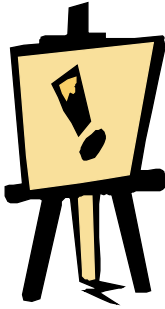# Practitioner's Guide:

Certifying Community Mobilisation

Certifying Community Mobilisation

Brief Description

Civil society participation in development is increasingly being recognized as being an essential component for promoting good governance - improving responsiveness of national policies and programmes to citizens' needs and ensuring transparency and accountability in policy making and implementation processes. Genuine participation of citizens however, goes beyond dialogue with or contracting a few non-governmental organizations. It must engage all citizens (women and men, in their various capacities, socio-economic status, affiliations and locations) beyond elections to active participation in making decisions that affect their lives. Engaging people requires efforts and mechanisms that can empower all, but most especially the disadvantaged members of society, to participate effectively in development processes.

The concept of **community mobilisation and development** emerged from the recognition that a genuine participatory approach to development is essential for success and sustainability. Ideally, the process involves all members of the community, however, it may also require some members of the community to take the lead in the process and to act as innovators since the entire community gains or loses through the action of any member of the community. Community mobilisation and development often makes use of the inherent optimism of human beings by providing a mechanism through which positive futures can be achieved. This optimism can only be tapped by moving away from the traditional "problem solving and prevention" towards "potential development and enhancement", there is a need to think-positive. Problem solving has often only resulted in social development being undertaken by communities (i.e. repair or construction of social facilities including health facilities, education facilities, etc.). Potential development focuses more on economic development, in other words what potential exists locally and what are the reasons or factors hindering the community from tapping, making use or actually developing these potentials. To sustain community development over time economic development is essential.

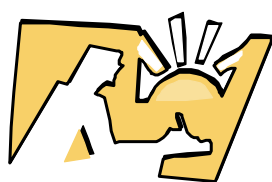Photo 1: Community mobilisation in action

Certifying Community Mobilisation

Proposed Main Users

Government organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Social Mobilisers, Community Workers, Development Aid Organisations.

Purpose of the Method

Increasing participation of people in their own development process has bought with it many challenges regarding the approaches how their interaction can be focused and sustained over time. Mobilising people to work together as a group rather than individuals has been undertaken over centuries, often under pressure and coercion. People have increasingly realised the benefits of working together voluntarily as a group rather than individuals. In the past three decades mobilising people has become an integral part of development work. This has also lead to a proliferation of training activities for group mobilisation. Few if any standards exist both internationally and nationally that actually define when a community has reached a certain level of mobilisation. In part this is due to widely differing opinions as to what mobilisation is. For example, there a differences between social mobilisation and community mobilisation:

▶ **Social mobilisation** is the process of bringing together all stakeholders to raise people's awareness of and demand for a particular programme (e.g. health etc.), to assist in the delivery of resources and services and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self-reliance. Social mobilisation recognizes that sustainable social and behavioural change requires many levels of involvement—from individual to community to policy and legislative action. Isolated efforts cannot have the same impact as collective ones.

▶ **Community mobilisation** is the process of engaging communities to identify community priorities, resources, needs and solutions in such a way as to promote representative participation, good governance, accountability and peaceful change. Sustained mobilisation takes place when communities remain active and empowered after the initial capacity building process ends.

▶ **Community mobilisation and development** is undertaken in stages. Similar to an education system in which students graduate from kindergarten through primary, secondary and higher education, community mobilisation and development can be broken down into typical "milestones" or continuum.

This method presents an approach how "standards" can be defined for community mobilisation. A certification process can be form part of a voluntary code of practise or an integral part of a governments' strategy for sustaining peoples participation in development. Reaching agreement on the graduation process for mobilised groups would be a first step in a certification process.

Certifying Community Mobilisation

Advantages

▶ Communities would know what level of development the mobilised group has reached or can strive for.

▶ A census can be undertaken throughout the country to determine the number of communities who have reached a particular stage of development.

▶ Valuable resources can be saved since communities would not have to undergo repeated community mobilisation exercises.

