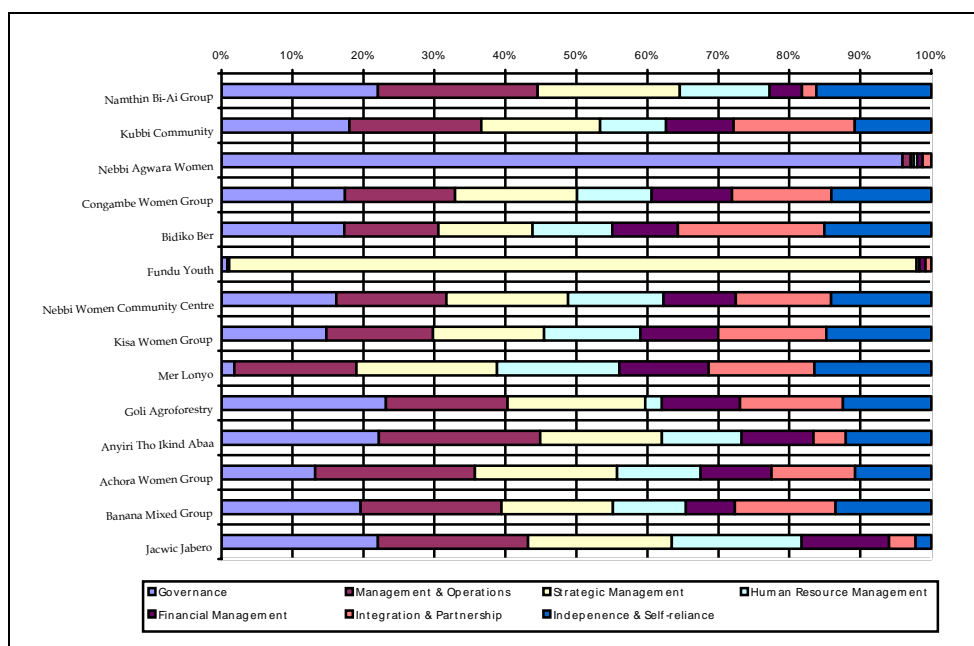


REPORT ON COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS' CAPACITY SELF-ASSESSMENT



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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Developing the assessment tool used in this exercise was not an easy task. Fortunately, there were many organisations that had their own tools from which we did not only benefit conceptually but also materially. The difficult task was to adapt the different tools to suit our partner Community Based Organisations (CBOs), many of whose members were illiterate. Concepts that looked simple and straight forward in English often did not have translations in the local language. In this respect we are very grateful and can never thank Gorta Ireland enough for supporting a process that is so long and arduous, with benefits expected in such a long run that many organisations actually shy away from committing their funding to. We are equally appreciative of the pioneer works of many NGOs whose tools provided invaluable inputs into AFARD's Capacity Self-assessment Tool; the CBOs with whom we tested and operationalised the tool; and finally to the team members of AFARD: Dr Sam Orach, Mr Alfred Lakwo, and our colleague Community Facilitators Mr Oneka Daniel and Mr Mungu Jakisa Patrick for simplifying these difficult terms and rendering them palatable to the members of the CBOs and in the local language.

The self-assessment scores given by groups also presented us with another problem. From our considerable interactions with some of the groups, we had a fairly good picture of their weaknesses and strengths. Yet when a group gave itself very high marks on an indicator when one felt that they should have scored less, respecting their answers was not easy. In this regard, the self-assessment exercise offered us an opportunity to humble ourselves and let their perceptions prevail.

The group members themselves took the exercise in their stride. The AFARD team therefore salutes them for undertaking the exercise without any apparent ill feelings. Special appreciation goes to the leaders who, more often than not, were directly addressed by many a question. It is, therefore, our sincere belief that the exercise will lay a strong foundation for the quest for self-reliance. We believe that such an effort, founded on discovering what works locally in the long run cannot fail to bear fruit. We look forward to that day.

