

Systematisation document

for the ERI East Africa Project 2013-15

This document serves as a report to HORIZONT3000 on the systematisation process that was undertaken from September 2014 to August 2015. Other sharing products have been created for different stakeholders and purposes.

INTRODUCTION

1. Description of the ERI approach

Enabling Rural Innovation (ERI) is a participatory approach that puts family farmers in the centre of agricultural development. It builds and strengthens their technical, organisational, social, and entrepreneurial capacities to shift from subsistence to market-oriented agriculture. It aims at developing profitable agro-enterprises without jeopardising food and nutrition security.

Farmer groups are supported in (re-)discovering social, technical, natural, and economic resources around them, setting group objectives and monitoring their progress towards them, making market studies, experimenting with different technologies, and setting up agro-enterprises, while safeguarding their natural resource base.

Rather than being passive 'beneficiaries', farmers develop, drive, and own agro-enterprises. They choose what they need and want after being supported in acquiring production and marketing information. ERI thus enables farmers to respond appropriately to dynamic markets and changing environmental conditions. More information on the ERI approach can be found under www.eri-approach.info.

2. How is it done?

The key players in implementing ERI are Community Development Facilitators (CDFs), employed by local NGOs or farmer district associations. They start by identifying and selecting existing farmer groups or forming farmer groups that would like to work with the ERI approach. After discussing the participants' expectations and conducting group-strengthening activities, the CDFs guide farmers through a series of practical learning sessions, which are organised along the 5 ERI modules of

- ✓ Participatory Diagnosis,
- ✓ Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation,
- ✓ Participatory Market Research,
- ✓ Farmer Participatory Research and
- ✓ Enterprise Development.

Cross-cutting issues gender and environment are addressed throughout the training cycle and CDFs mentor the groups continuously on their journey to a profitable group agro-enterprise. Appendix 1 shows a list of the standard training sessions, each group is

guided through. Additional sessions and mentoring on group strengthening and sustainable agriculture practices are done according to needs and vary in each implementing organisation.

3. The ERI East Africa Project

Since 2013 HORIZONT3000 has been implementing the regional ERI East Africa Project, which brings together six local partner organisations in Uganda and Tanzania. The project is based on the ERI approach and works with a total of 6.750 smallholder farmers and their communities.

The ERI-EA project consortium consists of the following partner organisations: Caritas Tororo, Uganda; Safe Neighbourhood Foundation (SNF), Budaka, Uganda; Youth Association for Rural Development (YARD), Buikwe, Uganda; Masaka Diocesan Development Organization (Caritas MADDO), Masaka, Uganda; Kolping Society of Tanzania (KST), Bukoba, Tanzania; Anglican Church of Tanzania, Diocese of Mara (ACT Mara), Bunda, Tanzania.

After the end of the project in 2015, HORIZONT3000 and its partners will carry out a second phase of the project from 2016 until 2018. The focus of the next phase will be on further strengthening ERI farmer groups from the current and new phase through mentoring and laying strategies for formation of higher level farmer organizations in readiness for market-oriented production and collective sales.

4. Why this systematisation?

Systematisation of experiences is a method that “intends to produce knowledge about action or practice, through the analytical reflection and interpretation about what happened, in order to improve our practice.”¹ This is done by defining which part of our experience or work we want to systematise and for what purpose, describing the context within which the experience has happened, telling the story of what had happened and critically analysing why it has happened this way and what could be done better next time.

The ERI EA Project has been a novelty in the way HORIZONT3000 has cooperated with its partner organizations. Even the approach itself has been new, so that continuous learning is a prerequisite for all implementing partners in order to develop the approach further. Therefore, a systematisation with the objective to learn from and improve our practice of implementing ERI had been considered from the planning stage of the project.

In consultative meetings CDFs of all partner organisations and project staff had identified collective marketing as a major challenge in their implementation practice. In 2015, an external evaluation of the project was carried out and the results again showed that few farmer groups had ventured into collective marketing despite efforts by implementers to enable them.

¹ Learning from our experience, a guide to participative systematisation, Luger, Massing, 2012

The systematisation involving project staff, several partner organisations, farmer groups, and other stakeholders was designed to better understand the subject and learn from practice what needed to be done differently to better guide and support farmers in selling their produce collectively. The main questions to lead through this were ‘What has triggered collective marketing in farmer groups?’ and ‘What has prevented farmer groups from marketing collectively?’

