply by a set of standards determined externally. Each group has to think about which things it can and should do well. Should it be generating more income? Providing emergency loans to members? Learning and spreading technical skills? Reducing illiteracy? Improving nutrition? Gaining community support? Working without GP assistance? Holding more productive meetings? Sharing organizational responsibilities more widely?

Each PPP group and inter-group association must select from a wide variety of possible economic, social and organizational objectives. Each group or association should consider its members' needs and circumstances, discuss possible goals, and select those on which there is greatest agreement. Members are likely to be more committed to goals that they have chosen themselves through group discussion, than to goals determined for them by an outside agency.

Initially they may be satisfied to have half a dozen task-related and organizational goals. But over time they may want to add more objectives to make their group's performance more rounded. Such decisions should be made by each group or inter-group association (IGA) based upon members' needs and circumstances. How many or how few objectives is up to the members to decide. The important thing is that *all members discuss these goals to see how many there is agreement on*. The fact of reaching some agreement on a certain set of goals helps to commit members to their achievement.

The list of possible self-evaluation questions offered in Part II of this manual is quite comprehensive (it may be shortened or added to by a country programme's GPs). Just reviewing such a list with a group is like a "short course" for members

on PPP group functioning and potential, calling their attention to many possible objectives they could have either for or through their group (or IGA).

In our experience, grassroots organizations are more likely to be too ambitious (rather than be too cautious) in choosing objectives. There are so many ways in which they want to improve their lives that they may want to have too many goals (questions) for their regular self-evaluation. If they insist on having a long (or short) list, the GP should accept this. It is, after all, *their* list and *their* organization. But the GP may encourage the group later to shorten its list (or add to it) if this seems appropriate. Once the group has some experience with the methodology, it will want to revise its initial selection of items anyway. Some goals may no longer seem important, and others may now seem more important or more attainable.

For members to consider periodically what their group can and should achieve will help to educate (and re-educate) them about group objectives and potential. Discussing what is worth doing and what is feasible will bring out into the open the needs and hopes of members so that a substantial base of agreement can be built as a foundation for successful collective action.

**Self-Improvement.** By assessing its progress in meeting its self-chosen goals, a group will be led to consider what changes might enable it to achieve those goals better. If there is group consensus that members' participation is less than full, or that maintenance of equipment and facilities is inadequate, the group can encourage reticent members to be more active and change any practices that discourage their participation, or it can assign maintenance responsibilities to certain persons and set aside some funds for costs of repair. Most of the solutions can be planned and implemented by members without outside assistance, or with the GP playing only a facilitative role, once there is agreement that a shortcoming exists.

Often correcting undesirable situations is a matter of bringing them to everybody's attention and taking a problem-solving approach. This means gathering necessary information, choosing the most promising strategy, agreeing on a plan of action, carrying this plan out, and then following up with group evaluation. If the problem persists, the plan or strategy may need to be changed by further discussion and agreement.

A good example concerns the pool of leadership from which a group's officers, committee chairmen, etc. can be drawn. In some groups, only one person or just a few are ready, willing and apparently able to take responsibility. When it comes to discussing this item (the fourth in the listing in Part II), if there is agreement that only a few persons are at present candidates for leadership positions, this gives the group just 1 point. If a majority is ready, willing and able to assume positions of responsibility, this warrants 2 points, and only if all are ready, willing and able can the group claim 3 points.

In some groups with what is called "leaderitis" in the Small Farmer Development Programme of Nepal, there is just one person who runs things. He may do this because he likes the prestige and power, or because he thinks nobody else is capable or interested to take on responsibility for the group -- or because nobody else has been identified by the group as a successor. He may be a very good and effective leader, but the *pool* from which leadership can be drawn for the group *is* very small, and *this* makes it very vulnerable. It deserves only 1 point in this situation, no matter how well it scores on other questions.

If after some discussion it is agreed that between a quarter and a half the members are willing and able to serve in leadership roles, this means the group has more capacity and thus can get 2 points in this regard. If a majority are willing and able, this puts the group in a strong position with regard to potential leadership and it should get 3 points, the top score.

Discussing this question focuses attention on who within the group is willing and able to serve in a leadership role? Some persons who have been overlooked -- perhaps because they are relatively young, or because men do not think women would have the time and interest to take on responsible positions-- may volunteer or may be suggested.

Everyone will learn, by discussing this self-evaluation item, who is in the category of "potential leader." This does not challenge the incumbent leader, but it lets him or her and all others know who else could share in carrying out group responsibilities. If very few can be identified, this suggests that the group should be "grooming" less active members for leadership responsibility by giving them small tasks to begin with. Just considering this question forces a group to take seriously the question of the size and depth of its leadership pool.

Solutions to enlarge a limited pool will vary from group to group, but they will emerge once a group becomes conscious of deficiencies in this regard. Discussing this problem is not a criticism of the incumbent leader, so it should not threaten him (or her). It is in everyone's interest that the group be able to say during subsequent self-evaluations that on this question, it deserves a 2 instead of a 1 -- and preferably a 3 instead of a 2. A look at the various questions will show how self-improvement can be instigated by considering how high or how low a group should be scored.

**Monitoring.** It might be expected that this would be the first and most important goal of any evaluation scheme, but self-evaluation, self-education and self-correction come first. In fact, this scheme can contribute to more useful monitoring and evaluation from higher levels than the standard evaluation methods because this approach addresses the group's own goals.

Monitoring within the People's Participation Programme should proceed at two levels. Inter-group associations (IGAs) where they exist should be monitoring the progress and performance of their constituent member groups. This means that the officers of an IGA should regularly review the self-evaluations of each member group and compare them:

- First with previous self-evaluations of the same group, to see what progress has been made and where performance may have gone backwards, and
- Second, with self-evaluations of other groups in the same IGA, considering each group's performance in relative terms.

It is possible to calculate the simple average score for a group, and to compare such a score with its previous scores and with other groups' scores. This will give a rough idea of (a) whether some progress has been made, and (b) whether or not the group is performing better than average (better than the average for all other groups). As discussed in Section 4, this methodology can be spoiled, however, if groups see themselves in competition with each other and thus fail to present the most honest self-assessment possible. Comparisons between groups, therefore, can be potentially damaging to the methodology if much attention is given to differences in average scores, especially if prizes or recognition are given on the basis of such scores. On the other hand, wise and sensitive IGA officers can review

the scores like "good elders" who are seeking to promote the good of everyone. In that case, their knowing which groups are having more or less success is in everyone's interest.

More significant will be some analysis and comparison of where a group or IGA is strong and where it is weak, by its own assessment and diagnosis. Monitoring areas of strength and weakness is more illuminating and helpful than comparing average scores because the latter cover up highs (strengths) and lows (weaknesses). Thus it is recommended that high and low scores be more attended to than average scores in any monitoring use of this methodology.

**Training and support.** Finally, the methodology can be used to design training and support efforts that will remedy the weaknesses that groups and IGAs themselves recognize and are prepared to try to correct so that they can judge themselves improved in future self-evaluations. If it is agreed that records of meetings are poorly kept, or that access to improved technologies is inadequate, or financial resources are not secure, special training programs can be designed to give members and/or officers the necessary information and skills. Depending on the nature of the problem, PPP staff may make special efforts such as arranging with the Extension Service to have its agents visit PPP groups more often, or negotiating with commercial banks to let PPP groups open special accounts.