▶ A clear "exit" strategy could be defined as to when the organisation assisting the community in its mobilisation efforts leaves the community, e.g. when it has reached a pre-defined level of maturity.

▶ A graduation or certification process would encourage transparency and make the institutions promoting community mobilisation accountable for achieving specific targets.

▶ Community mobilisation can be linked to a training programme that describes the necessary training needed to reach each level of graduation / maturity.

▶ Governments can systematically plan the gradual community mobilization of all communities in the country according to commonly agreed upon standards and a certification process.

Limitations

▶ An exit strategy out of the community is not always desired by NGOs and community based organisations providing capacity building services as it reduces their sources of income

▶ Not every community can be mobilized at the same speed. Much depends upon levels of education and training and also cultural factors. Therefore, some communities may take years to mobilise while others only take a few months.

▶ A consensus amongst all organisations undertaking community mobilization may not be feasible in a country due to ideological or political reasons.

▶ Community mobilisation can also be inherently political and can be misusd by politicians. People can be mobilised in a negative sense, either towards violence or towards a certain political idealogy.

▶ Certification of community mobilisation can not and should not be the sole responsibility of any government since this could discourage NGOs from participating in the process.

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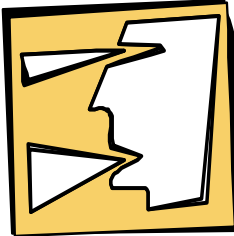
Community mobilisation: A systems-view:

A community is a group of people who form relationships over time by interacting regularly around shared experiences, which are of interest to all of them for varying individual reasons. What makes community more than a simple group of people is that they are drawn together around some object. This object can be physical, virtual, theoretical, or philosophical; a political ideal, etc. The community is important in that it contributes to individual and social well being by establishing and maintaining channels of communication, organizing resources to meet local needs, and providing a framework where the collective is more than the sum of its parts.

Community development is the process by which people living in a community identify common goals and work together to achieve those goals. Community mobilisation is a process of engaging communities through participatory methodologies with the objective of giving them the confidence to take responsibility for identifying potentials and solving problems that hinder them from tapping existing potentials. It is important to move away from only talking about "problems" towards a discussion about existing or latent potentials. This adds a positive dimension to development (behind every problem there is a potential). Community mobilisation empowers women and men to organize their own democratically self-governing groups or community organizations, which enable them to initiate and control their own personal and communal development, as opposed to mere participation in an initiative designed by the government or an external organization.

The interaction of the "community" can be viewed in form of a "system", the components need to be balanced and working in harmony with each other:

▶ **Social components** includes the communities own culture, values, traditions and norms and it depicts the way the community sees itself. Social component of the community results from the exchange of ideas and information within the community over time. This is not a static but rather a dynamic process. Changes take place over time, but members of the community change, people come and go bringing with them new ideas and information. Social aspects of the community are intangible they form the heart of the community process.