Particular focus was put on the three aspects of group leadership, the marketing committees and saving&credit activities which seemed to have had a lot to do with whether groups had marketed collectively or not. In addition the contexts were considered in which the different organizations were implementing their part of the project and which could have had an influence on why things happened the way they did.

THE SYSTEMATISATION PROCESS

From September 2014, a small team consisting of the Project Manager, the Technical Advisor (TA) to the project and the Technical Advisor for systematisation started to prepare for this systematisation, thinking about possible issues to systematize and discussing how best to coordinate evaluation and systematisation of the ERI Project. They prepared an introduction to all implementing staff at the Refresher training in October 2014, where Coordinators and CDFs selected the issues they wanted to be systematized.

In March 2015 representatives from all 6 partner organizations, from project management, and the two TAs developed the Framework for the systematisation; i.e. they agreed on the issue of collective marketing, the scope of the systematisation and planned the next activities that would be done.

The Facilitation Team that would drive the systematisation process consisted of the Project manager, the two TAs as well as one staff each from three of the partner organisations². This team met several times, prepared for systematisation activities, guided their organizations in doing it, discussing, analyzing and in the end bringing it all together.

From March to July 2015, four of the six partner organisations went through a systematisation process within their own organization, describing their local and institutional context and the farmers they work with, retrieving the history of what they did and what happened with four of their target farmer groups, and conducted a critical analysis workshop with representatives of different farmer groups.

² Amos Owamani (Project Manager), Tom Pircher (TA), Lilo Massing (TA), Andrew Tamale (Project Coordinator Caritas MADDO), Celina Takali (CDF SNF), Escain Kiwonde (CDF ACT Mara)

In August 2015, a collective Critical Analysis workshop was done with representatives and CDFs of all six partner organisations, project management, and other stakeholders to bring together and discuss outcomes from different levels of critical analysis. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations drafted on what should be done differently next time.

By December 2015, sharing documents for different purposes and target groups had been produced.

THE CONTEXT

The ERI East Africa Project and in this case its component of collective marketing by farmer groups has happened within a certain context or environment, which – besides the project intervention - has had an influence on whether or not farmers have marketed their produce collectively. This includes the national context in the two countries as described here. The local conditions in the different project sites, the characteristics of the implementing organisations and the farmers they are working with respectively, are included in the stories of what happened in each project site.

National context

The official agenda of Uganda's and Tanzania's national development plans promote farmer empowerment, the use of participatory methods, and other principles on which the ERI approach is based. However, service provision to farmers is mostly reduced to the promotion of high-input farming technologies and giving free inputs, e.g. seed to farmers. Agricultural financing initiatives and other reforms in the financial sector still remain very low.

Smallholder farmers in Uganda and Tanzania face weak value chain linkages. Many producers do not have access to profitable markets due to lack of market information and/or poor infrastructure. This situation puts farmers in a disadvantaged position, in which they often sell produce directly from their farms, having little bargaining power towards traders and limited knowledge of actual market prices.

Facilitating market research with farmers helps them in having better knowledge about potential buyers and market prices of selected crops. In addition to certain quality standards, these buyers often request farm produce in bigger quantities so that transport costs from rural areas and efforts in handling produce are worthwhile. Since individual farmers are often not able to provide farm produce in those quantities, it is assumed that farmer groups can engage better in business with 'bigger' traders and increase their profit by selling collectively.

THE STORY

The history of what was experienced and what happened in the ERI EA Project on the way to guiding farmers towards collective marketing was retrieved in four of the

organisations separately, within their given institutional and local context. After the stories had been told, they were analysed critically by implementers together with farmer group representatives in each setting respectively³. Two of the stories, of SNF and ACT Mara, have been summarized in this document.

1. The story of collective marketing in SNF

Institutional context

Safe Neighbourhood Foundation (SNF) is registered as an NGO, based in Budaka, Eastern Region of Uganda. Its structure encompasses the Board of Directors, the Management Team and staff including field workers and the accountant.