Too often training programs are designed on the basis of what outsiders think the groups should know, not knowing what the groups themselves think they need to know to achieve their immediate goals. People's attention will be more focused and training will be more effective if sessions deal with trainees' own perceived needs. This methodology will help PPP staff to plan training initiatives that are targeted to specific problems and deficiencies.

'When planning supporting activities for the groups and IGAs, GPs and PPP staff can review the self-evaluations to see where groups and IGAs feel they are not performing up to the maximum standard. Where they see some groups and IGAs achieving the top level of performance, they can study how and why this performance is achieved and can undertake their supporting activities based on what works for at least some groups and IGAs, rather than based on some hypothetical solutions.

## **Self-evaluation of and for IGAs**

The methodology that is presented here is illustrated with questions that are most appropriate for PPP groups rather than for IGAs. This is because the documentation available was much richer and more detailed on group performance and problems than for IGAs. However, the methodology is so simple and its logic so straightforward, that appropriate questions for IGA self-evaluation can be adapted from those for groups, or additional questions can be added just for IGAs.

IGAs using this methodology on a regular basis can achieve the benefits of self-education and self-improvement just as described for groups. For monitoring, in addition to IGA officers and members keeping track of their own progress (or lack thereof), the PPP staff and any involved government or NGO officials will want to follow IGA performance over time and on a comparative basis (among IGAs). They will of course be interested in the performance of individual groups as well. Actually, it may be possible to have the groups that make up an IGA review its self-evaluations to get an idea of where it is or is not meeting expectations.

The benefits of improved training and support described above can be achieved for IGAs as much as for groups by targeting assistance to the areas of weakness that an IGA has itself identified. In conclusion, although the presentation in this field manual is most explicitly tailored to the needs and functioning of PPP groups -- because they represent the main clientele at present -- the methodology is equally suited to IGA needs and functioning as these associations become more widespread and active within the PPP framework.

### **3. The introduction of participatory self-evaluation**

Although this methodology is an “external” one, devised far from the Communities where PPP groups and IGAs operate, in the process of introducing it, both Group Promoters and PPP group members are expected to contribute their ideas and suggestions. By adapting it to local conditions and goals, they should be able to make this methodology into one that they rightfully regard as their own. The process of introducing it should proceed with at least the following six steps.

**Step 1: Review and screening of questions by group promoters.** The PPP country staff responsible for promoting evaluation should begin by meeting with as

many GPs as can come together for one or two days to start the process of self-evaluation. GPs should have been given this field manual to read in advance so they will be familiar with the subject to be discussed.

The first thing is to consider the purposes and philosophy of self-evaluation. The ideas in this manual can serve as a starting point, but participants in this first discussion should develop their own understanding through discussion and debate, leading toward some shared agreement for that PPP country programme.

A good exercise would be for a drafting subcommittee to prepare a one or two-page statement of the purposes and philosophy of participatory self-evaluation. This can be considered by the whole group and when agreed upon with any amendments, it can be used as the country programme's own understanding and approach for conducting self-evaluation.

Next, the whole group should consider the list of draft questions which is presented in Part II. The list should first be reviewed as a whole, to get an overview of the scope of this methodology. Then the individual questions should be discussed. Some will appear relevant and useful for all groups, others may fit only certain groups, and some may not apply in that country's circumstances. Some with a change in wording may be judged appropriate for some, many or all groups, and such changes should be made.

The examples in the draft list may lead GPs to think of certain other questions that would be useful, and these can be worked out following the pattern presented by this methodology. Four alternative descriptive statements should be worded:

- The first will describe a near ideal condition, worth 3 points, where there is little room for improvement;
- A second describes a good situation, worth 2 points, but with definite room for improvement;
- A third characterizes a poor situation, worth only 1 point, having much room for improvement; and
- A fourth presents a really undesirable level of performance, worth no points, calling for drastic improvements.



Functioning groups should seldom perform so poorly that they rank in this last category, so there should be few demoralizing zeros in self-evaluation. But if they are deserved, they should be recorded. Most of the time, groups should be able to give themselves at least I point on an item, but they will also know what they have to do to rise to a 2 or a 3 in the next evaluation.

When GPs have reviewed the list, they will have their own list of questions they want to present to groups. It will probably be shorter, even much shorter, than the draft list included here. The long list is intended to stimulate ideas, not to be a burden because of its length. The list that emerges from the GPs' review may be only half as long as the list in Part II. It should include any additions that GPs wish to make.

**Step 2: Preparing questions for review with groups.** Once it is agreed which questions the GPs want to go forward with, the questions will usually need to be translated into vernacular or into more colloquial versions of English so that they will be readily understandable to group members and so that members will be comfortable with the wording. There is a temptation, to be resisted, for more educated people to use language that is more 'sophisticated,' in order to show off their higher educational attainment. (One hopes that GPs do not have such an attitude.) Very specific care should be taken that the wording of the questions and the alternative descriptive statements is simple and straightforward, the everyday language that adults use when talking among themselves. Simple language does not mean child-like or childish language, it might be added.

The questions should be written each on a separate card so that the physical form of this methodology is a pack of cards that can be tied up with string or kept in a box. If put on standard-sized cards, the questions can be stored in small standard card-file boxes that can be purchased and provided by the PPP. The questions are put on one side of the card, and the score that a group assigns itself can be recorded on the back of the card along with the date. For the first testing of the questions, however; this is not necessary. Remember that this methodology is designed so that no more than one member of the group needs to be literate, and there are no complicated numerical operations.

**Step 3: Discussing the methodology with active participants.** The next step is for a small group of GPs to meet for a morning or afternoon with half a dozen

selected PPP members or officers who have shown the keenest sense of commitment to the program and its goals. They will be the quickest to understand the purpose and the value of this methodology and to be able to give good feedback. The group should be told about the purpose and philosophy of self-evaluation, based on the statement prepared by the GPs at their initial review meeting.

The whole list of questions that came out of that meeting should be reviewed to get an overview of all the items and then the questions should be discussed with the PPP members or officers one by one to get their feedback. Critical comments and suggestions should be encouraged, both as to whether the question is relevant and will contribute to self-strengthening of groups, and whether the question is worded in an understandable way.

As a result of the discussion with these PPP members, the list of questions will be somewhat changed, with some questions dropped and some others added, and the wording of questions should be improved according to suggestions made. The assembled PPP members are the best judges of what wording will communicate most clearly and easily to other members.

When this was done with farmer-representatives in Sri Lanka, to give an example of something not included in the initial preparation of questions, the farmers suggested we add an item about participation in community religious observances. They said that when everyone came to the annual rice harvest festival, this contributed to solidarity among everyone in the community and boosted their groups' strength. So we added the following item to the list of questions for self-evaluation:

How many members participate in the annual harvest festival?

- 3 = All members contribute to and participate in the festival.
- 2 = Most members contribute to and participate in the festival.
- 1 = Some members contribute to and participate in the festival.
- 0 = Few members contribute to and participate in the festival.

This was something which had been overlooked by program supervisors who did not appreciate how important this Buddhist ceremony could be for the effective functioning of farmer organizations at the village level.

**Step 4: Trial introduction of group self-evaluation.** With the revised and reworded set of questions, GPs should spend a morning or an afternoon with about 10 groups each of which is willing to go through this exercise on a trial basis. A GP will act as the group's self-evaluation facilitator, though in the future this role will be played by a group member chosen for this purpose. The only requirement is that he or she be literate, though an enthusiastic personality is also helpful for getting active participation from members.

