

Haryana Community Forestry Project

Haryana Forest Department

**Training of Trainers on
Refresher Training for VRMC members
for
VRMC Strengthening**

Developed by

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Background

Village Resource Management Committees (VRMCs) are a critical component of the Haryana Community Forestry Project. The project has adopted various strategies to develop the VRMCs into strong, capable and effective resource management institutions. These measures and strategies are participatory planning and implementation, imparting training to develop knowledge, attitude and skills, provision of link workers and resource management fund, formulation of guidelines for formation of democratic and equitable VRMCs, linkage with Panchayat, norms and guidelines for functioning of VRMCs (model bye-laws), identification of capability areas for VRMCs and their regular monitoring.

However, as the VRMC capability assessment exercise shows, there are only a few VRMCs whose functioning can be considered satisfactory. There are areas of weaknesses and gaps for which the local project staff are partly responsible – such as unavailability of PA, microplan, tripartite agreement, cash books, microproject logbooks and farmers record cards, shortcutting the process of VRMC formation, inadequate follow up of training etc. However, it has also been observed that the VRMCs functioning suffers from various weaknesses on their own account. Such weaknesses are reflected in irregular or no meetings, improper record keeping, stagnant membership at 50%, almost no follow up on micro-plan activities which are not supported under HCFP, inefficient link workers etc. In the absence of an active and functioning VRMC, the institution has been reduced at many places to only the office bearers. This may have serious consequences for the sustainability of the resource as well as the VRMC. There is a need to generate initiative among the VRMC members, guide them in areas which constrain them and facilitate their development as strong, capable and effective resource management institutions.

Objectives

VRMC level Training

Two days, four to five hours per day in the forenoon or afternoon as per the convenience of the VRMC, in village, whole VRMC

- Discuss issues related to VRMC functioning such as meeting, membership, microplanning, etc. in relation to the bye-laws of the VRMC.
- Review and assess the record keeping, maintenance & utilisation of assets and provide advice for improvement
- Reinforce the need for activating the VRMCs and making them strong, capable and effective institutions.
- Facilitate preparation of an action plan for strengthening the VRMCs.

Cluster level Training

Two days, seven to eight hours per day, at cluster level, selected 6-8 members of the VRMC.

- Provide refresher training to VRMC members on selected topics.
- Discuss issues related to organisational and financial sustainability.

Selection of villages

Not all the villages need be selected for this training in the first instance. It has been decided to give priority to those villages which could be placed in the category of "medium" or "good" as far as the capability ratings go. Also those villages that have more areas under VWL should be given priority along with villages that have water harvesting dams. As per the information available (as on 31st Jan 2003), 34 villages have at least 25 Ha. VWL, while 72 have VWL area ranging between 10 and 25 Ha.

Scheduling of VRMC and Cluster level Training

It is suggested that all the villages in a cluster should be covered first. It is important that all the villages in the cluster are covered by the same group of trainers. Cluster level training would follow the VRMC level training. It is also suggested that the gap between VRMC and cluster level training should not be more than 15 days.

It is also important to ensure that the local operation staff associated with respective villages and clusters are involved during the VRMC level and Cluster level training. It is the local operation staff who would follow up on whatever is decided at the village level meeting, and where they could also participate in defining the nature and extent of their involvement in facilitating the VRMC to move forward. Also, there are various issues where the VRMC can not do much without the cooperation of the operation staff.

Planning for Cluster level Training

Though a list of various topics has been suggested for cluster level training, it is also important to recognise that in order to make the exercise more effective and useful, the trainers should include those issues for greater emphasis that they find to be critical. Such an issue may be related to topics they have covered in earlier training of VRMCs (Microplanning, Money Management, PME, Leadership & Communication Skills, VRMC Management). If so it would be useful to review those specific topics in detail during cluster level training. The trainers associated in a cluster would need to identify and list the areas and the amount of time they want to provide for each topic after completing the VRMC level training in a cluster.

Suggested Training Schedules

VRMC level Training

Day 1

Introduction

Purpose & Agenda

Desired capability & functioning of VRMCs

Review of VRMC functions & records

Snake & Ladder Game

Discussion on issues - regular meetings, increasing membership, elections

SWOT Analysis of the VRMC

Day 2

Issue of Financial Sustainability

Maintenance & management of community plantations (VWL & TGs)

Development of Action Plan

Close: Reinforce characteristics of a strong, capable & effective VRMC

Cluster level Training

Day 1

Introduction

Objectives & Issues to be taken up

Characteristics of strong, capable & effective community institutions

Desired level of functioning of VRMCs

Regular & effective meetings

How to write Minutes of Meetings

Microplan Revision

Day 2

How to write Cash Books

How to increase membership

Poor & gender sensitive management strategy for community plantations

Developing a Team and Trust

Forest management (optional)

Grazing management (optional)

ToT

Desired Capabilities of VRMCs

See List of Community Capability Indicators

Areas of Weaknesses and Concern in VRMCs

In Constitution, Functioning and Capabilities of VRMCs

Refer Conclusions of Community Capability Assessment Exercises

ToT

Characteristics of self-organised successful People's Institutions

- They are powered by a driving force that emerges within them.
- They sustain as long as they retain the loyalty of their members.
- They may enjoy their members loyalty either because of faith, or religious allegiance or economic rationality.
- They are governed by their own ethical and normative frameworks which may often differ from the normative framework used by external agents.