4 Community Development Facilitators (CDFs) are duly trained in the concept and skills of relaying the ERI project including the 5 modules, natural resource management (NRM), mentoring / group strengthening aspects and cross-cutting issues including gender, HIV/AIDS and the environment.

Activity implementation has followed a quarterly schedule. There has been no formal specialization in facilitating specific modules among the CDFs, though those with specific training in a particular field have indicated expertise in implementing respective sessions. In general there is team work. The lead CDF has ensured activity planning and periodic reporting as well as supporting the Co-ordinator to monitor progress in implementation. One other facilitator has been trained on the job.

The ERI Co-ordinator who is also the institution's Director has undertaken full training in ERI approach. He oversees the project work, participates in general activities particularly the farmer field day, the stakeholders' meetings, activity planning, M&E as well as periodic reporting. He serves part-time on the project alongside the accountant.

Local Context

Food crops serve as cash crops notably rice, maize, ground-nuts, millet and fruits (mangoes) among others. Land holdings of less than 3 acres on average support subsistence farming, which is the lifeline activity at household level. Two farming seasons occur. Over the years, rainfall amounts are on the decrease as droughts increase. The soils are highly eroded due to vegetation clearance, over cultivation and use of unsustainable traditional practices of farming. The relief is generally low with seasonal wetlands which support the production of rice, maize and vegetables throughout the year.

Civil society organisations and government extension programs offer a cross section of free services to community members, e.g. handing out farm inputs. Micro-finance institutions offering credit services are few and often not user-friendly. Saving and credit schemes are a viable alternative among groups. Farmers practicing collective marketing

³ Systematisation at organisational level was done in ACT Mara, Caritas MADDU, SNF and YARD. Their activities like retrieving the history with implementing staff and with farmer groups as well as the critical analysis workshops have been documented separately.

farming do bulking at a group store usually in a trading centre for better prices. Local Government is supportive of ERI work.

There is an established road network including the main Tirinyi – Mbale tarmac road, as well as feeder roads (murrum-graded) in all sub-counties. The main source of water in rural areas is the unprotected wells and a few boreholes which provide safe water.

Gender disparity is high in the area. Intervention measures to bridge the gaps are slow in creating the desired impact. Women’s efforts to empower themselves through socio-economic development groups e.g. saving and credit is helpful to some extent.

The police has its base at Budaka Town and branches at the sub-county headquarters. Other security organs exist e.g. UPDF veterans but these offer private services mainly in town centre. Deficiency in the security services in rural areas is indicated by rampant stealing of foodstuff, poultry and goats.

Telling the Story

Four groups were selected to participate in retrieving history.

Lyama Women’s Association

The group is located in Lyama Sub-county. It was formed in 2010 with the purpose to provide socio-economic empowerment to women, mainly housewives. The group is registered with Budaka Local Government at district level and has a membership of 18 (2 male and 16 female). Members have marketed collectively twice, i.e. maize and groundnuts respectively.

The group had been led through all ERI training sessions. After training on marketing basics and the guided market visit, the marketing committee conducted market research on their own at a local market centre in Lyama, Budaka Town and the distant market in Busia Town. Findings motivated some of the group members to market collectively their maize stock at a profit of 200/= UGX per kilogram. After training on enterprise selection and conducting an experiment on productivity of groundnuts varieties, group members decided to grow the red-beauty groundnut variety for collective marketing in August 2014. The group leader sourced funding from a government project, which was used to construct a group store. 8 members marketed collectively while others retained their part of the stock for seeds to plant in the next season.

On observation, there has been strong and responsible leadership especially the chairperson. The marketing committee has been active especially in searching for viable markets. The one-year VSLA training commencing in April 2014 enhanced the saving and credit activities, including the

Nawojja Omutaki Tadamba Group

The group is located in Budaka Town Council. It was formed in 2007 with purpose to promote agri-business as well as saving and credit for economic development among members. The group is registered with Budaka Local Government at district level as a farmer group. By end of 2014, there was membership of 18 ERI project participants (13 male and 5 female).

Just like the first group above, members went through all ERI training sessions, however, the group has not marketed collectively. After selecting enterprises, group members decided to plant maize for collective marketing in the second season of 2013 but did not market together citing poor harvest as reason. The next attempt to grow maize and market collectively did not work out either, although hopes to do collective marketing still hold among the current leadership.