▶ **Political component** of a community is defined by the way in which the community is organised to manage itself. It includes legal contracts between individuals, laws, rules and regulations. It includes elected and non elected governments, civic groups, religious and charitable organizations, clubs, associations, families and friends. The political component regulates the community's social system as well as the way in which the economic aspects of a community functions, including how the community produces, distributes, and consumes resources
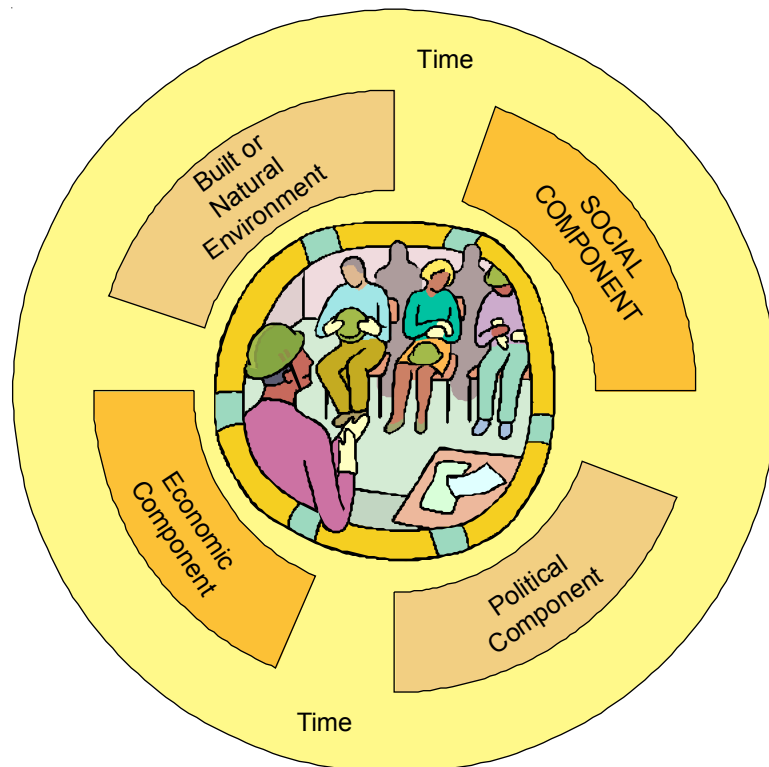
# Certifying Community Mobilisation

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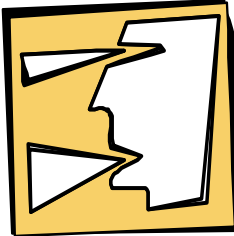
▶ **The economic component** of the community "system" is made up of both tangible and intangible factors, it is necessary in order to ensure that a community can actually survive. Economic component includes the exchange of resources between and amongst community members. Economic component requires the social and political component in order to provide the rules for the exchange of resources.

▶ **Built or natural environment** defines or describes the spatial area in which the community lives. The built environment includes cities, towns, villages and settlements while the natural environment includes forests, savannah, lakes, rivers. The spatial area has an enormous bearing on the way in which the community develops since it defines the resources available to the community (natural resources that are required for production, include land and water).

▶ **Time** is an important variable amongst all the components making up the community "system". Three separate times exist: past, present and future. The past is important for the community, it often defines how community has developed and the also should be seen a forming the knowledge-base of a community. A community's history is a critical part of its existence. Its influence is quite often not even seen, let alone understood. History shapes actions both today and in future. Day to day events are tangible accounts of the present, they interpret the past and define the future. A community also exists in the future. The future can be planned or experienced.

Figure 1: Five components of community mobilisation "systems-view"

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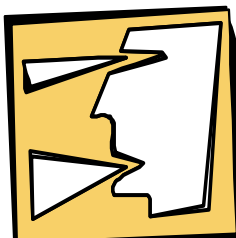
Putting it all together

The community components making up the "system" need to be mobilised in order to ensure that development can take place. Mobilisation is the process of getting the people in a community to empower themselves as well as to work together as a group to tackle common issues. Ideally, the process involves all members of the community, however, it may also require some members of the community to take the lead in the process and to act as innovators since the entire community gains or loses through the action of any member of the community. Community development often makes use of the inherent optimism of human beings by providing a mechanism through which positive futures can be achieved. This optimism can only be tapped by moving away from the traditional "problem solving and prevention" towards "potential development and enhancement", there is a need to think-positive.

Who should certify?
Self-regulation versus Governmental control

Self-regulation by organisations involved in promoting community mobilisation offers the least bureaucratic approach for certifiying stages of mobilsiation. Non-governmental organisations and training institutions would jointly define the necessary "standards" and the organisations would then internally ensure that they adhere to these standards.

Government regulation is likely to take longer to achieve in addition it will tend to be buerocratic and possibly also inflexible. Embedding it in specific decrees or even in laws (e.g. in decentralisation laws) would have the advantage of formalising the process. A purely governmental certification process could marginalise non-governmental organisations promoting mobilisation.

A self-rgulatory process that includes active involvement of the government is the most favoured option. Defining the most suitable institution / organisation to undertake the certification process is an important first step in the process.