Wilfred Cwinyai
Liaison Officer /AFARD.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

AFARD is a local NGO that has the capacity development of CBOs and other local NGOs as its main preoccupation. AFARD's understanding of capacity building is most closely mirrored by the definition of UNDP (1997), that is, "the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and societies increase their abilities to (1) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and (2) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner". Practically, capacity development in AFARD is about: Eliminating old or inappropriate capacity; Reducing demand on existing capacity; Making better use of existing capacity or strengthening it; Providing space for innovative or creative use of capacity; and Creating new capacity. First, AFARD had to establish what capacities already existed within the intended beneficiary groups, and in this case with the participation of the members. Only 21 groups were involved in the exercise in Nebbi District, North-western Uganda between July and December 2001.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

The main purposes of the capacity assessment exercise were to:

- a) At AFARD level, develop a comprehensive capacity assessment tool useable at local group levels;
- b) At the group levels, assess the strengths and weaknesses of AFARD's partner groups based on seven key themes;
- c) Identify which areas needed immediate tackling; and
- d) Establish a baseline information on groups' capacities.

METHODOLOGY

The tool used, AFARD's Capacity Assessment Tool (ACAT), has seven (7) core areas that are considered instrumental in the organizational growth and sustained development of CBOs, as well as their ability to generate benefits for individual members, the group, and the entire community. The seven key areas or themes of capacity are:

1. Participatory Governance within the group;
2. Management and Operations of the groups activities;
3. Strategic Planning;
4. Human Resource Endowment and Management;
5. Financial Management;

6. Integration and Partnership (fit within the environment); and
7. Independence and self-reliance (autonomy and sustainability) .

Each theme has a set of questions or indicator that are rated from 0 (non-existent) through 1 (fair) to 2 (good) and finally 3 (excellent) The success of the tool depends heavily on maximum participation, honesty, integrity and mutual respect of the members of a group. For example the theme Participatory Governance has 10 questions (indicators). The maximum score a group can make for excellent performance is $3 \times 10 = 30$ i.e., 100%. "Good" performance would be $2 \times 10 = 20$ out of 30, i.e., 67%. Any score below 67% (0 and 1) is considered as needing immediate attention. In this way it is possible to identify which issues should be handled as priorities. This simple interpretation of the findings makes it possible for CBOs to understand the process and results.

The findings for the 21 groups that participated in the exercise are presented below. The accompanying comments on the findings were based on conversations with the group members and observations by AFARD team.

FINDINGS FROM THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

1. PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE- AVERAGE SCORE = 71%

Areas of weakness

- a) Different members did not hold executive positions over time. In five groups, executives never or hardly ever changed at all. In another five groups members thought the change in leadership was not frequent enough. In only 4 groups did members report satisfaction with the frequency in leadership rotation. This was in spite of the fact that all groups had members professedly capable of leadership (overall score 68%).
- b) Accountability of leaders for their activities was poor. In two groups leaders were completely not accountable while in another three groups, accountability to the members left a lot to be desired.
- c) The scores for the other indicators were above 67% but there were still some worrying statistics. For instance one group did not have any vision at all. The visions of two other groups were not clear even to the members themselves in a sense that the members could not agree on a common version of the vision.

2. MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS AVERAGE = 60%

Areas of weakness

- a) Meetings were not held as frequently as members would have liked- a view expressed by eight groups (42.9%).
- b) Meetings were not well attended in nine groups.
- c) Records of meetings were generally not kept well. Three groups did not keep any records of meetings at all. Five groups kept records that were as good as useless.
- d) Generally people talked without hindrance in meetings except in four groups where members feared to express opinions that were too divergent from those of the leaders

- e) There was inadequate capacity and experience in changing ineffective leadership (seven groups).

3. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AVERAGE = 62%

Areas of weakness

- a) Not all members (42.8%) contributed at implementation as planned despite high participation during planning
- b) Seven groups did not have documented work plans.
- c) Within four groups, access to information was low- for instance many did not know how much money was on the group's account.
- d) Lack of established (or poor) procedures for getting feedback was reported in seven groups. Given the poor information flow within the groups themselves, it was therefore not surprising that several groups (7) were not satisfied with the activities the groups were engaged in.
- e) Six groups were not in the habit of experimenting with new ideas

4. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AVERAGE = 19%

Areas of weakness

- a) Generally there were a low proportion of members with specialized skills. Only four groups had at least one such member; 14 groups (67%) did not have any at all.
- b) Ability and experience in solving conflicts was lacking or very poor in 10 groups. In some groups even Local Councils of the area and elders are involved in conflict resolution, even when the groups had constitutions
- c) Six groups reported poor interpersonal relationship amongst their members.
- d) 11 groups (52%) lacked the ability to generate benefits for the groups and the wider community.

5. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AVERAGE = 48%

Areas of weakness

- a) The groups were deficient in all (13) indicators of financial management. The worst score was with respect to budgets where no group had a budget. 11 groups claimed that they had good financial records but on closer scrutiny the records were found grossly wanting. In any case they did not have a budget to begin with. Access to whatever records existed by members of the groups was also poor. In addition, many members did not understand the records.
- b) While only 6 groups (28.6%) didn't operate a savings and credit scheme, 15 groups were running rotational savings and credit schemes. Of these, only 2 (9.5%) had fairly well established schemes with good repayment; 13 groups had just started the schemes but without a clear direction.
- c) Accounting procedures was wanting in 16 groups (76.25%). 10 groups (47.6%) did not have records of their financial transactions. In 11 groups (52.4%) members lacked access to financial records of their groups.
- d) Asset availability and maintenance was poor. Records of assets were not kept at all in four groups and poorly kept in another seven groups. The acute lack of production assets was reported by 19 groups (90.5%)
- e) Group revenue base was narrow. 90.5% (19 groups) reported not having any other sources of income apart from their own membership contributions, and

sales of products- a situation that was compounded by the low productivity of the groups.

- f) 85.7% (18 groups) reported having inadequate resources to meet their activity needs.

6. INTEGRATION AND PARTNERSHIP AVERAGE = 18%

Areas of Weakness

- a) 11 groups had no or non-functional links with government or other development agencies from where they could get support. 14 groups did not have any linkage with other local development organizations such as the NGO forum and neighbouring groups with whom they could share information. It was therefore not surprising that 13 groups were not aware of current development issues within the district. It also partly explained the inability of the groups to enjoy support from the local community (for instance, non-members, the private sector and lower level government councillors).

7. INDEPENDENCE AND SELF-RELIANCE- AVERAGE = 62%

Areas of Weakness

- a) Inability of the groups to carry out their activities without external facilitation was reported by 14 groups.
- b) 11 groups reported that they could not even carry out productive meetings without external facilitation.
- c) 18 groups reported inability to raise adequate resources for planned activities
- d) Inability to withstand external pressure, say from donors, government staff was another major weakness reported. For instance, a development agency supported a group with inputs and training to raise tree seedlings for sale. The agency later dictated not only to whom the seedlings were to be sold but also at what price.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The picture that emerged from the assessment was of groups that had a low capacity to survive, fit within the environment, grow and flourish sustainably. Future interventions for these groups should therefore, among other issues, take particular note of the following systemic weaknesses:

- *Lack of clear visions shared by all.*
- *Static leadership that is not accountable to the members.*
- *Lack, or non-use of constitutions/byelaws.*
- *The considerable degree of oppression, especially of women, during meetings.*
- *Ineffective information flow.*
- *Lack of proper work plan and budget and more generally the lack of seriousness with which groups approached record keeping.*
- *Lack of requisite technical skills and knowledge.*
- *Inadequacy of finance due to limited and unproductive sources.*
- *Inability of groups to effectively integrate within the community, work closely and collaboratively with other stakeholders.*

-
- *The inability of groups to mobilise resources and implement planned activities without external intervention/facilitation.*

The approach recommended for use in addressing this serious capacity gap is to look at the various thematic areas in totality. This is because each theme affects, and is in turn, affected by all the other themes, and none is dispensable. It is also important for members of groups to realise that the primary responsibility for success or failure of the groups rests with them. Outsiders can only help and they will sooner or later leave them to their own devices. The assessment tool used in this exercise should be seen as a tool can help them to systematically examine their weaknesses and strengths. The tool may be used as it is, or it can be adapted as the members deem fit, and the information generated should be seen as their baseline information on the long road to self-reliance.