There had been leadership issues in the group. The chairperson was reported to have left the group due to issues in financial management. The Secretary then took to the chair to try and fill the gap, but issues have not been fully resolved to restore confidence in the group. Group members have been de-motivated to attend group activities due to mistrust created. They had a training session on conflict resolution but lessons were not successfully applied to the situation. The marketing committee was trained alongside others but it has remained inactive on grounds that there are no products to sell. One member of the committee also left the group. Besides, the group’s original saving and credit scheme was mismanaged by one of the loans committee members and the treasurer who defaulted on loan repayment. This has caused some group members to leave the group in protest. Despite the CDFs’ efforts to mentor the group

weekly saving as well as taking loans, which has facilitated small scale investments among members.

on resolving the issue, resolutions to pay the loans by defaulters were taken lightly and not fully implemented. The one-year VSLA training which started in April 2014 helped sustain the remaining members as well as attract some new ones. Group members save weekly and take loans for investment in their individual businesses, which has been the motivation for the members to stay in the group.

Busikwe Development Farmers' Group

The group is located in Naboa Sub-county. It was formed in 2011 to promote functional adult literacy (FAL) and development in general. Membership is predominantly female, i.e. 20 female, 6 male. It was registered in 2013 at sub-county level as a farmer group. It was characterized and selected alongside others groups at Naboa Sub-county during group selection for 2014 groups.

What happened within the group after the ERI training sessions? The group was trained in ERI modules just as the other selected groups of cycle 2, so completing the training within one year.

Group leadership at executive level was weak. CDFs provided sessions on group strengthening, which resulted in a change of leadership. But this could not improve the situation either. The Marketing Committee is non-functional though it was trained as others were. No market research has been done since training, reason given that there was no facilitation provided by group members.

Group members were not motivated to bulk for collective marketing either. Farmers said there had been need for immediate cash. Moreover, there was conflict of interest among some influential group members, who are also traders as private occupations. There is also mistrust among members and their leaders in matters of collective dealings.

On the other side, the saving and credit scheme was quite strong, being one motivating program to group members. Activities move on as planned, i.e. members save weekly and take loans for their individual / household investments as other groups do. Apparently, the scheme is what holds the group's existence.

Nangeye II Abakali Ngabo Farmers' Association

The group is located in Naboa Sub-county. It was formed in 2001 to promote functional adult literacy (FAL), group saving and sanitation in the area. Membership is predominantly female i.e. 33 (26 female and 7 male). The group was registered in 2002 at sub-county level as a farmer / development group for women. It was characterized and selected alongside others during group selection at Naboa Sub-county.

The group has undergone a full ERI training cycle. In particular, they appreciated the concept of planning to produce both for food security as well as household income. The most applied lessons got from the ERI training sessions are kitchen gardening, post-harvest handling practices e.g. no product wastage after harvest, and cost benefit analysis before production.

After enterprise selection, group members decided to plant rice ("kaiso variety") in the first season of 2015 and market collectively in June after harvest.

Many members of the group are active members (over 30). However, the previous chairperson caused havoc when he sold off the bulk of group members' cassava which was meant for collective marketing and disappeared with the money at the initial attempt for group members to market collectively. Inevitably, this caused mistrust among members so much that even under new leadership only half of them were willing to market collectively, without bulking at a group store i.e. directly to the buyer at the sales store.

The marketing committee has been trained but is deemed partially active since it was not going out far enough to search for profitable markets. The saving and credit activities on the other hand have been well done. Members save weekly and take loans for investment in small scale businesses at individual or household level.

Critical Analysis

In the critical analysis, the central aspects and additional issues that had surfaced during retrieving history with staff and in the four groups were discussed and analyzed. 19 group members participated from 10 groups (including participants in retrieving history), 2 CDFs, ERI project Co-ordinator, and one trader. Questions were asked on what was not clear yet about 'the story of collective marketing' and why it had turned out as it

had: What did good leaders do that led to collective marketing? How was leadership put in place? How was leadership shared? How was the constitution developed and put into practice? How were the marketing committees put in place? How were they facilitated? How has saving and credit helped the group to do collective marketing?