Central task of the organisation is to develop "code of conduct" along which all institutions agree they will abide by. This would also include elaborating a mechanism how the the defined quality standards will be adhered to and measured. Such a process can be initiated by a non-governmental organisation, a local government, or national governmental organisation. Important is that agreement is reached among all that a unified certification process with agreed upon indicators should be established. This may eventually be transformed into a decree or law eventually.

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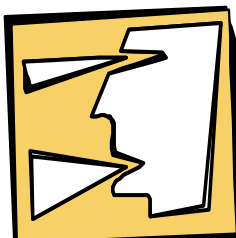
Step 1: Defining levels of mobilisation

It is not realistically possible for communities to become mobilised within a relatively short period of time. Time frames quoted as being necessary for mobilisation range from a few days to many years. It depends on many different factors, many of which have been touched upon in the previously depicted systems view (culture, time, levels of social development, level of political development). The definition of successful mobilisation is a gradual process made up of different levels: from embryonic to maturity. Success requires the definition of quality standards that define the achievement of a particular stage of mobilisation. The standards have to be defined and agreed upon, the most effective approach is to use the definition of a minimum basic standard.

The basic logic of the approach is based upon the hypotheses that there are fundamental attributes which any mobilised community has to have to be able to operate effectively . These basic attributes are independent of the function of the group. All groups, whether it is a water users group, a community health group or seed-growers group require similar capabilities to function.

Two approaches for determining levels of mobilisation are presented as examples. The "participation ladder" provides a basis for measuring the capabilities of the people who make up the groups. The stages define **what communities are able to do** (compare figure 2). The second example focuses more on what the **organisations are able to do** (compare the stages defined in table 2). The criteria assess organisational characteristics rather than social competencies.

The two approaches not mutually exclusive and they are designed to provide ideas for a certification process. Clearly these will vary from country to country and will be dependent upon the framework conditions. Graduation from one stage to the other is dependent upon the group able to undertake increasingly more complex functions. Ability to achieve these functions on a sustainable basis has to be verified through a quality assurance system.

Table 1: Typologies based upon either what the community or the organisation can do

Typology 1: Stages based upon what the **community** can do:	Typology 2: Stages based upon what the **organisation** can do:
1. Empowerment	1. Basic functional group
2. Consensus	2. Community group
3. Participation	3. Village development group
4. Interaction	4. Institutionalised development groups
5. Maturity	5. Association of development groups
	6. Federation of development groups