There was a gratifying immediate impact of the exercise within the groups that participated in this exercise. Groups reported changes in behaviour of members and leaders following the exercise: attendances at meetings and work improved; leaders were more participatory; and attempts were being made to establish records. They are therefore already primed for the journey towards self-reliance.

Part 1: INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, changes in the global political climate has led to the “rolling back of the state” thus allowing non-state actors a greater role in development. Associated with these changes is the growing recognition of the need to put people before things, and poor people first; development through learning and not blueprint. Terms such as decentralization, diversity, local knowledge, transparency and accountability, good governance, small groups, community action, participation and partnership are now firmly entrenched in our vocabulary.

Thus, community based organisations (CBOs) and (local) non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have become prominent actors in local development initiatives. They are rightly seen as crucial partners in the quest for lasting development. They also have the potential to provide an effective antidote against factors that hinder the promotion of equitable, sustainable and people-sensitive development. They are the most basic forms of organisations involved in the fight against poverty at the grassroots.

In Nebbi district, and indeed in many areas in Uganda, virtually all programmes that deal with CBOs have “capacity building” as a crucial element. However, not much effort has been devoted to assessing the capacity of these groups to engage effectively in the promotion of equitable and sustainable development within the region. The meanings and importance of the term itself differ with organisations. For AFARD, a local NGO devoted to the development of capacity of the CBOs and local NGOs in Nebbi district and West Nile region at large, it has been necessary to clarify by making the concept practical, develop the tools for assessment and utilise it to get a good picture of the gaps that must be addressed. The added challenge was that the tool must be, as a matter of necessity, amenable to participatory use by the members, simple and adaptable by each group.

The structure of the report

This report is in four parts. **Part 1** covers the general introduction. **Part 2** gives a brief picture about the study area, AFARD’s concept of capacity building and the tool and procedures used in this capacity assessment. In **Part 3** the findings and interpretations are dealt with. And, **Part 4** presents recommendations and lessons learned from the exercise for future actions.

PART 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 About Uganda and Nebbi District- the Project District

Uganda is a landlocked country located in East Africa. It is a country with a population of about 24 million (2002 Census), 75% of who depend almost solely on subsistence farming. The UNDP (1999) ranked it the 6th poorest nation in the world. This situation is not helped by the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS amongst the population (6.1% according to the HIV Surveillance Report).

Nebbi district is one of the 56 districts of Uganda. It is located in North-western Uganda and even by Ugandan standards, it is considered one of the poorest districts with human development indicators of 0.30 (UNDP, 1999) and 47% of the people living in \$1 a day.¹ A few indicators tabled below expound on the poverty of the people in the district.

Table 1: Selected indicators of standards of living for Nebbi district.

2002 Population (mid-2001 projection)	434,512
Per capita GDP in US\$	298*
Rural population	90%
Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births	105 (1995)
Life expectancy at birth	47 years*
Population with access to safe water	54%
Adult literacy rate	47%
Population that use wood for fuel	98%
Population that depend on agriculture for a living	85%

Sources: 1. Nebbi District Local Government (NDLG) Development Plan 1999-2002

2. * Vision 2025:Uganda Government 1999

The indicators noted in the table above emanates from a multitude of complex factors and generate an interlocked status of deprivation, powerlessness, and low capabilities, among others. Along the chain are isolation, unproductive economic ventures, back-door governance system, rapid population growth, and poor policies.

As a response to the poverty status of the population, collective solidarity groups have evolved as insurance mechanisms for sharing risks and building resilience to livelihood vulnerabilities.

The CBO presents a real target group of common interest, and their situation mirrors the plight of the people. Members see belonging to a CBO as an insurance against any adversity. The promotion of local development through CBOs, therefore, finds a fertile avenue for addressing the felt need of the community.

¹ The income poverty (gini coefficient) used herein is for northern Uganda generally.

The CBO generally improve the level of community participation; motivates the need for result-oriented-management; contributes to the enhancement of local mindset and leadership; provides an easily identifiable and justified target group for development programme focus; and builds on the capacity of the community to realize and appreciate the importance of cost-shared service delivery.