Discussions led to the following conclusions according to the central aspects of group leadership, marketing committees and saving and credit:

Leadership: Most groups were formed by influential leaders in the communities, the vision bearers. Group leaders were voted in power or appointed by members who subscribed to the proposed purpose. Term limit to leadership positions is stipulated in group constitutions. Leadership is shared through formation of committees. Responsible leaders have unconditionally promoted group development through activities including collective marketing, while manipulative leaders have caused mistrust among group members, so discouraged collective marketing.

Marketing committees: Committee members were elected and trained for their work. They knew their roles but performance has depended on the influence of the executive leadership and the motivation of the committee members themselves. Thus, many groups with good chairpersons for instance also have active marketing committees, whose members would make sacrifices for the good of the groups e.g. giving time and money to do market research. However, committee members usually expect compensation or some form of benefit for their service.

Saving and credit: Saving and credit enabled group members to save and take loans to invest in farming activities from which they bulk produce for collective marketing. Members of one group have built a group store from their savings. On the other hand, collective marketing has yielded money from product sales from which group members make savings. Saving and credit is a popular strategy that sustains members' interest even among groups that do not market collectively. New members have joined groups to participate in saving and credit activities. Members' welfare has improved due to small scale businesses financed from the saving and credit loans.

From those conclusions, recommendations were drafted on how to improve implementation in the next phase:

1. Group members ought to be well guided in developing and interpreting their constitutions.
2. There should be more mentoring on leadership and other aspects of group strengthening.
3. Marketing committees should be strengthened through refresher trainings, exchange visits and mentoring. They ought to ensure the quality of products and get stable buyers.
4. The saving and credit platform could as well be used to promote collective marketing activities

5. Farmers need to be guided more on establishing transparent dealings with traders in a win-win spirit.
6. Collective marketing needs to be emphasized more as a strategy for farmers to realize good profit.

Other factors influencing whether or not a group would opt for collective marketing were found to be the use of outdated traditional agricultural practices, the health status of farmers, the availability of land for cultivation and the objective of why the group had formed.

2. The story of collective marketing in ACT Mara

Institutional context

The Anglican Church of Tanzania (ACT) Diocese of Mara (DM) was founded in 1985, having separated from the Diocese of Victoria Nyanza. As a faith-based organization, it is a non-profit-making institution, mandated to operate in the administrative area of Mara Region. In 2010, the DM was subdivided and now covers the districts of Musoma, Bunda, Serengeti and newly formed district of Butiama.

The diocese has over the years been operating development programs that focus mainly on agricultural and livestock production, women empowerment, income generating activities and marketing, health, education, water supply and environmental conservation. It serves about 560,000 people (40%) in the whole region, directing its services to the entire population without discrimination on religion, ethnicity, color, race or political ideological grounds.

Local context

ACT Mara implements the ERI EA Project in Bunda and Serengeti Districts, Tanzania. Bunda District is one of the six districts of Mara Region. It is bordered to the North by the Musoma Rural District, to the South by Lake Victoria and the Mwanza Region, to the East by the Serengeti District, and to the West by Lake Victoria. The project is operating in Kiwasi, Kangetutya, Sazira and Kitaramaka villages.

Bunda Town, a small town 70 km south of Musoma and west of the Serengeti National Park serves as the district's capital. According to the 2012 Tanzania National Census, the population of Bunda District was 335,061.

Farmers in Bunda usually sell their crops in village open markets and during auction days where many buyers of livestock and crops come from different districts and villages. There are other market opportunities including hotels, schools and the district central market.

Serengeti District is home to part of the world-famous Serengeti National Park and contains the Western Gate to the park. It is bordered to the South by the Mwanza Region, to the West by the Musoma Rural and Bunda Districts, to the Northeast by Kenya and to the East by Arusha Region.

In 2012 the population of the Serengeti District was 249,420. Project villages include Nyankomogo, Wagate and Nyambureti. All these villages are located in the very interior parts of Serengeti district and ACT Mara is the only organization which is currently working hand in hand with these villages. Their market is mainly village open markets. Serengeti and Bunda central markets are over 90 kilometers away and difficult to access for most farmers. Roads are not in good condition, especially during rainy seasons.