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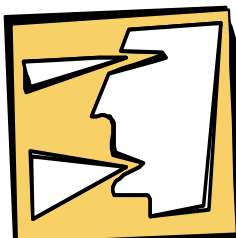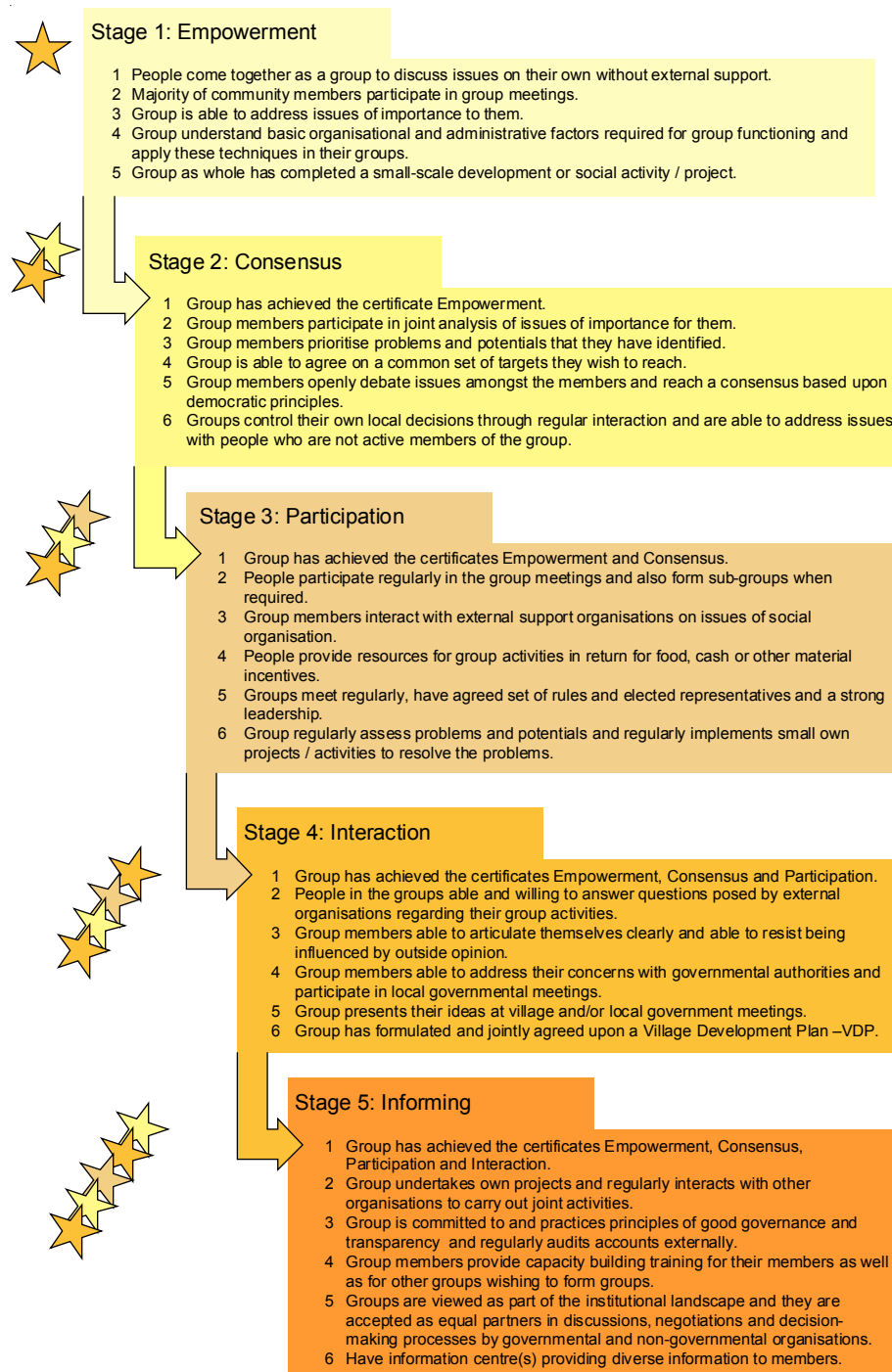
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**Figure 2: Stages of community mobilisation on the basis of
what the people in a community can do**

Stage 1: Empowerment

1 People come together as a group to discuss issues on their own without external support.
2 Majority of community members participate in group meetings.
3 Group is able to address issues of importance to them.
4 Group understand basic organisational and administrative factors required for group functioning and apply these techniques in their groups.
5 Group as whole has completed a small-scale development or social activity / project.

Stage 2: Consensus

1 Group has achieved the certificate Empowerment.
2 Group members participate in joint analysis of issues of importance for them.
3 Group members prioritise problems and potentials that they have identified.
4 Group is able to agree on a common set of targets they wish to reach.
5 Group members openly debate issues amongst the members and reach a consensus based upon democratic principles.
6 Groups control their own local decisions through regular interaction and are able to address issues with people who are not active members of the group.

Stage 3: Participation

1 Group has achieved the certificates Empowerment and Consensus.
2 People participate regularly in the group meetings and also form sub-groups when required.
3 Group members interact with external support organisations on issues of social organisation.
4 People provide resources for group activities in return for food, cash or other material incentives.
5 Groups meet regularly, have agreed set of rules and elected representatives and a strong leadership.
6 Group regularly assess problems and potentials and regularly implements small own projects / activities to resolve the problems.