The GP and group will go through all the questions on a trial basis, seeking consensus from group members on which of the four descriptive statements best describes the group's situation with regard to the particular question. If there are any questions or objections about an item or its wording, this should be *noted on the card*. When the exercise has been completed, the GP and group should *review those items* where questions or objections were raised to clarify what the problem might be. Suggestions for improving the item (possibly dropping it) should be entertained and noted down.

**Step 5: Revisions based on initial trial.** When the methodology has been tested with the several groups (we suggest about 10, but the number could be as few as 6 or as many as 12), the GPs should review the results and feedback they have gotten. If only one or two groups have difficulty with a question but the others find it reasonable, it can be kept in the set. Suggested improvements in wording that seem helpful, even if Corning from only one group, can be made. Ideas for additional questions should be worked out with four alternative descriptive statements. Some testing of the wording for these should be done before they are included in the final set of questions.

The result of this step will be a refined final set of questions which can be reproduced on cards as described above, with provision for recording results on the back, as shown on the next page. These cards can be tied into a bundle, or even better, they can be kept in appropriate plastic or tin boxes which protect them from rain and other hazards.

**Step 6: Introduction to groups.** With the methodology pre-tested and revised in a participatory manner, with active involvement of GPs and PPP groups, it is ready for use within a country program. It should be made clear that even at this stage,

however, the first year's use will be experimental, and suggestions from all groups are welcome, so they do not see this as simply being imposed from above.

The first time the methodology is used, a GP will take the lead in introducing it and starting the self-evaluation process, but the group should be asked to designate one member who will be their self-evaluation facilitator. This person will take over the process *even during the first session* once it has been started by the GP, and he or she has been able to see how the GP presents the questions and leads the discussion.

The first step at this stage is for the group to review all of the questions in the master set and to decide which of these are desirable objectives for the group. It may choose as few as half a dozen or as many as two dozen, but probably not more to begin with. If it wants to add some items already at this stage, it is free to do so, and the GP can help the group to describe four alternative conditions. (There

should be some blank cards included in the pack provided to groups.) Those questions not chosen by the group can be put together in a separate section of the pack or box, tied with string or a rubber band.

Once there is agreement on which questions are to be used for the self-evaluation, the GP will begin discussion of each question, one by one. (The GP will hand over this responsibility to the group member chosen as self-evaluation facilitator after it is clear the group and the facilitator have a good idea of how this process works.) The score representing the statement which the group agrees on for each question should be written on the back of the card.

By putting the score on the back, it will not be visible when the cards are used again (probably a year later) and should not influence the evaluation at that time. If some members recollect the previous score or scores, this causes no problem. But it should be stressed that members are to focus on describing as best they can the current situation. After they have agreed on this and have written it down, they can compare the score with earlier ones, seeing whether or not they have improved their level of performance.

When all the selected questions have been discussed and decided on, the group should review their scores on the cards and decide *which ones represent the most significant shortcomings in performance* for the group. It should decide on its own agenda for improvement which focuses on one, two, three or more things (but

probably not more than half a dozen, otherwise its efforts will be too scattered). It should discuss *how best* to make the improvements desired and it should agree on a plan of action to achieve the goals of better performance.

**Follow-up.** By the end of this first self-evaluation, the whole group should have a good understanding of how this methodology works and how they can continue to use it in the future. It is desirable to fix some date for doing this self-evaluation on an annual basis. Perhaps the group has an anniversary date of its founding which can be the occasion for holding a regular meeting to conduct the self-evaluation. This was found useful by the farmer groups in Sri Lanka, who made it a special occasion combined with some commemorative observances and feasting.

After each self-evaluation has been done, the GP working with the group should review the evaluation results with the group officers, to reinforce the plan for dealing with any identified shortcomings. The results can be copied down by the GP and noted in the records the PPP keeps for each group. Where there is an IGA, the results should be communicated to it for its consideration of how constituent groups are progressing (or not).

The group should find the self-evaluation interesting and worthwhile enough that it needs no persuasion or reminding from the GP to follow up with at least annual repeats. Groups can use this methodology more often if they like. In the event that a group is disinterested or so disorganized that it cannot conduct regular self-evaluations, the GP can give encouragement. But failure to use this methodology may be indicative of other deficiencies.

Groups should not be forced to do self-evaluation if they are unwilling or unable to follow through. Where there is an IGA with active officers, they can encourage regular self-evaluations by all constituent groups. The GP should make every effort to get this process institutionalized within the groups and IGA so that its continuation does not depend on his or her efforts.

#### **4. Issues in participatory self-evaluation**

The approach of this field methodology is simple and amenable to considerable adaptation in its application. A number of issues can be identified of which PPP supervisors and Group Promoters should be aware.

**The problem of language.** Although numbers are used in this scheme, it is essentially more qualitative than quantitative. The success of this methodology depends on how well words are used and understood. For this reason, use of simple language has been stressed, with an emphasis on consulting the users of the methodology to get the best possible wording.

If members normally use a local language (even though they may be able to converse in English), the questions should be translated into the local language. Mechanical or literal translations should be avoided. Persons who are fluent in both languages and who understand the PPP and its goals should find wordings that are truly equivalent in meaning.

Sometimes it is hard to make an idea expressed in one language understood in another language. If this happens, very free translations to capture the spirit and intentions of the question should be sought or the question should be dropped. Sometimes other languages do not have adjectives that can be used to construct the “four-level” alternatives shown in Part II. The word for “some” may mean something more like “most” or like “a few” than a number mid-way between “most” and “a few” as in English. It is not necessary that the four alternatives represent exactly equal steps along a continuum, but approximating this is desirable.

The key concept behind the methodology is that the first description represents an excellent situation and the fourth represents a dismal situation. In between (a) *almost no room for improvement*, and (d) *immense scope for improvement* there are two situations. One (b) is a good circumstance with some room for improvement but no major problems, while the other (c) is a poor situation which is in need of much improvement.

If the same wording is maintained over time and if all groups use the same terminology, anyone can see when progress is being made or when not. The purpose of identifying which are the excellent and which are the dismal situations can be achieved with wordings that are only approximate. This is also true also for identifying performance levels that are more good than poor -- or more poor than good.

Having four alternatives rather than five pushes groups in the middle range of performance to decide whether they are more good than poor, or more poor than good, that is, whether their shortcoming in this regard is minor or major. If the methodology provided a middle alternative, groups might too quickly agree on this as a compromise, without exploring why some members think performance is poor or why others think it is good.

If a group cannot get consensus on either the second or third alternative, it can give itself a score of 1.5. This is a compromise between 1 and 2, which is all right if it best represents the group's situation. A group that thinks its performance is better than the second alternative but not perfect enough to match the first description could agree on a score of 2.5. While results get communicated in terms of numbers, it is still the words behind them that are the most important element of this methodology.

**The comparability of numbers.** The steps described for developing this field methodology in specific country settings should produce questions and answers that are both reasonably valid and reliable. But since one is not conducting independent measures of each performance variable, people can always wonder how comparable the results are.

Since the principal purposes of this methodology are self-education and self-improvement, this problem of comparability of numbers is not as serious as with an activity whose sole purpose is evaluation. There are many benefits to be attained from the process of discussion within groups no matter how reliable and valid the results are for formal evaluation. But this system intends to help supervisors keep track of group performance too.

The methodology is clearly most reliable for monitoring the progress of individual groups by comparing them with their own previous self-evaluations. It should produce valid results also for comparing the performance of groups within a cluster where they know each other's work and have each other as implicit standards of comparison. The further one stretches comparison across space or over time, the less sure one can be that similar increments are being identified and contrasted, but this applies to more formal evaluation tools as well.