Factors present in successful community institutions involved in natural resource management

- Clearly defined boundaries of the resource
- Local organisations have clear legal mandate for development of the resource, which is unassailable.
- Group favouring reservation of the resource for common benefit more powerful than the group favouring private enclosure (encroachment)
- Homogeneity of purpose towards conservation and "common" benefit
- Existence of institutional arrangements for discussion of common problems
- Existence of enforceable rules against rule-breaking
- Members trust the village level leaders and consider the decisions taken by them to be fair.
- Member clearly see the benefits accruing or likely to accrue from the efforts of the local organisation.
- Use rules restricting time, place, technology or quantity of resource related to local conditions.
- Flexibility and equity in the application of rules. Graduated sanctions and contribution.
- Ease of detection of rule breaking
- Involvement of individuals affected by rules are able to participate in modifying them.
- Regular audit of resource conditions and behaviour of (potential) users by monitors, who are accountable to the users.

ToT

Messages to be effectively delivered at the VRMC level

VRMCs are not merely HCFP specific. Though they have been constituted under the project. They would continue whether there is HCFP or not and as long as the villagers want it to continue.

In order to develop the VRMCs should *interact with other departments*, and seek support from them to implement their microplans, particularly for those activities which are not supported by the project.

VRMC is a sub-committee of the Panchayat (at many places). VRMCs should *work closely with the Panchayat* and maintain a healthy relationship with the Panchayat. It should seek advisory, policy as well as financial support from the Panchayat.

VRMCs should *take initiative* for various activities and if needed, should seek support from outsiders. It should call its meetings itself, organise membership drives, maintain records and documents and organise the protection of plantations as well as harvesting and distribution of intermediate products by itself.

Each and every member of the executive body should be familiar with their role and responsibilities as well as the bye-laws (constitution) of the VRMC. The VRMC should act according to the bye-laws framed by it with respect to membership, elections, meetings, decision making, money management, management of its resources and benefit distribution. If needed the VRMC can modify the bye-laws as per the need and add more rules and regulations.

The VRMC should ensure that a copy of the micro-plan is provided to the Panchayat and BDO.

The VRMC should ensure that the Panchayat has passed the resolution related to its constitution and functioning, and that the tri-partite agreement has been signed. The VRMC should have copies of both.

The VRMC has to be careful that all its powers and duties do not get concentrated or limited to one or two individuals. Each and every individual associated with the committee should take up responsibilities according to their capabilities. Decisions should always be taken up in committee meetings, preferably through consensus.

The VRMCs should undertake:

- Regular meetings
- Regular membership promotion efforts till every household is its member
- Regular Planning
- Regular Implementation
- Regular monitoring
- Regular Record Keeping
- Regular elections (every two-three years)
- Regular assessment of their achievements

VRMCs should strive to become transparent, accountable, inclusive, equitable, informed and responsive institutions.

If the VRMC has not been constituted properly, it is better to organise an election with the participation whole village.

VRMC level training

Review the functioning of VRMCs

Discuss the rules and regulations as provided under the bye-law of the VRMC. Discuss issues related to regular monthly meetings, participation of members in meetings, agenda of meetings, functioning of link workers, membership, regular elections at intervals specified in the bye-laws.

Discuss issues related to relationship with Panchayat, maintenance, management and utilisation of assets such as Tree Groves, VWL, Chetna Kendra.

Review the record keeping, including resolution register, cash book, logbook, farmers record card, micro-plans, PA report, monitoring survey reports, PME reports, Monitoring board etc

Time needed:

Two hours

Material needed:

Capability assessment chart

Bye-law of VRMC and other records

Chart paper & Sketch pen

Issue	Status	Efforts made	Perception of VRMC about current status (satisfactory / unsatisfactory)	What can be done?
Membership				
Meetings				
Etc.				

VRMC level Training

Snake and Ladder Game

Use Snake and Ladder game to reinforce the importance of various issues in the functioning of the VRMCs. You can either use the sample given on next page or you can design your own frame.

Divide the trainees in three to five groups. Ask them to play the game using the dice and dots. Ask them to read and remember where they go up or down. After the game discuss the issues associated with snakes and ladders.

Remember:

Do not clutter the frame with too many messages.

Do not have more than five or six snakes and ladders in a game ending at 50.

The progression of issues/messages should correspond to the progress of the institution.

Associate important issues with longer snakes and ladders.

If you want to design and use your own frame, it is better to use it on day 2 of the training so that you can incorporate issues of concern related to the respective VRMC.

Time needed:

60 to 90 minutes for game, followed by discussion.

Material needed:

Snake and Ladder Frame

Dice and dots of four-six different colours

VRMC level Training

Issue: Low and Stagnant Membership

Members of an organisation determine its strength. The greater the number of members, the stronger is the organisation. An organisation which visibly works for the benefit of its members with commitment but without prejudice and partiality earns their support and trust.

Every organisation has a set of norms and rules for its members, which qualify an individual or household to be called a member. If the individual or household does not follow the rules or norms of membership, then the person loses the right of membership. Such rules and norms could relate to contributions (such as membership fees, voluntary labour), presence in meetings, etc.