Stage 4: Interaction

1 Group has achieved the certificates Empowerment, Consensus and Participation.
2 People in the groups able and willing to answer questions posed by external organisations regarding their group activities.
3 Group members able to articulate themselves clearly and able to resist being influenced by outside opinion.
4 Group members able to address their concerns with governmental authorities and participate in local governmental meetings.
5 Group presents their ideas at village and/or local government meetings.
6 Group has formulated and jointly agreed upon a Village Development Plan –VDP.

Stage 5: Informing

1 Group has achieved the certificates Empowerment, Consensus, Participation and Interaction.
2 Group undertakes own projects and regularly interacts with other organisations to carry out joint activities.
3 Group is committed to and practices principles of good governance and transparency and regularly audits accounts externally.
4 Group members provide capacity building training for their members as well as for other groups wishing to form groups.
5 Groups are viewed as part of the institutional landscape and they are accepted as equal partners in discussions, negotiations and decision-making processes by governmental and non-governmental organisations.
6 Have information centre(s) providing diverse information to members.

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Table 2:   Stages of community mobilisation based upon organisational criteria

Nr.	Example of mobilisation graduation criteria:	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Trained and understand basic principles of community mobilisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Group has been officially formed and participated in social mobilisation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Meets regularly as a group (minutes of meeting)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Participated successfully in a basic training course on organisational, administrative, accounting methods	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Organises and implements small-scale developmental or social activities / projects	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Has agreed set of rules and elected representatives and a strong leadership		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Trained in participatory planning and implementation techniques		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8	Carried out a problem and potential assessment and planned a small development project		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Has successfully completed at least 1 developmental project (possibly with external support)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Select and implement projects based upon principles of participation and transparency			✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Implemented at least 2 or more externally supported small development projects			✓	✓	✓	✓
12	Planned and implemented at least 1 development project completely on their own			✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Commenced a group savings and loaning system, regularly maintain accounts			✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Regularly undertake maintenance of the development projects			✓	✓	✓	✓
15	Directly elected committee members recognised as part of local self-governance				✓	✓	✓
16	Completed training in local self-governance and decentralisation				✓	✓	✓
17	Formulated and jointly agreed upon a Village Development Plan -VDP				✓	✓	✓
18	VDP includes capacity building / skill development activities (non-material)				✓	✓	✓
19	Committed and practice principles of good governance and transparency				✓	✓	✓
20	Created a recognised association or group of development councils / committees					✓	✓
21	Employ and pay for own executive officer for association					✓	✓
22	Have mobilisation staff and provide mobilisation services for members					✓	✓
23	Have established a development fund for financing community projects (loans)					✓	✓
24	Regularly externally audit accounts					✓	✓
25	Created a officially registered federation at regional or national level					✓	✓
26	Regularly represent issues of members at governmental forums						✓
27	Provide capacity building training for members						✓
28	Advocate for resources amongst government and donors for member organisations						✓
29	Have information centre(s) providing diverse information to members						✓
30	Active participation in regional and national governance						✓