**Avoiding errors.** There are two kinds of errors that groups can make in self-evaluation. They can think they are performing better than they really are, or they can underestimate how well they are performing. Two principles derived from the initial experience with this methodology in Sri Lanka can help to reduce such errors.

First, make it a policy that the results of this self-evaluation are not to be used for either prizes or penalties. The exercise is for a group's own self-strengthening. Those with the highest scores should not get any special financial or other rewards because their good performance should be ample reward in itself. Neither should low-scoring groups be chastised, embarrassed or otherwise punished. Poor performance should prompt GPs and others to make greater efforts to help raise the level of performance, which benefits members. If some external rewards or punishments result from this exercise, groups may score themselves higher on the scale than they know they belong.

Second, the process of deciding on what score the group should have on a particular item should never be hurried. The GP or group member facilitating the discussion should not move on quickly to the next item but instead should solicit all members to comment on the question, voicing any opinions or experience they think are relevant. If discussion is slow to begin with, this should be accepted. Once the group becomes familiar with the process, ideas will flow. The facilitator indeed will then more likely have the problem of moving discussion along because each item could take an hour. But 15-20 minutes for an item is not too much. Once discussion starts flowing, short-comings that have been ignored or suppressed will come to the surface and honesty is likely to prevail. Experience suggests that people's groups are if anything too critical of their limitations rather than blind to these.

**Making comparisons.** For purposes of comparison, as noted already, a group's previous assessments of its performance are most relevant. Where has progress been made, and where not? Have there been improvements made on those items put on last year's agenda for action? These questions are certainly the most important.

From a PPP supervisor's point of view, however, it may be desirable to have some overall picture of group performance, not just to compare groups with themselves. For this, calculating average scores will give some idea of performance trends. It



will be good to “track” not just the average score for all groups, but to have average scores for all groups on a particular item, like repayment of loans or size of leadership pool. Rather than just know total trends, it will be instructive to see what if any improvement is being made in particular categories of interest to those responsible for PPP performance.

In order to monitor overall performance and progress of groups in an area or in a whole country program, supervisors may think it desirable to have some common set of core questions that all groups will address on a regular basis. This gives some basis for making standardized comparisons, though it should be kept in mind that comparisons based on individual questions will be less valid and revealing than careful study of the groups’ total self-evaluations.

A small set of standard questions will also call groups’ attention to things that the Program itself gives priority to. For example, including a question about women’s participation in all group self-evaluations should increase awareness about the extent to which women have an active role in group management. (If a group has no women members, the fact that it must consider the question on a regular basis may suggest to the men that it should open up their membership.) If a PPP country programme has a large credit component and repayment of loans presents a special difficulty, having all groups consider their repayment record annually is one way to heighten consciousness and improve performance in this regard.

However, supervisors must realize that specifying some common "core" questions for all groups’ self-evaluation represents a compromise with the principle that this methodology "belongs" to the groups and not to the Programme. It is likely that these “core” items will be ones that the groups would select for themselves anyway, especially if the choice of standard questions is made with the IGAs. After individual groups have made chosen the set of questions they want to consider on a regular basis, the GP may ask them to add a few more questions for the sake of strengthening the Programme as a whole. If there is resistance and GPs cannot easily persuade members of the value of these additional questions, any that are objected to should be dropped rather than impose any self-evaluation questions on a group. Where there is a lack of rapport and trust, this indicates a potential problem for the Programme.

**The problem of objectivity.** It may be thought by some that this methodology is limited as an evaluation tool because it is entirely “subjective.” In fact, if the

scores are recorded only after some collective discussion, 10-15 minutes, maybe even half an hour, during which time members compare their understanding and assessment of the “true situation” in their group, considerable “objectivity” is gained. It can be argued that this method is more objective than when an outsider comes in with an interview schedule and asks questions of individuals, who do not have to compare and justify their views in front of one another. They have no obligation to speak truthfully or fully with this outsider whom they do not know and who probably knows little about the workings of the group anyway. Their misunderstanding of his questions and his misunderstandings of their answers are likely to add up to significant miscommunication. (1)

So one reason for adopting this more “subjective” method of self-evaluation for groups is dissatisfaction that more “objective” methods can produce more valid results. This does not mean that no outside evaluations should be conducted. This methodology does not substitute for all standard kinds of evaluation. There is a place for them, if only because donors are accustomed to dealing with such data and may be uncomfortable relying entirely on this new methodology until they have become familiar with it and what it can accomplish.

As stated previously, this methodology is intended only in part to serve the purposes of standard evaluation techniques. It is thus best seen as complementary to such techniques. PPP supervisors should emphasize its contribution to self-education, self-improvement, and improving training and other assistance efforts, using the information generated by this method then for Programme level evaluations of performance and progress as well.

With this field methodology, the People’s Participation Programme is taking a large step toward operationalizing and institutionalizing its philosophy of self-reliant participatory development. Even without the services of a GP, each group and IGA can continue this method of self-evaluation for as long as it exists, making whatever modifications are thought to be useful. In its pack or box of self-evaluation cards, the group or IGA can maintain a history of its progress made over many years. Where members conclude that improvements have been made, or where they find that their performance has deteriorated, this is recorded by themselves and for themselves. In their hands is placed a power to self-identify and self-correct problems that should make collective action a greater force for development at the grassroots than has been seen before.

## **Part 2: Questions for participatory self-evaluation**

### **Inventory of questions for participatory self-evaluation**

#### **1. Group operation and management**

##### **A. Management responsibilities**

Style of management  
Sharing of responsibility (within group)  
Supervision of officers (by members)  
Rotation of officers  
Pool of leadership  
Specialized functions

##### **B. Meetings and participation**

Frequency of meetings  
Decision making method  
Speed and effectiveness  
Member participation  
Women's participation  
Productivity of meetings  
Attendance at meetings  
Records of meetings  
Progress reports  
Facilities for meetings

##### **C. Operation of group**

Constitution and by-laws  
Communication  
Quality of discussion  
Interpersonal relations  
Discipline  
Assignment of tasks  
Conflict management  
Problem-solving

##### **D. Work of group)**

Work plan  
Assistance of group promoter  
Group goals  
Group achievement  
Group work  
Contributions

**2. Economic performance**

Income generation  
Economic diversification  
Expansion  
Production  
Production credit  
Emergency loans  
Assets  
Savings  
Group purchases

**3. Technical operation and management**

Improved technologies  
local technologies  
Technical information  
Maintenance  
Quality control  
Technical responsibilities  
Technical diffusion

**4. Financial operation and management**

Financial affairs  
Financial records  
Depreciation  
Profits  
Repayment of loans

Security of resources  
Contributions of resources  
Inventories

## **5. Group institutionalization and self-reliance**

### **A. Potential Autonomy**

Progress toward self-reliance  
Independence from group promoter  
Meetings without group promoter  
legal status  
Resource mobilization  
Broader benefits

### **B. Membership base**

Group solidarity  
Knowledge sharing  
Members' self-confidence  
Membership growth  
Reasons for group formation  
Ensuring effective leadership

### **C. Knowledge base**

Monitoring and evaluation  
Evaluation for self-management  
Experimental approach

### **D. Broadening the base**

Spreading program  
Linkages outside program  
Linkages within program  
Linkages with other local organizations  
Support of program at several levels  
Community support  
Ability to resist pressures

Continuation of group

## 6. Other considerations

Access to assets  
Reducing inequality  
Improvements in nutrition  
Literacy  
Health improvements  
Socially undesirable activities  
Environmental protection  
Agricultural improvement  
Breaking impediments  
Balanced program

## 1. Group operation and management

### A. Management Responsibilities

Style of management: How are group activities managed?