Therefore, AFARD's focus on groups as vehicles for development requires their promotion in and for the tasks before-their-hands. This organisational development is based on sustainability question, neglect of local 'home-grown' approaches, resistance to positive change, and the need to foster partnership (as a balance between top-down and bottom-top development approach). It is from this insight that AFARD hinged on capacity development.

2.2 *The concept "Capacity Development" explained*

The basic objective of AFARD is to contribute to the fight against the rampant poverty depicted by the above statistics through capacity building of CBOs and local NGOs. Capacity per se can be defined as the 'abilities, skills, understandings, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviors, motivations, resources and conditions that enable individuals, organisations, networks/sectors and broader social systems to carry out functions and achieve their development objectives over time.'² . AFARD's understanding of capacity building is most closely mirrored by the definition of UNDP (1997)³, that is,

"the process by which individuals, groups, organizations, institutions, and societies increases their abilities to (1) perform core functions, solve problems, define and achieve objectives; and (2) understand and deal with their development needs in a broad context and in a sustainable manner".

It is a process of progressive learning, which outsiders can only facilitate (Tandon, 1997)⁴, and can best be developed in a participatory manner through the ideas, actions and initiatives of group members themselves (Goshing and Edward, 1997).⁵

At the group level, capacity development involves a process (*efforts to produce improved capacity*) that yields a product[s] (*the capacity built*) from better

² See Real Lavergne, Tools and Approaches\CIDA Tools: Capacity Development Operational Guide for Program Managers: Asia Branch Guide, May 16, 2001 at <http://remote4.acdi-cida.gc/ex.../>

³ UNDP, 1997. "Capacity Development", Technical Advisory Paper 2 in Capacity Building

⁴ Tandon, R., 1997. Capacity Building in Civil Society, Annex: Draft Statement of SOI: Meaning of Capacity Building, New Delhi: PRIA. See also Stan Burkey, 1993. People First: A guide to Self-Reliant, Participatory Rural Development, London.

⁵ Oxfam, Save the Children, 1995. Toolkit 5: A Practical Guide to Assessment, Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.

organisational performance (*outcome/impact*) and permanence (*sustainability*) and self-reliance (*among the members of the groups in their well-being*).⁶

However, organizational capacities includes:

- an organizational culture, values, structure and procedures and performance motivation, that enable members to carry out their functions with a democratic and *non-monopolised leadership*.
- a productive linkage with outside groups and organizations to stimulate partnership, promote its objectives, and operate as part of a *network* aware of its need for autonomy with that of interdependence.
- basic set of competencies that can enable it to cope with its workload and environment. And, sufficient membership to carry out the tasks and services needed to implement the critical functions of the organisation.
- a *legitimate identity* and existence with the ability to persuade key stakeholders such as the politicians, private sector organisations to support partly its operations.
- the ability, the *resources* and the *autonomy* to develop and focus on a *manageable set of objectives* over a reasonable period of time with *goals that are reasonably clear, accepted, and achievable*.

It should be pointed that capacity development encourages cooperation; builds sustainable change process; facilitates the transfer of knowledge and resources through the exchange of skills, knowledge and competence; and increases participation of members of groups through a better understanding of the processes and procedures in leadership, policy and decision-making as a gateway to improving governance, transparency and accountability. Therefore, capacity development of groups focuses on a self-renewing process that the organization or system can understand the implications of its experiences, learn, adapt, and change its collective behaviour.

However, capacity development **cannot be done for a group but with and by them**. This implies that, the joint actions involved in capacity development must be from an informed point of view of both actors. The point of departure should be known and accepted by both parties as the requisite position. It is at this juncture that AFARD delved into the capacity self-assessment of group in Nebbi district after a baseline information on their composition, location, activity, and shortcomings.⁷

⁶ Depending on the context, capacity development has been conceptualized as an approach, process, and strategies for development promotion. The generally agreed principles are holistic development perspective, long-term commitment, broad based partnership, local agenda setting, ownership and capacity, on-going learning and adaptation, and the multilayered levels (individual, organisation and society).

⁷ The focus herein is that organizations have rules (*reflection, regulations, procedures*), insights (*structures that puts rules into practice*) and culture forming its behavior. These experience continuous learning (*for improvement, innovation and development*) as a process of change. The emphasis is on the Integrated Organizational Model (IOM) that looks at an organization (*with its strategy, structure, system, staffing, management style, culture*) in view of its mission, input and output taking into account the general (*political, economic, social, technical*) and specific (*linkages, competition*, among others) environment.