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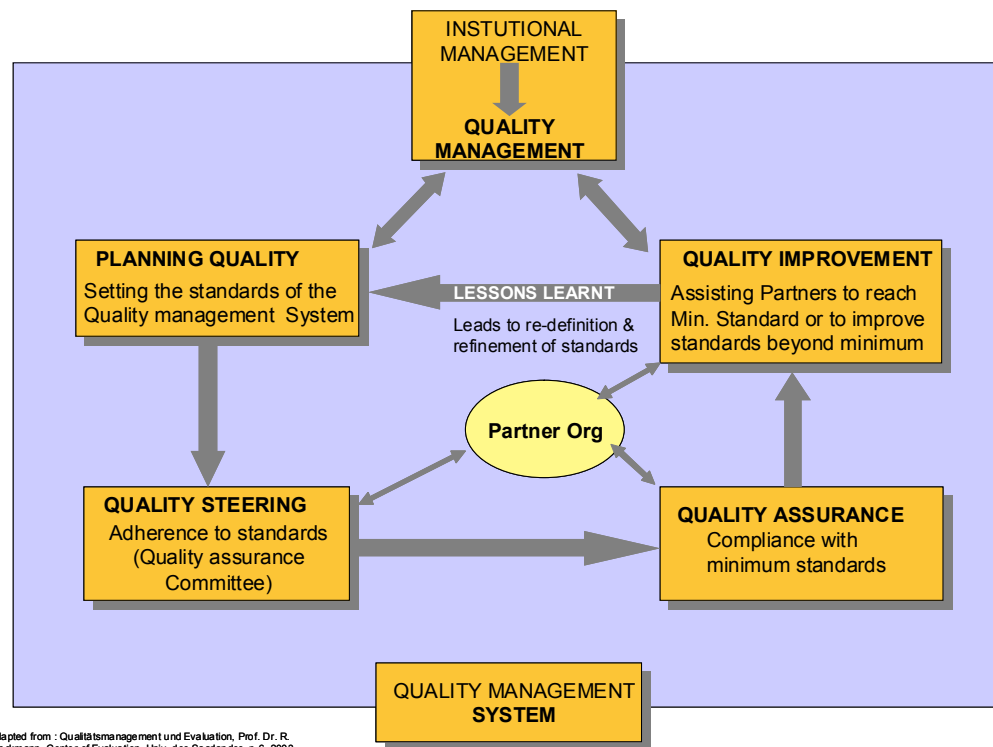
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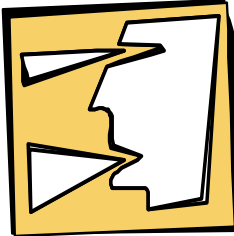
Step 2: Quality assurance system

Quality management systems are designed in order to meet the quality standards laid down by the management of an organization. It includes the organizational structure, responsibilities, processes and resources required to meet these basic minimum quality standards. The most important concept that has to be introduced to an organization / institution is the establishment of a **quality culture** that is enshrined in a set of commonly agreed upon standards and principles and in order to ensure their compliance a system for monitoring, maintaining and steering has to be put into place.

Quality steering, quality assurance and quality improvement forms a continuous learning and self-improvement cycle. Institutions defining the quality criteria certify whether communities and institutions that assist in the mobilisation process adhere and comply with the defined standards. At the institutional level assistance, advice and support needs to be provided and this will be necessary in order to assist either the partner organisations or the communities themselves to reach the minimum standards. Together all elements in figure 2 represent the Quality Management System.
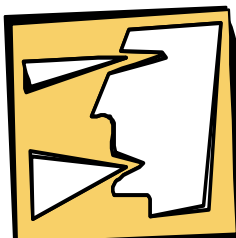
Figure 3: Systematic quality assurance approach

Adapted from : Qualitätsmanagement und Evaluation, Prof. Dr. R. Stockmann, Center of Evaluation, Univ. des Saarlandes, p.6, 2003

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Step 3: Defining a performance scale

▶ A scoring system has to be developed and agreed upon that is universal to all quality assurance questions that may be posed.

▶ It is important to agree upon the terminology of the scoring system first prior to defining the standards to be fulfilled.

▶ The main question is to what extent the quality standard or criteria of the standard have been met that has been defined in table 1.

▶ Table 2 defines the ranking process to achieve the minimum standard, namely 3.

Table 3: Quality standards and definition of minimum standard

|	
1	**A basic or minimum standard is not met.** There are no visible signs of any efforts to address compliance with the standard. There maybe some verbal excuses for non-compliance.
2	**A basic or minimum standard is not met.** However, there is visible commitment to change for the better. There are some demonstrated efforts to improve the situation. Partner organisations should be able to produce some evidence that the issue of non-compliance has been assessed and plan for improvement to reach a stage of compliance are currently being implemented. All efforts have not yet reached an acceptable level of compliance.
3	**A basic or minimum standard is met.** This score refers to a minimum level of compliance that would still be considered as acceptable.
4	**A basic or minimum standard is met.** There is some demonstrated additional effort to surpass the definition under score 3. There is visible commitment to continuous improvement. Evidence can be produced to demonstrate quality improvement. An excellence or maximum standard is met in most aspects.
5	**An excellence or maximum standard is fully met.** Excellence has been achieved. It is hardly possible to improve any further. Evidence to demonstrate sustained positive results and trends over 2 years can be produced.