3 = Decisions are always made with all members' knowledge and participation.

2 = Decisions are usually made with all members' knowledge and participation.

1 = Decisions are sometimes made with all members' knowledge and participation.

0 = Decisions are never made with all members' knowledge and participation.

Sharing of responsibility: How widely are responsibilities for group activities shared?

3 = Most or all members have responsibility as officers, committee members, activity captains, or in other roles.

2 = Many members have such responsibilities.

1 = Some members have such responsibilities.

0 = Only a few members have such responsibilities

Supervision of officers: How much oversight do members give officers?

3 = Members are very active and informed in keeping track of what their officers do on behalf of the group.

2 = Members are sometimes active and informed in keeping track of what their officers do.

1 = Members are from time to time active and informed in keeping track of what their officers do.

0 = Members pay no attention to their officers' activities.

Rotation of officers: How much sharing of responsibilities is there?

3 = Officers serve a fixed term and then others are selected to take their places.

2 = Officers replaced from time to time but not regularly

1 = Officers can be replaced if they do not perform well.

0 = Officers once chosen remain in their posts indefinitely.

Pool of leadership: How large is the number of persons from whom the group can draw its leaders?

3 = Most members are ready, willing and able to assume positions of leadership in the group.

2 = A quarter to a half of members are ready, willing and able to assume positions of leadership.

1 = Only one or two members are ready, willing and able to be leaders.

0 = Nobody is ready willing or able to assume leadership.

Specialized functions: How much organization is there to meet special needs of group for certain kinds of expertise, supervision, etc.?

3 = Group has many specialized roles or committees to deal with particular tasks like marketing, training, bookkeeping, etc.

2 = Group has some specialized roles or committees to deal with particular tasks.

1 = Group has at least one specialized role or committee.

0 = Group has no specialized roles or committees.

## B. Meetings and participation

Frequency of meetings: How are group meetings held?

3 = Weekly and whenever needed

- 2 = At least monthly and more often if required
- 1 = At least every two months on average
- 0 = Irregularly

Decision making method: How are decisions made?

- 3 = By consensus with agreement reached by all
- 2 = By majority vote.
- 1 = By group officers
- 0 = Not made in any regular way

[Note that by consensus (3) or by majority vote (2), members can decide that their officers should make certain decisions on behalf of the group; this indicates group solidarity and organizational capability rather than the opposite.]

Speed and effectiveness of decision making: How quickly are decisions made and with what likelihood that they will be implemented?

- 3 = Decisions as a rule are made quickly and effectively.
- 2 = Decisions are made quickly but not always followed up, or even if made slowly are generally given effect
- 1 = Decisions are only sometimes made quickly or effectively.
- 0 = Decisions take a long time and are seldom effective.

Member participation: How fully do members participate in the decision making and work of the group?

- 3 = All members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Everyone feels free to speak up and play an active role.
- 2 = Most members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Most feel free to speak and play an active role.
- 1 = Some members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Some feel free to speak up and play a role.
- 0 = Few members participate actively in meetings and group activities. Few feel free to speak up and play a role.

Women's participation: How fully and actively do women participate in the operation and management of the group?



- 3 = Women participate as fully as men or even more fully in running the group.
- 2 = Women participate almost as fully in running the group.
- 1 = Women participate somewhat in running the group.
- 0 = Women do not participate in running the group.

Productivity of meetings: How productive are group meetings?

- 3 = Group meetings are always very productive; time is well spent; decisions clearly made and followed up.
- 2 = Group meetings are usually reasonably productive.
- 1 = Group meetings are sometimes productive.
- 0 = Group meetings are never productive.

Attendance at meetings: How many members usually come to meetings?

- 3 = Almost all members usually come; average attendance over 90%.
- 2 = Most members usually come; average attendance 70-90%.
- 1 = A majority of members usually come; average attendance 50-70%.
- 0 = Less than a majority usually come; average attendance under 50%.

Records of meetings: Does group keep useful minutes of meetings?

- 3 = Secretary or other officer always keeps complete and correct minutes.
- 2 = Secretary or other officer usually keep reasonably accurate minutes.
- 1 = Somebody usually keeps some minutes of meetings.
- 0 = Nobody keeps any useful minutes

Progress reports: Does group maintain and utilize progress reports?

- 3 = Group has and pays attention to monthly progress reports.
- 2 = Group has and pays attention to quarterly or less frequent progress reports
- 1 = Group has occasional progress reports.
- 0 = Group has no progress reports.

Facilities for meetings: How well provided for are group meetings?

- 3 = Meetings are held in a comfortable and congenial setting either through having a regular meeting place or a satisfactory rotation among members' homes.
- 2 = Meetings are held in a satisfactory place for everybody.

- 1 = Meetings are sometimes held in a satisfactory place.
- 0 = Meetings are held in uncomfortable and uncongenial settings.

### C. Operation of group

Constitution and by-laws: Does the group have a written basis?

- 3 = Group has clear and adequate constitution and by-laws.
- 2 = Group has some written basis for selecting officers, holding meetings handling funds, etc.
- 1 = Group has some agreed precedents for selecting officers, holding meetings, handling funds, etc.
- 0 = Group has no basis for selecting officers, holding meetings, handling funds, etc.

[Note that groups need not start with formal written documents; they can operate by consensus and indeed may be more effective beginning this way; but for continuity and minimizing misunderstandings and problems later, on some written basis for group operation is desired]

Communications: How good is communication within the group?

- 3 = All members are always kept informed about plans, programs etc.
- 2 = Most members are usually kept informed.
- 1 = Some members are generally kept informed.
- 0 = No members are as a rule kept informed.

Quality of discussion: How do members communicate with one another?

- 3 = There is always frank and constructive discussion.
- 2 = There is usually frank and constructive discussion.
- 1 = There is sometimes frank and constructive discussion.
- 0 = There is seldom frank and constructive discussion.

Interpersonal relations: How do members relate to one another?

- 3 = All members maintain friendly and mutually supportive relations.
- 2 = Most members maintain friendly and supportive relations
- 1 = Some members maintain friendly and supportive relations.

0 = No members maintain friendly and supportive relations.

Discipline: How is group able to deal with problems among members, such as laziness, non-attendance of meetings, shirking tasks, or stealing group property if these arise? Are there provisions for fines, or even expulsion from membership in serious cases?

3 = Group is able to impose and get accepted any penalties for behavior judged by other members to be harmful to group.

2 = Group is able to persuade any members to stop or avoid harmful behavior.

1 = Group sometimes able to stop harmful behavior by members.

0 = Group is unable to prevent or avoid harmful behavior.

[Note that (3) is not that (3) is not to be judged as necessarily 'better' than (2) since persuasion may be preferable to penalties; but the possibility of penalties (3) usually makes persuasion (2) more effective, and it for this reason represents greater group capability]

Assignment of new tasks: Are all members clear about their tasks within group and satisfied that these are assigned fairly?

3 = All members are clear about tasks and consider them fair.

2 = Most members are clear about tasks and consider them fair.

1 = Some members are clear about tasks and consider them fair.

0 = Few members are clear about tasks and consider them fair.

Conflict management: How able is a group to resolve conflicts?