As VRMC is a sub-committee of the Panchayat, the whole Gram Sabha represented by the Panchayat is eligible for its membership. In order to build up stake and interest of the villagers in the functioning of the VRMC and the activities of the project, the project has suggested a membership fee of Rs. Ten as contribution from the community side. In order to force the membership, the project staff had to resort to linking the payment of link workers, resource management fund, construction of Chetna Kendra to achievement of 50% membership. This has resulted in a situation where most of the VRMCs show a membership of only 50%. It is also not improbable that in some cases, the Link Workers had to pay the membership fees of certain individuals from their own pocket in order to achieve the target of 50%, as the release of their honorarium was linked to that.

The membership, and more particularly payment of membership fees, remains an issue of great concern. The rule of membership fees could turn out to be an "exclusionary" mechanism unless all the households decide to become members by conforming to this rule. It may have serious consequences, particularly at the time when the issue of harvesting and distribution of benefits comes up. The fee paying members may consider them "more privileged" than others.

Discuss:

How to increase membership?

Provide:

Tips for organising membership drives and increasing membership.

VRMC level Training

Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (or Limitations) Analysis of VRMCs

One of the more popular tools, designed to help us with critical analysis of an organisation such as VRMC is the matrix or framework of the SWOL or SWOT tool (Limitations are sometimes termed Threats). It can be used to assist with an organisational analysis, to assess the internal and external factors which determine the current performance of the VRMC. SWOT can also be used in other contexts: to evaluate performance in any given situation. It can also be helpful as the final "filter" before implementing activities or strategies.

How to do it

This is a simple framework in which any statement can be evaluated from the standpoint of its strengths and opportunities, while not overlooking its weaknesses and threats to success.

- ◆ Put the headings on a large sheet of paper, or on a large whiteboard/blackboard, or with post-it-notes or cards on a large table, the floor or the ground.
- ◆ Team members then brainstorm all their strengths and all the weaknesses. Then they brainstorm ways to turn weaknesses into strengths (opportunities), and the potential variables (Limitations) which might affect these opportunities not being realized.

Functions	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Limitations
Regular meetings	-----	-----		
Preparation of Plans				
Proper Record Keeping				
Implementation of projects				
Maintenance & Management of Plantations				
Support to IGAs				
Making new members				
Monitoring of projects				
Organising training				
Mobilising resources				
Other				

VRMC level training

Financial Sustainability

Help the VRMCs to estimate their total current annual income and expenditure.

Discuss how they can increase their income over next one year. Discuss their potential expenditure in the coming year. Discuss whether the income or funds available to them in the post-project period would be sufficient to maintain and manage the VWL and other resources under the control of the VRMCs.

Time needed:

One hour.

Material/Records needed:

Pass Book of the VRMC; Cash Book of the VRMC; Chart Paper & Sketch Pen.

Income			Expenditure		
Source	Amount		Source	Amount	
	2002-03	2003-04 (estimated)		2002-03	2003-04 (estimated)
Membership fees			Stationery		
Sale of grass			Watchmen salary		
Sale of other NTFPs			Link Worker Salary		
Sale of intermediate products			Engagement of labour for harvesting		
Sale of Poles			Meetings		
Voluntary Contribution			Travel		
Survival bonus for VWL			Others		
Grants from Government					
Grants from Panchayat					
Rent of utensils/Chetna Kendra					
Honorarium Support for Link Workers					

VRMC level training

Maintenance and Management of Community Plantations

Help the VRMCs to discuss various issues related to future maintenance and management of community plantations such as Tree Groves and Village Woodlots.

Accompany the VRMC members on a transect walk to the Tree Groves and the VWL sites. On the site, discuss issues related to:

- Growth of trees
- Protection from grazing & theft
- Replanting in blank areas
- Need for cultural operations
- Protection from termites
- Protection from encroachment by neighbouring fields.
- Other issues related to protection and management

Ask the VRMC members as to how would they rate the plantations on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 is for best). Discuss how they can further enrich their plantations.

Ask VRMC members about the different species that are planted and their potential use / benefits.

Ensure that all members of the VRMC, including women members accompany you.

You could also ask them to prepare a sketch map of the VWL plantation site and its surrounding areas, and ask them to show area of slow growth, grazing problem, open areas etc.

Time needed:

Two hours.

Material needed:

Chart paper & Sketch Pens.

Sketch Map of the VWL & other Plantation sites (if available).

VRMC level Training

Development of Action Plan for VRMC Strengthening

On day 2 of the VRMC level meeting, and after identification of and discussion on various issues related to VRMC functioning, the trainers should facilitate development of an action plan at the VRMC level. This should be in the written form and should specify the individuals (from VRMC as well as HCFP) responsible for various activities by name in order to build commitment. It should specify verifiable and measurable targets.

The issues that could be taken up for development of action plan may include:

- Increasing membership
- Reconstituting the committees
- Reviewing the bye-laws & framing new rules for maintenance and management of plantations
- Development of resource and village development plans
- Developing and adopting arrangements to make the VRMC functioning more accountable and transparent
- Developing linkages and mobilising resources from different sources.

The trainers could use the following format for developing the action plan.

1. Activity
2. Tasks
3. Expected result(s) in 3 months, 6 months & 1 year.
4. Time schedule for tasks
5. Main responsible person
6. Support team members
7. Responsibility of local Forest Guard

Cluster level Training

Characteristics of Strong and Effective Community Institutions (VRMCs)

The TACIRIE Principle:

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Transparency | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Everyone sees how decisions are made and who makes them |
| Accountability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decision-makers (both local and governmental) are procedurally and periodically answerable to those they represent |
| Comprehensive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All interest groups are consulted from the outset in defining the nature of the problem or opportunity prior to any decisions about management being taken |
| Inclusive | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All those who have a legitimate interest (in particular those whose livelihoods are dependent on the resource) are involved |
| Representative | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decision-makers are representative of all interest groups |
| Informed | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All interest groups understand the objectives of the participatory process and have adequate, appropriate and timely access to relevant information |
| Empowered | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All interest groups (women and men) are capable of actively and voluntarily participating in decision-making in a non-dominated environment without being compelled, constrained or otherwise left with no other choice |

Adapted from: Adnan et al., 1992 and Bass et al., 1995.