Step 4: Defining minimum standard for each criteria

Each criteria depicted in either figure 1 or table 2 requires a clear set of indicators that can then be used to determine whether the minimum level has been achieved. The indicators must independently verifiable, they must be unbiased (i.e. free from social, cultural or behavioural interpretation), they must be measurable.

Each criteria or indicator should be equated to a training or capacity building module. What is important is that the training module should be "modular" and should be independent of each level of graduation. If a community has reached level 2 and wishes to "graduate" to level 3 or even level 4 an appropriate training curricula needs to be available which will ensure that the community are trained in the necessary skills. However, completion of the training does not represent successful achievement of the criteria, this is only possible once the processes and approaches that have been trained are sustainably applied by the communities.

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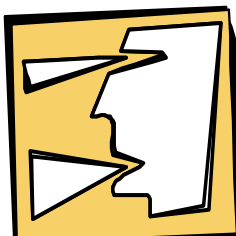
Step 5: Defining the indicators

Indicators for the criteria need to be described in a short and precise statement. The indicator needs to measure the result that will be achieved. The skills required and the minimum quality standards that are to be fulfilled have to be defined for each of the thirty criteria depicted in table 1. Table 3 presents an example of five criteria used to determine whether a group has achieved stage 1 of the mobilisation approach.

The criteria and indicators need to be evolved for each country separately. The criteria and the minimum standards need to be defined specifically for the conditions prevalent in the respective country. Both the criteria and the indicators used in the tables are to be viewed as examples.

Table 4:   Mobilistion criteria and their minimum level of achievement

Mobilisation Criteria	Expected skills	Minimum level of achievement
Empowerment (i)	Basic group organisation skills. Group discussion skills	Group meets as a group, all members of group can voice their opinions, irrespective of gender, status in society. Group has declared its willing to join together as a group.
Empowerment (ii)	Understanding animation processes. Group dynamics. Different forms of organisations.	Group has assessed different forms of group formation, have jointly agreed on a structure appropriate for their needs. Group has actively participated in mobilisation training.
Participation (i)	Meeting techniques. Group work procedures and approaches	Group meets regularly, either on daily, weekly or monthly basis, more than 80% of the group members attend these meetings regularly, the meetings are organised and conducted in a participatory manner involving all sections of the group (women, youths, etc).
Participation (ii)	Basic management and organisational skills. Minimum book keeping skills	Group is able to organise its work in an orderly manner, can divide the work amongst the members fairly and justly, can provide evidence of expenditures, can transparently collect contributions from the community in cash or kind.
Maturity	Problem and potential identification. Prioritisation skills. Planning skills Project implementation skills .	Group has identified a development project that includes a specified own contribution in cash and kind. The project was completed on time and within the financial framework defined.

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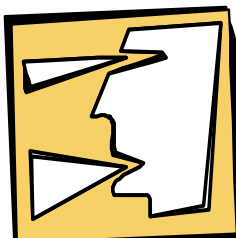
Step 6: Training curricula and syllabus

After the criteria and the graduation process has been agreed to, the next step involves defining a training curricula and syllabus for each of the 6 main graduation steps. What is important is that the communities can progress from one status to the other if they have been appropriately qualified and trained and more importantly if they actually meet the minimum criteria.

▶ The approach allows some communities to progress quickly, others that require more intensive mobilisation can also complete their graduation process according to their own skill levels.

▶ The approach also allows national governments to define standards of mobilisation.

▶ Implementing organisations know what types of community mobilisation skills they require in order to jointly implement development programmes with the communities.

Step 7: Train and certify training organisations and institutions

Training institutions and organisations who will be undertaking the capacity building of the communities also need to have the necessary standards to be able to undertake the training. The quality of training also needs to be certified. This ensures that the community actually receive standardised and quality assured training.

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