3 = Group is always able to resolve conflicts among members and with any external bodies.

2 = Group is usually able to resolve such conflicts.

1 = Group is sometimes able to resolve such conflicts.

0 = Group is never able to resolve such conflicts.

Problem-solving: Is a systematic problem-solving approach followed?

3 = Always.

2 = Usually.

1 = Sometimes.

0 = Never.

D. Work of group:

Work plan: Are group activities guided by a suitable work plan?

3 = Group follows detailed but appropriately flexible plan that is worked out in advance with members' agreement.

2 = Group has a firm work plan, but it has some shortcomings that can be corrected with experience.

1 = Group has an incomplete work plan that needs improvement.

0 = Group has no work plan, everything done on ad hoc basis.

Assistance of group promoter: Does the group assist the group promoter in his or her work?

3 = Group actively takes initiative to go beyond his or her suggestions.

2 = Group assists GP and goes beyond his or her suggestions.

1 = Group accepts GP and his or her suggestions.

0 = Group is indifferent to GP and his or her suggestions.

Group goals: How well are group goals understood by all members?

3 = Goals are understood by all members.

2 = Goals are understood by most members.

1 = Goals are understood by some members.

0 = Goals are understood by no members.

[When discussing this question, members may ask each other to try what they understand to be the group's goals, to test whether there is agreement on them.]

Group achievement: How well are the goals of the group achieved?

3 = Goals are fully achieved.

2 = Goals are generally achieved.

1 = Goals are partly achieved.

0 = Goals are not at all achieved.

[In discussing this question, the group may usefully discuss also the reasons why members may think the goals are not being fully achieved.]

Group work: How is group work shared among members?

3 = Group work is clearly and fairly shared among all members.

2 = Group work is participated in by most members.

1 = Group work is done by some members.

0 = Group work is not clearly or fairly shared.

Contributions: How much and willingly do members contribute hoes, buckets, etc. to the work of the group?

3 = All members contribute tools, implements, etc. whenever needed.

2 = Most members usually contribute tools, etc. when needed.

1 = Some members contribute tools, etc. when needed.

0 = Members never contribute tools, etc. when needed.

## **2. Economic performance**

Income generation: To what extent has the group succeeded in income generation?

3 = Group has been very successful in raising member incomes.

2 = Group has been fairly successful in raising member incomes.

1 = Group has been a bit successful in raising member incomes.

0 = Group has been unsuccessful in raising member incomes.

Economic diversification: To what extent is the group able to diversify economic activities, for example, to take up fish farming?

3 = Group has diversified into many economic activities.

2 = Group has diversified into several economic activities.

1 = Group has diversified into one new economic activity.

0 = Group has diversified into no new economic activities.

Expansion: How successful are activities as judged by expansion of scale?

3 = The scale of group activities has increased remarkably.

- 2 = The scale of group activities has increased somewhat.
- 1 = The scale of group activities has remained constant.
- 0 = The scale of group activities has had to be reduced.

Production: Has output of goods or services increased?

- 3 = Acreage planted and/or yields have increased substantially in agricultural activities, or output of non-agricultural goods.
- 2 = Acreage, yields or output have definitely increased.
- 1 = Acreage, yields or output have increased a little.
- 0 = Acreage, yields or output have not increased or even declined.

Production credit: Has group facilitated members' getting access to credit when needed for productive activities?

- 3 = All members now able to get whatever credit they need.
- 2 = Most members are able to get credit when needed.
- 1 = Some members are able to get credit when needed.
- 0 = No members are able to get credit when they need it.

Emergency loans: Has group established a fund or mechanism so members can get emergency loans when they need it (e.g. for medical emergency or other crisis situation) so members need not go to moneylenders?

- 3 = All members are able to get emergency loans and avoid indebtedness and impoverishing mortgages to outsiders.
- 2 = Most members are able to get emergency loans.
- 1 = Some members are able to get emergency loans.
- 0 = No members are able to get emergency loans.

Assets: How much has the group increased its assets (the combined value of fixed capital, equipment, working capital, inventories, savings, etc.)

- 3 = Group has substantially increased the value of its assets.
- 2 = Group has somewhat increased the value of its assets.
- 1 = Group has managed to maintain the value of its assets.
- 0 = Group has not maintained the value of its assets.

Savings: How has the group built up and managed its group fund?

3 = Group has rapidly increased its group fund through savings and is using these savings for dramatic group benefit.

2 = Group has increased its group fund with savings used for group benefit.

1 = Group has made some increase in its group fund but is not using this for much group benefit.

0 = Group has not increased its group fund.

Group purchases: Does group engage in purchases of production inputs, capital goods, or consumer goods to reduce the prices members must pay?

3 = Group makes regular beneficial purchases on behalf of members.

2 = Group makes occasional beneficial purchases for members.

1 = Group makes a few purchases to aid members.

0 = Group makes no purchases to aid members.

### **3. Technical operation and management**

Improved technologies: To what extent are members getting access to and using improved technologies?

3 = All members are acquiring knowledge of better technology.

2 = Most members are acquiring knowledge of better technology.

1 = Some members are acquiring knowledge of better technology.

0 = No members are acquiring knowledge of better technology.

Local technologies: To what extent does the group rely on locally- known technologies, local equipment and locally available materials?

3 = Local technologies, equipment, etc. are fully utilized

2 = Local technologies, equipment, etc. are frequently utilized

1 = Local technologies, equipment etc. are somewhat utilized

0 = Local technologies, equipment and materials are not utilized

Technical information: To what extent is the group working with extension personnel? [Which personnel are relevant depends on group's and members' needs; could be for agriculture, fisheries, marketing, small-scale industry, etc.]

- 3 = Group has regular and fruitful interactions with extension personnel (through visits to extension agents, visits by agents, written materials, etc.)
- 2 = Group has fairly good interactions with extension agents.
- 1 = Group has a little interaction with extension agents.
- 0 = Group has no interaction with extension personnel.

Maintenance: Does the group make provision for maintenance (as well as protection) of its equipment and facilities? This includes maintenance and repair of any buildings (shed, storehouse), vehicles (truck, motorcycles), equipment (grinding mill, pumps, saws, etc.)

- 3 = Group carries out excellent regular maintenance, so that there are no or very few breakdowns and no avoidable deterioration.
- 2 = Group does reasonably good and thorough maintenance.
- 1 = Group does some irregular maintenance.
- 0 = Group does no maintenance.

Quality control: Does the group monitor and improve quality, especially in producing non-agricultural goods and services?

- 3 = Group is organized for regular and rigorous quality control.
- 2 = Group is increasing its consciousness of the need for and is making provisions for quality control.
- 1 = Group is becoming aware of need for quality control.
- 0 = There is no consideration of quality control.

Technical responsibilities: How active and responsible are members for maintaining the technical performance of the group?

- 3 = All members feel responsible for maintaining and improving the technical performance of the activity, such as early detection of crop pests or diseases or sharpening grinder blades before they get dull.
- 2 = Most members feel responsible for technical performance.
- 1 = At least a few members feel responsible for technical performance.
- 0 = No members feel responsibility for technical performance.



Technical diffusion: Does technical know-how introduced and learned in group activities get adopted by members in their individual or family activities or by friends and neighbors?

3 = Technical knowledge gets widely and quickly spread.

2 = Technical knowledge gets often spread.

1 = Technical knowledge gets sometimes spread.

0 = Technical knowledge never gets spread.

#### **4. Financial operation and management**

Financial affairs: How is the business of the group managed?