Discuss these characteristics, and ask the VRMC representatives to rank themselves on each criterion. Discuss the ways in which they could enhance their rank.

Cluster level Training

Importance of regular meetings

Most of the VRMCs surveyed for their capabilities do not meet regularly. Even though their bye-law suggests meetings at least once a month, it is rarely followed. In fact regular meetings could be considered to be a barometer for the activeness of the VRMCs. They seem to meet somewhat frequently in the beginning, at the plantation time and/or when a meeting is called by the project staff. Very few VRMCs show the initiative in calling regular meetings. Records show that even when the meetings are called they are poorly attended. In some cases where the Sarpanch is also the Chairperson of the VRMC, (s)he is rarely able to make time for VRMC meetings. There is also a feeling that there is no point in meeting without an agenda. The agenda is more clear when there is some activity taking place on ground such as plantation or construction of Chetna Kendra. However, it is important that the VRMC members understand their multifarious responsibilities and organise regular meetings in order to discuss various issues they are supposed to deal with. Regular meetings help bind the VRMCs together for a common goal, helps develop kinship and team spirit and a sense of importance as well as purpose. In the absence of regular meetings, the danger of the VRMC being reduced to "one person show" increases, which may have undesirable consequences for the sustainability of the VRMC as well as the resources. It is therefore important that the VRMCs meet at least once a month to discuss various relevant issues, at least for an hour or two.

Ask the trainees to list advantages and disadvantages of regular meeting or meeting at least once a month.

Planning and organising a meeting

Planning and organising a meeting involves

- Setting an agenda
- Arranging a date & venue for the meeting
- Controlling and managing the proceedings of the meeting
- Making decisions
- Preparing Minutes of Meetings (MoM)
- Reporting decisions to concerned parties
- Storing MoM for future reference

Preparing Agenda for meetings

Refer Tool No. 10 in PME Training Manual.

Example of issues for development of Agenda for VRMC meetings

- Functioning and performance of Link Workers
- Planning for resource and village development
- Monitoring of project activities
- Support to SHGs and IGAs
- Protection and Maintenance of Plantations
- Evaluating the capabilities of VRMC
- Mobilisation of resources
- Increasing membership
- Review and presentation of VRMC activities and accounts
- Matters of concern such as non-participation by some members, rule breaking by individuals
- Resolution of conflicts related to management and utilisation of VRMC resources
- Plan for management of harvesting the intermediate yields
- Developing norms for distribution of benefits
- Organising election/selection of VRMC members and office bearers
- Review achievement of VRMC's microplan

How to write Resolutions and Minutes of Meetings of the VRMC?

The Resolutions and Minutes of Meetings (MoM) are recorded in the Resolution Register maintained by the VRMCs. The VRMC Secretary is responsible for preparing the minutes of the meeting.

Tip box

Making a record of meetings

Make sure a clear record of the meeting is kept by recording:

- Who attended
- What was done (i.e. what discussions were held)
- What decisions were taken
- What actions were agreed and who is responsible
- Date of next meeting

The MoM are an important means for verifying the improved capabilities of the community / VRMC. If the decisions made by the VRMC are recorded, it can provide a reference in case of dispute and ensure transparency.

Format for Writing MoM:

Date & Place of Meeting

Context and Purpose of meeting

Chairperson & ex-officio members present

Agenda 1

Brief description of discussion (1 or 2 paras)

Decision 1 (What is to be done)

Decision 2 (Who is responsible)

Decision 3 (By what time it should be done)

Agenda 2

Brief description of discussion (1 or 2 paras)

Decision 1 (What is to be done)

Decision 2 (Who is responsible)

Decision 3 (By what time it should be done)

.....

.....

Date and tentative agenda for next meeting

Name and Signature of participants

Cluster level Training

How to organise effective meetings?

Meetings are very important, but can also be a great waste of time if not properly planned and organised. This session is related to understanding good and bad practices in meetings and how to facilitate better meetings.

Good and bad meetings

Ask trainees to describe and list what makes a good meeting and what makes a bad meeting. Make some rough sketches of how people are positioned in good and bad meetings.

Ask them to reflect on their experience of holding meetings; describe the meetings according to the following questions:

- What was the purpose of the meeting?
- Where was it held?
- At what time of day was it held?
- Who attended the meeting?
- What were the seating arrangements?
- Was there an agenda for the meeting?
- Was a record of the meeting taken?
- How long was the meeting?
- What were the actions arising from the meeting?
- Was there a follow-up meeting?
- Would you do anything differently now that you have thought about what makes a good and bad meeting?

What should you do before holding a meeting?