2.3 Objectives of the assessment exercise

The major objective of the assessment was for AFARD to evolve a locally acceptable capacity entry points and for the group members to participatorily assess their strengths and weaknesses before embarking on self-reliant development

The specific objectives of the assessment were at two levels:

At AFARD level:

- a) To develop a capacity basement tool. The focus of this objective was to formulate a *locally acceptable and practical tool* for use by AFARD, the groups, and other partners interested in capacity development; and *identify strategies and indicator* for core in-group capacity development.

At the group levels:

- b) To establish a baseline information on groups' capacities so as to be able to position the group capacity development niche. This objective helps in understanding by answering the question *why capacity development of groups at the micro level?*
- c) To assess the groups' strengths and weaknesses based on seven key areas of capacity thereby brining to light *the 'what' of capacity development*, a prime content-based question.
- d) Identify which areas needed immediate tackling, which enable action point setting for *the 'how' and 'with wha't results, group capacity development – strategies and indicators.*

2.4 ACAT, the Participatory Assessment Tool

In order for AFARD and her partner CBOs to systematically tackle capacity development, AFARD developed an AFARD CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (ACAT) that members of groups used to participatorily assess their capacity to engage in sustainable, equitable development. The object of this report is therefore to present the findings from 21 groups that participated in the exercise in Nebbi district in 2001.

ACAT was developed from a multiple of tools such as those for Program Planning Approaches⁸ and similar tools developed by other organisations.⁹ It

⁸ This includes Management by Objective (MBO) Approach; Result-Oriented Management (ROM) Approach; and Programme Planning Framework (PPF) Approach.

⁹ For further details See:

- UNDP, September 1997. *General Guidelines for Capacity Assessment and Development to Support the Development and Implementation of National Programme Framework, BPPS/MDGD and FMP International, Version 1.1;*
- Paran Srikantia and Ronald Fry, "Appreciative Capacity Building: A Self-Referential Technology of Organisational and Community Transformation. Paran emphasizes the fact that capacity building involves

is meant to be flexible enough to suit the interests and needs of individual groups- hence a group can leave out or adapt any indicators as they deem fit.

The tool focuses on seven (7) core areas that are considered instrumental in organizational growth and sustained development of the groups, as well as the groups' ability to generate benefits to individual members, the group, and the entire community. The task was therefore to assess in a participatory manner, the various areas in which the capacities of the groups were weak or strong. The exercise may also be seen, as a participatory capacity needs assessment.

Table 1: The seven key area of capacity assessment

<i>Participatory Governance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • history, identity and philosophy (vision, mission, objectives, and their clarity); • legal status (by registration and registering authority); • leadership styles; and • organisational structure (leadership layout, selection procedures, rotation, coherence with vision and mission, inclusiveness).
<i>Management and Operations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the organisational learning (especially information management – generation, flow, quality, use, and storage); • decision-making process (consensus building, team work); • meetings (regularity, participation, attendance, productivity, records keeping); • organisational culture (ethics, honesty, code of conduct);and • management of change (adaptability).
<i>Strategic Planning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • members participation in needs assessment, opportunity exploration, activity selection, and work planning; • presence of an action plan, members awareness and agreement with action plan; • task assignment/allocation; • activity identification with considerations for environment, gender, costs, political system, self-reliance, mainstreaming, and local cultures; • coordination (horizontal and vertical) within and outside the organisation; • activity reporting (framework , schedule, and communication flow); and • M&E process (through feasible indicators, process, responsibilities, and usage that relate output/progress, and outcomes/impact).
<i>Human Resource Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • availability of technical skills and competence in areas of operations; • skills development activity and plans;

both a reflective and imaginative process that shifts the locus of responsibilities with community and individuals building their accountability, refocusing its resources (local) through an effective action thereby setting a centrifugal point for transformational change;