Telling the Story

Four groups were selected to participate in retrieving history.

Matokeo farmer group

The group is located in Bunda district and has joined the project in 2013. ACT Mara has trained the group on ERI like other groups and they went as far as having a collective maize storage facility and selling their produce collectively. They first heard of ACT Mara from the neighboring group which was being trained in ERI. "We wrote a letter to ACT Mara via the village government leaders requesting for their training", says one of the group members, "and were glad to get a positive answer that the organization will start working with us". Mr Mussa Kisasi, a group member said that "we have been looking for organizations which can train us on anything that will help us come up with more activities for the group other than doing saving and credit only". "The organization trained us in group dynamics issues, the current and future situation (referring to visioning using the river code); we developed group goals and came up with an activity plan. Different committees were put in place for monitoring and evaluation, marketing and research. We were trained on marketing and we selected the marketing committee which went for market research in Bunda Central market". The issue of farmer participatory research was mentioned where farmers commended the research committee for a job well done. The group identified situka maize variety as the best suited for their soils. Other trainings done included post-harvest handling, kitchen gardens, farmers attending the agricultural shows, and health and sanitation issues. It was said that strong leaders helped in making sure that group members are responsible and are following the bylaws as stipulated in the constitution, which helps the group to reach the planned objectives.

Tupendane vicoba farmers group

The group is located in Serengeti district and has joined the project as a first cycle group in the year 2013. They were trained using the ERI methodology, started to have a collection place for maize and sold their produce as a group. It is narrated that the facilitators introduced themselves in the village government and explained the purpose of the project. After that they invited all citizens in a public meeting where they clarified about the criteria for project beneficiaries and interested people joined groups and joined the project. "After that we started trainings in improved agriculture production, harvesting, drying and storing". "The facilitators found us in groups, but these groups were not well organized. They helped us to plan for implementation and management of setting goals in time". Committees were formed which were responsible for monitoring and evaluation, agricultural experiments as well as market research. "We searched for market before producing; this helped us to sell collectively. We were given a story of Agaba and Mugisha, most of us are becoming Mugisha now."⁴ Most members apply improved farming systems and the project has introduced new enterprises like fish farming. The group has one meeting in every week, to talk about their plans, and save and borrow money. This is seen as making the group to stay together and being able to sell collectively. Group members appreciate group leaders on their efforts to make sure that planned activities are well implemented and for unifying group members. Members agreed that, having strong leaders and active members in the group is a key to their success. Leaders are collaborating with committees and are giving them opportunities to report on progress of activities including those that lead to collective marketing during saving and credit meetings. They commended the marketing committee for identifying a buyer who is offering them a good price.

⁴ referring to the ERI training material; a picture story for leveling expectations

Kilimo biashara farmers group

This group was formed by ACT Mara in 2012, and is located in Bunda district. The group has not sold collectively although it was trained on ERI and the importance of collective marketing in the same way as others.

The group members vividly remembered visioning (the river code), group goal setting and action planning, market research activities in Bunda central market and Musoma food processor, exposure visits to agricultural shows in Arusha and Mwanza as well as an exchange visit to a group doing collective marketing of rice in Nyatwali-Bunda.

Group members agreed that there is now a difference in their farming ways and production levels as a result of the project intervention. But they could not sell collectively because many members had experienced the former Mara Cop cooperative which ended up misusing farmers' money. It was difficult for them to see how collective marketing could work for them. It was also not clear whether facilities for bulking produce were available. Yet the monitoring and evaluation committee reported that over 100 bags of maize could have been bulked for collective marketing. The group did not have its own saving and credit scheme, as different members were already active in other saving and credit groups, making it difficult to also join the group scheme. This was seen as a reason why they did not meet regularly to address such issues together.

Tuinuane women group

It is a pure women group located in Serengeti. It joined the project the year 2013 as a first cycle group and underwent ERI trainings as well. The group has not sold collectively though they have a collective unit and have used the maize collected for food security.

ACT Mara started by introducing themselves to the village government. At first people were reluctant to join the project, but after being explained they decided that this was a beneficial project for them. "After that the facilitators trained us in sustainable agricultural practices, market research, how to conduct research and health and sanitation issues". There is a monitoring committee that checks on the wellbeing of group members' homesteads; there are marketing committees for market research and there is another committee which is implementing agricultural experiments.