Tip box: What must be done before a meeting

- ✓ *Arrange the meeting in advance and inform people in advance if there is any change in programme*
- ✓ *Check that the time is convenient*
- ✓ *Make sure people know the purpose of the meeting, and who should attend*
- ✓ *Make sure on the day before the meeting is to take place, it is still possible to hold it*
- ✓ *Make sure that women are able to attend the meeting and that you are holding the meeting at a time and place convenient for them*
- ✓ *Make sure you have all the necessary equipment - such as pens, charts, paper*
- ✓ *Follow up all the actions you agreed at the last meeting before going to the next meeting*
- ✓ *Make sure that any necessary government or other non-government staff are able to attend*

What should you do during a meeting?

What to do during meetings

- ✓ Do not arrive late.
- ✓ Be patient! Do not hurry meetings
- ✓ Conduct meetings in a public meeting place and not at the house of one particular person
- ✓ Make sure that everyone sits together with no separation (preferably not with some on chairs and others sitting on the floor)
- ✓ Do not carry on too long. Value people's time.
- ✓ Encourage the participation of all, especially those who feel little inhibited such as women and poor.
- ✓ Announce agenda --- Explain context & background --- Discuss & invite comments as well as suggestions --- Decide
- ✓ See that proper number of members are present to ensure the validity of the meeting and decisions taken
- ✓ Ensure that the decisions are within the norms, guidelines and rules.
- ✓ Stick to agenda. New but important issues should be taken up in the next meeting, unless they are very urgent
- ✓ Finalize tentative agenda items for next meeting

Tips for involving women in meetings

- Treat women with respect and recognise that if they are cautious and reserved, it is because they are expected to be, it does not mean that they can not contribute
- Discuss with both women and men, the value of women's knowledge and experience and the importance of getting information from them and involving them in decision making
- Meet with women in places where they are comfortable:
- Be aware of the heavy work load of women – do not act as if what they are doing is unimportant and can easily be interrupted to talk with you – be flexible to organise meetings at a time which does not interrupt their routine
- Listen to what women want to talk about, do not start with your own assumptions of what you think they will want to talk about
- Recognise that many women are trained to withdraw rather than project themselves in a socially difficult or unfamiliar situation – try to counter this by making them feel at ease
- If the participation of women is becoming very difficult due to prevailing social norms, ask them to form a separate committee and meet separately. However take care that the decisions are not finalised before they are confirmed by women's group.

Cluster level Training

Planning for Resource and Village Development

Microplanning exercise was taken up in all the villages after formation of the VRMCs. However, at almost all the places, it has remained a one time exercise. Rarely does a VRMC review the progress of its microplans or take up those activities which are outside the purview of HCFP. There are fewer cases, if any, of villages which have tried to modify their original plan or take up re-planning exercise. The activities on the ground, even under the project, continue for second and/or third year, but this is rarely reflected in the microplan.

The VRMCs should independently take up the planning exercise at least once in a year, and finalise their action plan for each year. This plan, as for the original plan, should be presented in the general body meeting together with the account and expenditure for last year, and should be approved.

The new plans can be appended to the original plan.

Purpose:

- To explain the importance and need for regular planning (once a year).
- To review the original plan, and identify the gaps and reasons.
- To help VRMCs develop action plan for activities which have not been followed up.
- To review the planning process and method with the VRMC members.

Time needed:

One to two hours

Material needed:

Chart Paper & Sketch Pens

Use the format provided on next page and facilitate the planning for one or two different activities. Explain the format, and ask them to complete the format in subsequent VRMC meetings. The VRMC members may modify the format according to their convenience.

Area	Unit (Area, No.)	Source of Funds	Special conditions for accessing funds and implementation (input, cost, time schedule)	Person responsible for follow up	Desired support from Panchayat	Year	
						2003-04	2004-05
<i>Community Forestry</i>							
Village Wood Lot							
Tree Groves							
Sand Dune Fixation							
<i>Private Forestry</i>							
SDF (normal)							
SDF (modified)							
Poplar							
Multi species Farm Forestry							
Kitchen Garden							
Orchard							
<i>Soil & Water resource management</i>							
Water harvesting dam							
Johad Rehabilitation							
Check dams							
Rehabilitation of degraded soil							
<i>Energy</i>							
Fuel Efficient Chulha							
Fuel efficient crematoria							
<i>SHGs</i>							
New Groups							
Support for IGAs							

Area	Unit (Area, No.)	Source of Funds	Special conditions for accessing funds	Person responsible for follow up	Desired support from Panchayat	Year	
<i>Village Environment</i>							
Solid waste management							
Liquid waste management							
Street lighting							
Avenue plantation along road sides							
<i>Capacity Building & Training</i>							
Skill training for SHG on various IGAs							
Areas related to VRMC management							
Agroforestry							
Management and maintenance of plantations							
<i>General Village Development</i>							
.....							
....							

Cluster level Training

How to write Cash Books?

Use the Money Management Manual to explain the Cash Book and how it is written. Give exercise to individuals on writing of Cash Book. Discuss the common mistakes made during writing of Cash Books. Explain the rules to be followed for writing of Cash Book.

Time needed:

One hour to 90 minutes.

Material needed:

An example of income and expenses made during a month, also specifying cash in hand and cash in bank.

Money Management Manual/Handout

Cluster level Training

Sensitising the VRMCs to the need and importance of managing different interest groups and incorporating the concerns of poor and women in the planning and implementation

Organise a discussion with the trainees with reference to Panchayat Land. Identify different Interest Groups, and discuss their nature of interest on the Panchayat land. Such groups could be of graziers, potters taking soil from land, stone mine workers, encroachers, lease holders of Panchayat land, farmers having fields neighbouring the Panchayat land, Panchayat, People using the land for storing cow dung cakes, poor and women. Discuss how the existing VWL, the species planted under VWL and the rules being applied for its management affect different interest groups. Also discuss the ways in which a "win-win" solution can be evolved with respect to groups which are losing.