- Beryl Levinger and Evan Bloom, 1997. *Simple Capacity Assessment Tool (SCAT)*; and *Discussion-Oriented Organisational Self-Assessment (DOSA)* at www.gdrc.org;
- D.C. Misra, "Monitoring Extension Programme and Resources" in B.E. Swanson, R.P. Bentz, and A.J. Sofraka (eds.), 1997. *Improving Agricultural Extension: A Reference Manual*, FAO, Rome; and
- Louisa Gosling and Mike Edwards, 1998, *Toolkits: A Practical Guide to Assessment, Monitoring, Review and Evaluation*, Development Manual 5, Page Brothers, London.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group supervision by any support institutions such as the department of community development; • benefits and its relevance to members, individuals and the entire community; • team work as reflected in role allocation and contribution in group work; and • conflict management.
<i>Financial Management</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infrastructure (asset worth, inventory, control and management); • budgeting process targeting the relation of budget and plans, allocation relationship with priorities, and balance of income and expenditures; • accounting looking at budget discipline, transparency of procurements, audit and control mechanisms (e.g. cash reserve limits), and reporting (schedule, format, agreement of all); • ability to acquire loan on its own; and loan history where applicable; and • fund raising capacity especially in regard to the diversity of funding sources, and efficiency in resource mobilisation.
<i>Integration and Partnership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both horizontal, vertical, within and outside sector focus in relations to the local area support, government support, donor support, media support; and • networking with other similar groups.
<i>Independence and self-reliance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the relationship and autonomy from advocates and promoters; • incentives from the group for membership; • ability to mobilise own resources; • planning capacity and competence; • pressure resistance from other sources and those from within; • programme expansion and replicability as well as innovativeness; and • members self confidence and reputation in community

The success of the tool depends heavily on maximum participation, honesty, integrity, and mutual respect of the members of a group. Dishonest answers would mean founding the capacity development of the groups on a false premise and is doomed to failure.

2.5 Methodology of the Assessment

Between June and November 2001, 21 groups used the ACAT to accomplish their capacity assessment.¹⁰ The groups were selected from each of the 3 Counties that composed Nebbi district- 13 groups were from Padyere county, 4 from Jonam and 4 from Okoro county. Selection of groups was based primarily on cost implications: proximity to AFARD offices, and the presence of experienced volunteer community facilitators given that the whole process required considerable and sustained inputs from a facilitator. The CBO Inventory provided a point of reference for selection basing on this criterion. Other factors considered were accessibility by vehicle during rainy seasons,

¹⁰ Looked at another way, ACAT provides for both an ex-ante appraisal of capacity and ex-post evaluation of performance at the group level for the supporting organisation. That is why it is also a tool that can finally be used by a group to do a self-evaluation to gauge the changes attained since the first assessment.

and the willingness of the group to engage in growth-oriented self-reliant development as advocated for by AFARD.

Steps followed in undertaking ACAT

- a) A half-day visit to a group to make an appointment for meeting with AFARD team (especially for selected groups).
- b) Members of groups were introduced to ACAT (see annex 1) and what each indicator meant was explained. It was possible to bring several groups to one venue. This took a whole day.
- c) The groups then met to score themselves on each indicator. For each indicator (question) the worst possible answer was given the score 0. Score of 1 was fair, 2 was good while the highest score possible was 3. AFARD members did not attend these “scoring” meetings. The importance of open, frank discussion could not be overstressed because it formed the basis for recognition of weaknesses and the need to correct them. It also involved a considerable amount of soul searching on the side of all members but from the leaders it required courage and humility. It was therefore a process of cleansing, as if the group was starting from a fresh sheet.
- d) A joint evaluation meeting (the groups and AFARD) to confirm the scores and agree on which indicators required immediate attention was held.
- e) The evaluation sheet is produced in duplicate. Groups retained a copy as its baseline information. Henceforth the group could use the same tool to assess their progress.