3 = All members are informed and involved in financial decisions.

2 = Most members are informed and involved in financial decisions.

1 = Some members are informed and involved in financial decisions.

0 = Members are informed and involved in financial decisions; everything is managed by the group president or treasurer.

Financial records: How are accounts and other records maintained?

3 = Group keeps thorough and detailed written records of its production activities and all financial transactions.

2 = Group keeps some written records of its production activities and financial transactions.

1 = Group keeps a few written production and financial records.

0 = Group keeps no written production and financial records.

Depreciation: Does the group make provision for depreciation of its equipment and facilities? Does it set aside funds to replace the physical assets of the group when they are no longer functional, or has it made provision to get loans for replacement when needed?

3 = Group is fully protected to maintain its physical assets.

2 = Group is fairly well protected to maintain its assets over time.

1 = Group is somewhat protected to maintain its assets over time.

0 = Group is not at all protected to maintain its assets over time.

Profits: How does the group handle the profits from its economic activities?

- 3 = Group saves and reinvests all profits for expansion of activities.
- 2 = Group saves and reinvests some profits.
- 1 = Group saves and reinvests few profits.
- 0 = Group saves and reinvests no profits.

Repayment of loans: How promptly and fully do members repay loans?

- 3 = All members repay their loans promptly and fully.
- 2 = Most members repay their loans promptly and fully.
- 1 = Some members repay their loans on time and sufficiently.
- 0 = Few or no members repay their loans as expected.

Security of resources: How are the group's financial resources kept?

- 3 = Group funds are all kept securely in a bank account drawing interest.
- 2 = Group funds are kept securely in a bank account without interest or are loaned out non-institutionally to draw interest.
- 1 = Group funds are sometimes kept in bank or loaned out carefully.
- 0 = Group funds are left in individual hands or are loaned out privately without assurance of repayment.

Contribution of resources: How adequate are contributions

- 3 = Member contributions are fully sufficient and fair.
- 2 = Member contributions are substantial and usually fair.
- 1 = Member contributions are modest and not often unfair.
- 0 = Member contributions are insignificant or unfair.

Inventories: How does the group manage the stock of products it has manufactured and/or the crops it has produced?

- 3 = Inventories are very well managed and maintained with no spoilage of crops, **or** no excess build-up of unsold **goods**.
- 2 = Inventory is fairly well managed with little spoilage or buildup.
- 1 = Inventory is periodically managed with some avoidable spoilage or buildup, imposing some costs on the group.
- 0 = Inventory is unmanaged with substantial spoilage and/or buildup, so group incurs serious losses.

## **5. Group institutionalization and self-reliance**

### **A. Potential Autonomy**

Progress towards self-reliance: How dependent is the group upon the group promoter?

3 = Group can now or very soon operate essentially on its own with only minimal assistance from GP and program.

2 = Group can within 6-12 months operate on its own with minimal assistance from GP and program.

1 = Group can within 12-24 months operate on its own with minimal assistance from GP and program.

0 = Group cannot within foreseeable future operate on its own.

[Lengths of time specified for categories 2 and 1 for ending dependence on GP can vary from country program to country program, so these numbers should be specified with regard to country conditions]

Independence from group promoter: How able is group to operate without direction or intervention of GP?

3 = Group always tries to solve a problem itself before taking it up with the GP.

2 = Group often tries to solve a problem by itself before seeking the help of GP.

1 = Group occasionally tries to solve a problem by itself.

0 = Group never tries to solve a problem by itself.

Meetings without group promoter: How well does group carry on its meetings without group promoter?

3 = Group is able to meet regularly and effectively without GP.

2 = Group can meet without GP, but GP's periodic attendance at meetings is necessary for regular and effective meetings

1 = Group can from time to time meet effectively without GP.

0 = Group cannot meet successfully without GP present.

Legal status: What is the legal status of the group?

- 3 = Group has all necessary recognition and approval to be able to get loans, hold property, etc.
- 2 = Group has some ability to get loans, hold property, etc.
- 1 = Group has plans for getting recognition and approval.
- 0 = Group has no legal status and no plans for getting this.

Resource mobilization: To what extent is the group able to mobilize resources from within the group and/or externally to meet its needs?

- 3 = Group can now always mobilize resources from savings, loans, sales or other means to meet its financial needs.
- 2 = Group can mobilize most of the resources it needs now from its own resources or from outside.
- 1 = Group can mobilize some resources internally or externally.
- 0 = Group is unable to mobilize resources to meet its needs.

Broader benefits: How able is group to produce benefits beyond those to group members as group members? Are benefits being generated also for individuals and for the community?

- 3 = Group has produced and is producing substantial benefits beyond its original economic activities, such as building a school or repairing roads.
- 2 = Group has created some benefits beyond its original economic activities.
- 1 = Group has considered producing benefits not in its plan.
- 0 = Group has undertaken and is concerned only with original activities.

## B. Membership Base

Group solidarity: Do members help each other apart from group activities?

- 3 = Group members frequently help each other with harvesting, loans, or other acts of service to others.
- 2 = Members sometimes help each other.
- 1 = Members once in a while help each other.
- 0 = Members never help each other.

Knowledge sharing: Do members who get training share their new knowledge with others?

- 3 = Group actively provides for the sharing of members' new knowledge and skills with others, both other members and even persons outside the group.
- 2 = Group sharing of members' new knowledge
- 1 = Sharing of new knowledge occurs only at individual initiative.
- 0 = There is no sharing of new knowledge.

Members' self confidence: Do members show increased self confidence as result of participation in group activities?

- 3 = All members have gained much self-confidence from group.
- 2 = Most members have gained some self-confidence from group
- 1 = Some members have gained some self-confidence from group
- 0 = Members have not gained self-confidence from group.

Membership growth: Has group membership grown? Or have new groups arisen alongside original group?

- 3 = Group has enjoyed substantial increase in membership, or to keep its size small, parallel group or groups have been started because other have been impressed with the group's accomplishments.
- 2 = Group has enjoyed some increase in membership.
- 1 = Group has had no increase in membership.
- 0 = Group has had a decline in membership.

Reasons for group formation: Why was the group formed?

- 3 = Because of shared conviction that collective self-help would improve the position of all members.
- 2 = Because some members had conviction about collective self-help and others anticipated personal benefits.
- 1 = Because members anticipated cheaper credit or other material inducements.
- 0 = Because the group promoter got people together, not that they had any clear idea about purposes of group action.

Ensuring effective leadership: Does group have capability or experience in replacing ineffective leadership?

- 3 = Group has replaced ineffective leadership or is very confident that it could and would do so; it has specific procedures and provisions for this.

- 2 = Group agrees that it should and could replace ineffective leadership.
- 1 = Group willing to consider replacing ineffective leadership.
- 0 = Group afraid to take action to replace ineffective leader.

### C. Knowledge base

Monitoring and evaluation: How does the group get and ensure feed-back on its performance?

- 3 = Group has well established procedures and roles for monitoring and evaluating group performance.
- 2 = Group has periodic monitoring and evaluation of Its performance.
- 1 = Group has occasional monitoring and evaluation or its performance.
- 0 = Group has no provision for monitoring and evaluating performance.

Evaluation for self-management: Does group use participatory monitoring and evaluation for improving capacities of organization?

- 3 = Group maintains good records and analyzes them regularly.
- 2 = Group maintains records and analyzes them periodically.
- 1 = Group maintains some records and considers them.
- 0 = Group maintains no records.

Experimental approach: Do members adopt an empirical, trial-and-error method to experiment with and test innovations?