Group	Nature of Interest	Strength of the Group	Does the VWL benefits or harms their interest? How?
Poor			
Women			
Landless			
Graziers			
Panchayat			
Neighbouring farmers			

Time needed:

60 to 90 minutes

Material needed:

Chart Paper and Sketch Pen

Cluster level Training

Deciding on management strategy for VWL

Purpose: to highlight priorities and differences between different interest groups and emphasise the need for sensitivity to the needs of poor and women.

How to do it

The activity begins by identifying the different types of products that could be available from a VWL.

Starting with the first product compare whether men or women use the resource more. The group could be asked to give points from one to ten. Each point can be represented by a X, to indicate the relative importance of the resource to each group. Continue with the next product until the entire gender column has been completed. Then continue with the wealth column, comparing the uses of resources by richer, average and poorer people.

It is important to follow up the matrix with discussion in greater depth about why use patterns differ, how access rules affect different groups, what conflicts there may be between groups.

Use should be carefully defined and agreed – for example use could mean the person who actually harvests the resource, or the person who is the end user.

Time Needed:

One hour

Material Needed:

Chart Paper and Sketch Pens

Examples to show differences between women and men, rich and poor, local and external: priorities for different products (numbers in brackets indicate how many stones were allocated to each product)

	Gender		Wealth		
	Men	Women	Richer	Average	Poorer
Firewood		xxxxxx (5)	xx (2)	xxx (3)	xxxx (4)
Green manure	Xxxx (4)		xxxx(4)	xxx	
Fence posts	Xxxx (4)		xx(2)	xxxx(4)	X(1)
Timber for ploughs	Xxxx (4)		xx(2)	xxxx(4)	xx(2)
Timber for house construction	Xxxx (4)		xx(2)	xxxx(4)	xxx(3)
Medicinal plants		xxxxxx(5)	X(1)	xxx(3)	xxxxxx(5)
Grasses		Xxxxxx(5)	X(1)	xxxx(4)	xxxxxx(5)
Income from sale of firewood					
Income from Sale of Timber					

If we summarise this table then we can see which product is of greatest importance to which group

Product	Gender	Wealth
Firewood	Women	Poorer
Green manure	Men	Richer
Fence posts	Men	Average
Timber for ploughs	Men	Average
Medicinal plants	Women	Poorer
Grasses	Women	Poorer

From this summary it becomes clear that management decisions will have very important consequences on particular groups. It is also clear that the majority of users are poor people but that rich people also have an important interest in the forest that could conflict with some of the other uses - for example over-cutting of green manure can lead to a serious reduction in medicinal plants due to an alteration in shade levels. This exercise is very important when determining how an area is going to be managed for what products and for whom.

Cluster level Training

Building a coherent team out of VRMC executive body members (optional)

When several people come together to work on a single initiative or project, they are not necessarily a productive team. Before a group of people can function well together, they must pass through a series of stages. These have been characterised by Charles Handy (1985) as: 1) forming; 2) storming; 3) norming; and 4) performing.

Once the group is working together, it can achieve its common purpose. To do this it must have members with the necessary range of skills and abilities. The larger the size, the greater the diversity of talent, skills and knowledge likely to be present.

Tip box Team size and participation

3-6 people	Everyone speaks
7-10 people	almost everyone speaks; quieter people say less. One or two may not speak at all
11-18 people	5 or 6 people speak a lot. 3 or 4 others join in occasionally
19-30 people	3 or 4 people dominate
30+ people	little participation possible

Source: Jenny Rogers (1989)

Small groups may be less effective due to a limited collective range of knowledge. Yet, if you make a group too large, then new learning constraints arise (see the tip box). Individuals are more likely to be inhibited in discussions and the more active members may strongly influence the group. It takes far more courage to speak out in a large team than in a small one. A team of 5-7 members usually works best for achieving optimum productivity and participation. There is, of course, no single ideal group size because other factors such as leadership, cohesiveness and desire for consensus play an important role.

Range of roles in groups

The capacities of individual team members do not necessarily determine whether a group performs well. Experience has shown that teams composed of the brightest individuals do not necessarily turn out to be the most productive. Specific functions are needed if a team is to realise its objectives. There is a range of roles required to make a team perform well enough to achieve goals. These involve both task roles – those that help to achieve the goals of the group, and maintenance roles those that help in the process of achieving these tasks.

Although formal job titles will have influenced the selection of individuals for a team, the roles that individuals play within the team are more crucial to its success. For example, there may be individuals good at listening, others who are skilled at seeking information, or clarifying, organising, relieving tension, setting standards, group diplomacy or dissecting ideas. Individuals may play a number of roles at the same time. These roles can be distinguished from each other and are described in Box 2.