"All these committees have helped the crossing of the river to be possible for some of us"⁵.

"We went as far as bulking some few maize bags but after getting trainings on food budgeting we realized that we did not have enough food for the season. We decided not to sell the maize but to use the stored bags of maize for food security".

It was agreed that having men in their group could be beneficial. Following the constitution and having unity among group members was seen as key to success.

Saving and credit is helping them to be together as a group and they get loans from the scheme which is helping them to do other income generating activities.

Critical Analysis

In the critical analysis the project staff together with 15 farmer representatives discussed the experiences that had been collected from the mentioned four groups and came up with lessons learnt and recommendations. The central aspects of group leadership, marketing committees and saving & credit were at the centre of the discussion and the following conclusions were drawn:

Group leadership: Leaders (chairperson, secretary and treasurer) make the core part of any group. A group with strong leaders is more likely to succeed when it comes to collective marketing. This is because leaders are responsible for making sure committees are active and are given an opportunity to share progress of different activities to the general group.

They are responsible for organizing group meetings to discuss activities and make plans. Strong leaders will lead by example when it comes to group activities and this creates trust and encourages group members to also work hard to achieve their planned activities.

⁵ referring to the ERI training tool 'River code' for visioning

Marketing committee: The role of the marketing committee is crucial for a group to succeed in bulking and collective marketing. Committees need to be given more trainings and exposure to markets to gain experiences and establish contact/communication with buyers.

It has helped the group to market collectively when the committee

- was involved in mobilizing farmers to bulk their harvests in one place.
- identified a store for hiring and gave feedback to the group where the costs for hiring the store were agreed.
- continued with tracking the market price to identify when to sell the produce
- gave feedback to the group on the market price and let the group decide whether to sell or to wait for a better price.
- was involved in the process of selling.

Saving & Credit is an important component that can facilitate a group to have collective marketing in three ways. First, the scheme can offer loans without interest for immediate problems that group members face during the period when they are waiting to market the produce. Secondly, farmers involved in saving and credit meet regularly, which provides room for discussion on their activities including collective marketing. Third, saving and credit schemes create unity, trust and transparency among members. In some groups the scheme has been used to enforce the by-laws by deducting the penalties from members share.

Follow-up/mentoring

It was agreed that most issues like leadership problems, marketing committee problems, getting storage facilities and others that hinder collective marketing, including the dilemma if few members of the group are able to bulk and do collective marketing, can easily be addressed by the project if there are regular follow-ups or mentoring sessions of the group.

Regular follow-ups should be done by the project even through communication to get updates of what is going on in groups on different activities that lead to collective marketing. CDFs need to make themselves easily approachable so that farmers can share any problems with them and mentoring sessions can be planned accordingly.

Production levels

Farmers felt that it is impossible to have collective marketing if yields are low and the same crop is used for food. When you have selected food crops as an enterprise, it is important that you produce surplus for bulking and marketing or you have other crops for food security that will cover the period until next harvesting season.

From those conclusions, recommendations were drafted on how to improve implementation by ACT Mara in the next phase:

Recommendations

1. It is important to guide groups to put in place leaders who are actively involving the group members in running group activities, conducting group meetings and are enforcing the group constitution. Strong leaders can help groups to achieve collective marketing.
2. Marketing committees should be given more exposure to markets and groups need to be guided to come up with strategies to support further market research even without support from the project.
3. Saving and credit should be a 'must' in groups involved in the ERI EA Project especially in cases where groups have no activities that make them meet regularly
4. The project should continue training farmer groups on group dynamics, production and collective marketing. It is also important to raise further awareness in farming communities to understand the concept of farming as a business and benefits of collective marketing.

THE CRITICAL ANALYSIS

After the critical analysis in four of the project sites was concluded, the Facilitation Team brought conclusions and recommendations together, presenting them in a collective Critical Analysis workshop with representatives and CDFs of all six partner organisations, project management, and other stakeholders to discuss outcomes from different levels of interpretation and analysis of what had happened. Conclusions were drawn and recommendations drafted on what should be done differently next time:

"Basing on the experience retrieved and analyzed, how can we do our implementation for collective marketing better?"