- 3 = Members all very active in innovative experimentation.
- 2 = Some members very active in innovative experimentation.
- 1 = A few members active in innovative experimentation
- 0 = No members active in innovative experimentation.

### D. Broadening the base

Spreading the program: Does group take initiative to spread the program to other areas and other groups?

- 3 = Group has helped numerous other groups to get started or to become more successful.

- 2 = Group has helped some other groups to get started or to become more successful.
- 1 = Group has helped one other group to get started or become more successful.
- 0 = Group has not helped other groups.

Linkages outside program: How does group relate to government agencies?

- 3 = Group has excellent interaction with many relevant agencies that can help it achieve its goals.
- 2 = Group has some good interaction with several relevant agencies.
- 1 = Group has a few interactions with some agencies.
- 0 = Group has no reliable interaction with any agencies.

Linkages within program: How does group relate to other parts of PPP?

- 3 = Group has excellent linkages with other PPP groups through inter-group association (IGA) and with PPP staff and supporting non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
- 2 = Group has some good linkages with IGA, PPP and NGOs.
- 1 = Group has a few linkages with IGA and NGOs, or to PPP.
- 0 = Group has no reliable linkages with IGA or NGOs, or even to PPP.

Linkages with other local organizations: Does group have link-ages with other groups at the local level, like cooperatives, church associations, youth clubs, etc.?

- 3 = Group has very active and good cooperation with other voluntary organizations at local level.
- 2 = Group has some very good cooperation with other voluntary organizations at local level.
- 1 = Group has at least one cooperative link with another voluntary organization at local level.
- 0 = Group has no links with other voluntary organizations.

Support of program at several levels: Does inter-group association monitor and assist groups within program?

- 3 = IGA actively and effectively oversees group activities and takes steps to help weaker groups, utilizing the skills and experience of stronger groups.
- 2 = IGA undertakes some monitoring and assistance of groups.

- 1 = IGA has plans for monitoring and assisting groups.
- 0 = IGA does not exist or does nothing to help groups.

Community support: How much understanding and support has the group created within the community?

- 3 = Group enjoys strong and enthusiastic support from the community at large for its activities and continuation.
- 2 = Group has good understanding and support from some parts of the community, such as chief or local administrators.
- 1 = Group has a little understanding and support from the community.
- 0 = Group has no understanding and support from the community.

Ability to resist pressures: How able is group to withstand economic or social pressure from opponents of collective self-reliance, such as merchants or shopkeepers who lose from group bulk purchase of consumer goods or officials who

want to keep rural people dependent?

- 3 = Group fully united to resist hostile outside pressures.
- 2 = Group generally united in resisting pressures.
- 1 = Group somewhat united in resisting pressures.
- 0 = Group not at all united in resisting pressures.

Continuation of groups: How confident is the group that it can maintain itself after the FAO-assisted program is withdrawn some time in the future?

- 3 = Group is quite confident it can maintain itself on its own.
- 2 = Group is somewhat confident it can maintain itself on its own.
- 1 = Group thinks it might be able to maintain itself on its own.
- 0 = Group lacks confidence it can maintain itself on its own.

## **6. Other considerations**

Access to assets: Does group have access to needed resources such as land for growing crops or to oxen and ploughs for ploughing?

- 3 = Group has assured access to all needed resources.
- 2 = Group has usual access to needed resources.
- 1 = Group has occasional access to needed resources.



0 = Group has no access to needed resources.

Reducing inequality: Does the group through its activities contribute to more equal income and status of its members (and others)?

3 = Group contributes substantially to equalizing opportunities and outcomes for members (and others in the community).

2 = Group contributes somewhat to equalizing opportunities and outcomes.

1 = Group does not make more unequal opportunities and outcomes.

0 = Group contributes to the maintenance and increase of inequality in opportunities and outcomes.

Improvements in nutrition: Has food intake increased and/or is there better choice of food as a result of group activities?

3 = Members and their families enjoy greater amounts and better variety of food a result of group activities (directly through group production activities or indirectly as result of income earned).

2 = Members and their families enjoy improved amounts and variety of food as a result of group activities.

1 = Members and their families have some improvement in the amount or variety of food as a result of group activities.

0 = Members and their families have no improvement.

Literacy: Has group activity contributed to the spread of literacy where this was limited before?

3 = Group has helped or encouraged all members to become literate.

2 = Group has helped or encouraged some members to become literate.

1 = Group has helped or encouraged a few members to become literate.

0 = Group has helped or encouraged no members to become literate.

Health improvements: Has group taken steps to increase its members' knowledge and practices for preventing illness and reducing its effects, such as malaria prevention and control, or vaccination of children, or improved sanitation in the community?

3 = All members have much better health knowledge and practices.

2 = Most members have better health knowledge and practices.

- 1 = Some members have better health knowledge and practices.
- 0 = No members have better health knowledge and practices.

Socially undesirable activities: How conscious are groups of the social effects of their activities?

- 3 = Group is unwilling to undertake activities that have negative social consequences even if these are profitable (such as beer brewing, or growing crops that cause soil erosion).
- 2 = Group is concerned about activities with negative social consequences and tries to avoid or reduce such these.
- 1 = Group at least acknowledges negative social consequences of certain activities.
- 0 = Group is oblivious or unconcerned about negative social consequences.

Environmental protection: Does group take action to protect and improve the natural environment, by planting trees, combating erosion, etc.?

- 3 = Group has active program to protect/improve environment.
- 2 = Group has several activities to protect/improve environment.
- 1 = Group has one or two activities to protect and improve environment.
- 0 = Group does nothing to protect and improve environment.

Agricultural improvement: Do members participate in agricultural shows and other activities that promote a better level and status of agriculture?

- 3 = Members are very active in agricultural activities outside and inside community.
- 2 = Members are somewhat active in agricultural activities.
- 1 = Members are occasionally active in agricultural activities.
- 0 = Members are never active in agricultural activities.

Breaking impediments: How successful is the group identifying and removing barriers to productive activity?

- 3 = Group has been able to make major improvements in members' situation, such as ensuring timely and adequate delivery of fertilizer before planting season.
- 2 = Group has been able to make several improvements.
- 1 = Group has been able to make at least one improvement.

0 = Group has been unable to break any impediments to production.

Balanced program. Does the group strive for and maintain a balance between economic (individual benefit) and social (community benefit) activities?

3 = Group has active program of economic and social activities.

2 = Group has active program of either economic activity or social activity with some of the other kind of activity.

1 = Group has some economic activities or some social activities, but not both.

0 = Group has little program for either kind of activities.

### **Footnotes:**

(1) Major and intrinsic flaws in conventional “objective” social science research are documented and analyzed in Campbell et al. (1979). When villagers’ answers to standard, properly conducted surveys were compared with the “real” situation as two anthropologists and a linguist were able to construct in three rural villages of Nepal, it turned out that average errors of 50%, 100%, even 150% were common on questions as simple as “how much land do you own?” or “how much labor did you contribute to your village’s group projects last year?” Campbell and associates concluded that “non-sampling errors are so great, and unavoidable, that evaluators and researchers would be better off conducting smaller, more intensive and longer-term studies than the usual kind of large sample surveys with standard (long) questionnaires that are completed during a single visit. Not only the reliability but the validity of such instruments is suspect. For a shorter and more accessible version of the Nepal study, see Stone and Campbell (1984), which focuses on the demographic aspects of their critical evaluation of standard “objective” social science methodologies.

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