Box 1 The four stages of team development

Forming

1. Team is not yet a team, but a set of individuals
2. Individuals want to establish a personal identity with the group and make an impression
3. Participation is limited as individuals get familiar with the setting and each other
4. Individuals begin to focus on the task at hand and discuss its purpose
5. The team is essentially evolving ground rules on which future decisions and actions will be based

Storming

1. Characterised by intra-group conflict and lack of unity
2. Preliminary ground rules on purpose, leadership and behaviour are damaged
3. Individuals can become hostile toward each other, and express their individuality by pursuing or revealing personal agendas
4. Friction increases, rules are broken, arguments can happen
5. But, if successfully handled, this stage leads to a new and more realistic setting of objectives, procedures and norms

Norming

1. Characterised by overcoming tensions and by developing group cohesion in which norms and practices are established
2. Group members accept the group and accept each other's idiosyncrasies
3. Group allegiance develops and group strives to maintain it
4. Development of group spirit, harmony becomes important

Performing

1. Characterised by full maturity and maximum productivity
2. Can only be reached by successfully completing previous three stages
3. Members take on roles to fulfil the group activities since they now have learnt to relate to one another
4. Roles become flexible and functional
5. Group energy channelled into identified tasks
6. New insights and solutions begin to emerge

Source: Charles Handy (1985)

Nobody is perfect and therefore each role or function is accompanied by an allowable weakness. Acknowledging these weaknesses creates openness in the team. Individual team members feel more comfortable about not having to be perfect and feel free to concentrate on their strengths. The best teams are those which have a wide mix of roles and functions represented. Teams consisting of entirely one type of person, however brilliant the individuals may be, can be disastrously ineffective. For example, a team with several Shapers will stay locked in conflict, where too many Resource Investigators will produce a team good at gathering information and making contacts but poor at reflecting and implementing.

Who are you?

Box 2 The nine types of team members

The Coordinator: The team's natural chairperson; confident, talks easily, listens well; promotes decision-making; able to encourage contributions from all team members; need not be brilliant intellectually. *Allowable Weakness:* a bit manipulative

The Energy Plant: The team's vital spark and chief source of ideas; creative, unorthodox, imaginative. *Allowable Weakness:* lacks practicality; a bit of a handful; up in the clouds

The Implementer: The team's workhorse; turns ideas into practical actions and gets on with them logically and loyally; disciplined, reliable, conservative. *Allowable Weakness:* can only adapt if told why; lacks imagination

The Resources Investigator: The fixer; extrovert, amiable, good at making and using contacts; an explorer of opportunities. *Allowable Weakness:* undisciplined; short attention span

The Shaper: Usually the self-elected leader; dynamic, positive, outgoing, argumentative, a pressuriser; seeks ways round obstacles. *Allowable Weakness:* not always likeable; tendency to bully; provokes opposition

The Monitor/Evaluator: The team's rock; strategic, sober, analytical, introvert; capable of deep analysis of huge quantities of data; rarely wrong. *Allowable weakness:* an unexciting plod; lacks imagination

The Teamworker: A counsellor and conciliator; social, perceptive, accommodating, aware of undercurrents and others' problems; promotes harmony; most valuable in times of crisis. *Allowable Weakness:* indecisive

The Completer/Finisher: The team's worrier and stickler for detail, deadlines and schedules; has relentless follow-through; chief catcher of errors and omissions. *Allowable weakness:* reluctant to let go; worries about small things

The Specialist: The team's chief source of rare knowledge and skill; a single-minded loner; self-starting, dedicated and makes the occasional dazzling breakthrough. *Allowable Weakness:* contributes on a narrow front

Source: Meredith Belbin (1992)

This section tries to help you answer this question and to look at how you can best fit into your team. You together with your team members may or may not make an effective team. Teams are not just born overnight they have to be developed and nurtured rather like children. In order to be effective, team members need to understand themselves and what they offer, where their weaknesses lie and where overall the gaps are in the team.

What role do you play in your team?

Thinking through who you are, how you behave and your relationship to the team it is helpful in understanding what role you play in your team. This exercise helps each person to understand their role and to look honestly at whether the team is functioning in the right way – do you have team members who constantly interrupt?

Do you have team members who come up with new ideas? Do you have team members who encourage others to contribute? etc.

Team profiling

The results from this exercise can be used to look in more detail at strengths and weaknesses of the team. Before you do this exercise look at Box 2 and assess which of these types of team member you tend to be.

Purpose:

- to develop a team profile of the roles that individual members commonly take
- to encourage each team to develop its own strategy based on available roles and responsibilities

How to do it

Hand out one sheet of paper to each trainee with the list of 11 questions on it. Each person anonymously circles just three of the eleven questions according to how s/he feels they perform in the team.

Collect all the sheets in and as a team produce your own profile from the answers to the questions. The profile should contain a list of the roles which are well represented. It should also emphasise what is missing. As a team reflect

<p>Box 3 Team profile questions</p> <p>(Only circle three of these questions that best reflects how you behave in your team)</p> <p>In your team do you:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Stay quiet for a while and then join in?y/n2. Feel uneasy/uncomfortable and wish you were working alone?.....y/n3. Want to take over and structure the discussion?.....y/n4. Want to take a leadership role?.....y/n5. Encourage others to make contributions?.....y/n6. Come up with new ideas?.....y/n7. Interrupt others to ensure your point is made?.....y/n8. Remind the group about practical actions and achieving the set objectives?.....y/n9. Make everyone relaxed and promote harmony?.....y/n10. Get annoyed and frustrated when there is too much talk and not enough decisions and action?.....y/n11. Mediate between those team members strongly disagreeing with each other?.....y/n

on the results of the profile and think what needs to be done to improve the way you operate, if it appears that there are too many people playing one role or perhaps too many playing disruptive roles e.g. interrupting others to make their point.