Participants concluded on the following recommendations:

1. CDFs (implementing organizations) should advise farmer groups on potential requirements for collective marketing. Groups need to set up clear guidelines on facilitating movements of the marketing committee, acquiring or renting storage facilities, transport requirements, quality control of the produce, etc. CDFs should further encourage and guide farmer groups to establish a fund for marketing activities, with clear guidelines on how to raise the money and manage the fund.
2. Throughout the training cycle, CDFs should emphasize more the issue of collective marketing as one of the strategies in ERI. Starting at levelling of expectations, then group strengthening, the issue of working together for greater benefit should be emphasized. In marketing trainings of the group and the committees, as well as in business planning, the potential increase in profit through collective marketing should be well presented. A recommended tool is the cost-benefit-analysis, showing different calculations from collective or individual marketing.

3. Saving and Credit had been seen as one strategy for a group to enable collective marketing, as it helps members to address urgent cash needs, while storing their produce for bulking and collective marketing. In addition to promoting saving and credit, it has been recommended to encourage groups to also have other income generating activities, which can overcome the lack of income while waiting for the produce to be sold collectively.
4. CDFs should be knowledgeable about all finance issues that are of benefit to the groups they work with. Particularly progressing groups or associations that have reached a level where loans may be needed and are accessible to them, require guidance or information. CDFs (implementing organizations) should be able to inform groups on the services of all finance institutions available to them, their terms and conditions and potential risks and be able to advise them.
5. It was seen that also gender issues had been crucial for farmers to decide whether or not to join in collective marketing, as family members have expectations on the use of the produce at harvest time. It has been therefore recommended to involve spouses of farmers to participate in key events of the group business. CDFs should plan for specific events where spouses are invited to the group, particularly at PD (leveling expectations), at farmer field days (seeing the fruit of the work), or at stakeholder meetings (feeling proud of the spouse's success).

SHARING OF THE LESSONS LEARNT

The systematisation document will be shared with participants of this workshop as well as other stakeholders, inviting comments or additions.

The outcome will further be shared with farmer groups, particularly those that participated in the systematisation. Each organization will decide on the method they wish to use for sharing with their groups.

At the next refresher training for CDFs, a session will deal with how to incorporate those recommendations into the implementation of the ERI EA Project. Activities that are needed to put the recommendations into practice will be agreed on.

Further information on systematisation in the 4 organisations can be obtained from the organisations themselves. Their contacts are available through the Project Manager ERI East Africa Project, Amos Owamani (amos.owamani@horizont3000.org).

Appendix 1 ERI training cycle according to modules

ERI module	Main message	Process	Training Sessions
Participatory Diagnosis (PD)	Visioning Planning	Farmer groups assess which resources and opportunities are available to them, and how they can use them to achieve their set goals	1 - Getting started 2 - Visioning 3 - Identifying what we have 4 - Action planning
Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)	Checking our progress	Farmer groups keep track of their progress toward achieving their goals and learn from successes and mistakes	1 - Basics of monitoring & evaluation 2 - Design of methods and tools 3 - Analysing our results 4 - Evaluating ourselves
Participatory Market Research (PMR)	Learning about markets	Farmer groups themselves conduct market research to identify and analyse profitable markets and enterprises	1 - Marketing basics 2 - Preparing for market visits 3 - Analysis and preparation for feedback from market visits 4 - Selecting an enterprise 5 - Preparation for market chain analysis 6 - Market chain analysis: Interviews 7 - Market chain analysis: Business meeting 8 – Market chain analysis: Preparation for feedback
Farmer Participatory Research (FPR)	Farming better	Farmer groups experiment on their own fields to test which practices, technologies and varieties work best on their farms	1 - Basics of sustainable agriculture 2 - Designing experiments 3 - Developing data collection tools 4 - Farmer field day
Enterprise Development (ED)	Developing an enterprise	Farmer groups develop profitable enterprises and build sustainable business relations based on thorough business plans and market intelligence	1 - Post-harvest handling 2 - Business planning 3 – Market Intelligence 4 – Record keeping 5 – Contract management and business principles