Cluster Level Training

Forest management (optional)

By good forest management, in which we choose our treatments carefully, we can improve the development and condition of a forest. Sustainable management and use of their forest resources must be based on the type and condition of the forest, the needs and preferences of forest users for different forest products, and silvicultural practices that ensure sustainable forest use.

It is important to remember that silvicultural operations that involve removing trees and other plants by e.g. weeding, thinning and harvesting is not inherently bad for the ecosystem – these actions done carefully can in fact help restore and enrich the biodiversity and ecosystem health of a forest. In other words, restoration of an ecosystem and its sustainable, productive use should go hand in hand.

Below, different forest management strategies are presented. More than one strategy may be combined for a particular area, depending on the needs of different user groups and on the productive and ecological condition of the particular site.

Forest Management Strategy	Definition	Type of situation
Forest Resource Creation	Establishing and maintaining plantations to create new resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very degraded forest areas where planting is the only means of re-establishing forest • when there are existing plantations • when there is a demand for forest products • where growth rates are likely to be good
Forest Resource Utilisation	Harvesting products to meet local and/or commercial needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when the forest condition is such that harvesting can take place without causing degradation • when the growing forest needs thinning to develop NTFP production and biodiversity values • when there is a demand for forest products
Forest Resource Management and Conservation	Managing an existing forest to improve or conserve its different values (productive values, ecosystem functions, biodiversity values, cultural and spiritual values)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In forest where biodiversity is high or potentially high • In degraded areas where ecosystem functions need to be restored
Forest Resource Protection	Controlling illicit activities to prevent damage to a forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In degraded areas where ecosystem functions need to be restored • Areas where there is a high pressure from destructive use • Areas where there is a good potential that protection activities will work • Sacred groves where protection needs to be upheld or strengthened

(Adapted from Peter Branney)

Depending on the chosen forest management strategy or combination of strategies, a number of forest management options or actions may be needed. Again, these management options may need to be combined, depending on the needs of the different user groups, the particular site and its ecological status. Examples of forest management options are given below.

Forest management strategy	Forest management options (examples)
Forest Resource Creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plantation establishment • sowing and dibbling • plantation tending operations
Forest Resource Utilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • thinning • timber and fuelwood extraction • bamboo management • cane management • green leaf manure harvesting • dry leaf litter collection • NTFP collection
Forest Resource Conservation and Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NTFP management • Natural regeneration management • Enrichment planting • eco-tourism development • soil and water conservation
Forest Resource Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fire protection • grazing protection • protection from illicit harvesting of poles, timber or fuelwood • protection from encroachment

(Adapted from Peter Branney)

Information needed for silvicultural management decisions

- type, structure, successional stage and species composition of the forest
- productive capacity of the forest in terms of small timber, fuelwood, fodder, fencing material, other NTFPs etc
- risks posed by fire, grazing etc.
- needs and preferences of all user groups
- past and present harvesting systems and ideas suggested by different user groups
- effects of specific silvicultural treatments on forest structure, species composition and capacity to regenerate
- knowledge of silvicultural options for harvesting and treating different forest types
- range of forest products and the relative quantity of each product type that may be provided by each silvicultural option over time

Cluster Level Training

Grazing management (optional)

Grassland is common land producing grass used either through cut-and-carry systems or livestock grazing or a combination of both. Grassland is perhaps the most neglected and most commonly over-used resource in the village. Cattle and small animals may be an important part of the community's livelihood, and it may be the base for livelihoods of nomadic graziers. Grazing is not inherently bad or damaging to ecosystems, but it needs to be managed sustainably. When there is a high grazing pressure and periodic nomadic grazing, sustainable management may be difficult. Careful planning and a lot of negotiations between different user groups may be needed, both within the community and between the community and users groups outside the community.

The following are some of the options for sustainable livestock management that may be considered by the community (and negotiated with outside user groups such as graziers coming from Rajasthan):

- identification of all user groups
- allowing all user groups to participate in planning
- introduction of rotational grazing
- protection from grazing in areas where trees should be allowed to regenerate
- increased stall feeding
- increased fodder production on private land
- increased fodder production on common land
- reduction of number of livestock
- introduction of improved breeds
- introducing mechanisms for sharing grass and grazing (e.g. by tradable grazing/grass harvesting rights)
- monitoring the health of grazing areas

Potential benefits of rotational grazing

Both overgrazing and total or partial rest of a grassland may lead to capped and eroding soils with dead grass. Periodic animal impact in the form of intensive grazing and trampling by a cattle herd during a brief period, together with periods of rest may improve water, mineral and energy flows in many ecosystems. Trampling during a brief period can break up sealed soil surfaces and trample dead grass and other plant tissue into the soil to help start the decomposing of organic matter. If a period of rest follows, plants will regenerate and dormant seeds may germinate.

Changing grazing practices to rotational grazing with high animal impact and minimal overgrazing can have the following effects:

- Reduction of plant spacing
- Improvement of grassland health through greater diversity, deeper root systems, and more porous soil
- Restoration of water cycles
- Reduction of noxious weeds
- Reduction of breeding sites of pest organisms and stabilisation of populations through greater diversity of species
- Reduction of capital and supplemental feed demands

(Adapted from Allan Savory, Holistic Resource Management)

Example: Rapid benefits of rotational grazing

The Society for Social Forestry and Research in Tamil Nadu studied the effect of introduction of controlled, rotational grazing on revenue land in some villages. After only 2 months, the number of grass species in the area had increased from 4 to 20.