Basic facts about ACAT

- It can be described as a hands-on tool that explores 7 thematic areas about organisational capacity.
- Its objective is to assess organisational strengths and weaknesses.
- It is used to capture (at the start) existing capacity and later on evaluate capacity change.
- The procedure involves mutual meetings with groups, a honest group assessment of itself, and discussion with the groups to find common agreeable capacity.
- Its advantages include opening up space for dialogue, taking responsibilities for results and actions and its demerit include taking up even bad assessment results if the group insists.
- The main users of ACAT are groups, group facilitators, NGOs, and community development departments of governments.
- ACAT outputs include both quantitative and qualitative data as well as observational situations about a group.
- The time of use of ACAT is at the start of organisational assessment or during participatory periodic reviews.
- It takes a maximum duration of 5 days per group to administer ACAT effectively.
- The budget for the administration of ACAT is flexible depending on the institution involved but basically it requires basic stationery, logistic support to reach the group site and facilitation allowance. It should not be used as a tool where participating groups are paid.

It deserves to point that:

- The inquisitive nature of questions and the feelings of apprehension associated with its requires a subgroup work - for instance the leaders, youth, women, men, etc, fill forms separately and a member presents the views of the sub-group rather than of individuals. The plenary discussions then provide a dialogue stage where different opinions are synchronised, respected and no pointing of fingers follows. The eventual consensus capacity point is thus one where no manipulated result is used. However, it was noted that in some groups where joint scoring was done (in 1 group) no divergent opinion evolved and manipulations were common.
- The high illiteracy rate among the members, over 50% for women groups, made it imperative to translate the initial English version of the questionnaire into the local language so that each group (and sub group) is in a position to assess their group without interpretation bias. Any such cases that came up were handled in the plenary.

Part 3: FINDINGS FROM THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Below is the presentation of the findings by theme (key areas of capacity building pertinent for groups). For example the theme Participatory Governance had 10 questions (indicators). The maximum score a group could make for excellent performance was $3 \times 10 = 30$ i.e., 100%. "Good" performance would be $2 \times 10 = 20$ out of 30, i.e., 67%. Any score below 67% (0 and 1) was considered as needing immediate attention. In this way it was possible to identify which issues should be handled as priorities for actions and with what strategies.

This simple interpretation of the findings made it possible for CBOs to understand the process and results. It did not, however, preclude the corroboration of the findings with more detail and from a slightly different perspective. For instance the average score of 67% for the 21 groups would indicate that generally the groups were faring well on that particular indicator. But averages tend to cover up extreme variations. Thus in addition to the average scores for the 21 groups the number of groups that scored 0, 1, 2 or 3 is also presented.

The ensuring comments on the findings are also based on corroborative conversations with the group members and observations by AFARD team.

3.1 Participatory Governance

The emergence of a group leads to an entrusted leadership aimed at providing an overseers role to ensure compliance and representation. Besides, it leads to an acceptance of a system of governance under which members' interests and expectations are harmonized and met. However, this should be in line with the institutional motivational factor (how and why a group was formed).

Below were the findings on whether groups were being governed participatorily. This is important because being voluntary organizations, lack of participation has a negative impact on the commitment of members and the longevity and vibrancy of the groups

Table 2: Groups Responses on indicators for participatory governance

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator n= 21			
		Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
1) Do the leaders involve or consult the whole group in the making of decisions?	79	1	-	10	10
		4.8%	-	47.6%	47.6%
2) Are tasks and responsibilities shared evenly among the members of the group in a team spirit?	71	-	5	8	8
			23.8%	38.1%	38.1%
3) Do different members hold the executive positions over time?	49	5	5	7	4
		23.8%	23.8%	33.3%	19.0%
4) Are there many members who are capable of leading the group successfully?	68		6	8	7
			28.6%	38.1%	33.3%
5) Are leaders accountable for all their actions to the group?	65	2	3	10	6
		9.5%	14.3%	47.6%	28.6%

6) Does the group have a vision?	78	1	2	7	11
		4.8%	9.5%	33.3%	52.4%
7) Is the vision clear and shared by all members?	81	1	1	7	9
		4.8%	4.8%	33.3%	57.1%
8) Are the objectives of the group clear and ascribed to by all members?	73		5	7	9
			23.8%	33.3%	42.9%
9) Are the strategies and activities to achieve the objectives agreeable to all members?	73		6	8	7
			28.6%	38.1%	33.3%
10) Does the group have bylaws that govern all aspects of the group's management and operations?	73	1	5	4	11
		4.8%	23.8%	19.0%	52.4%

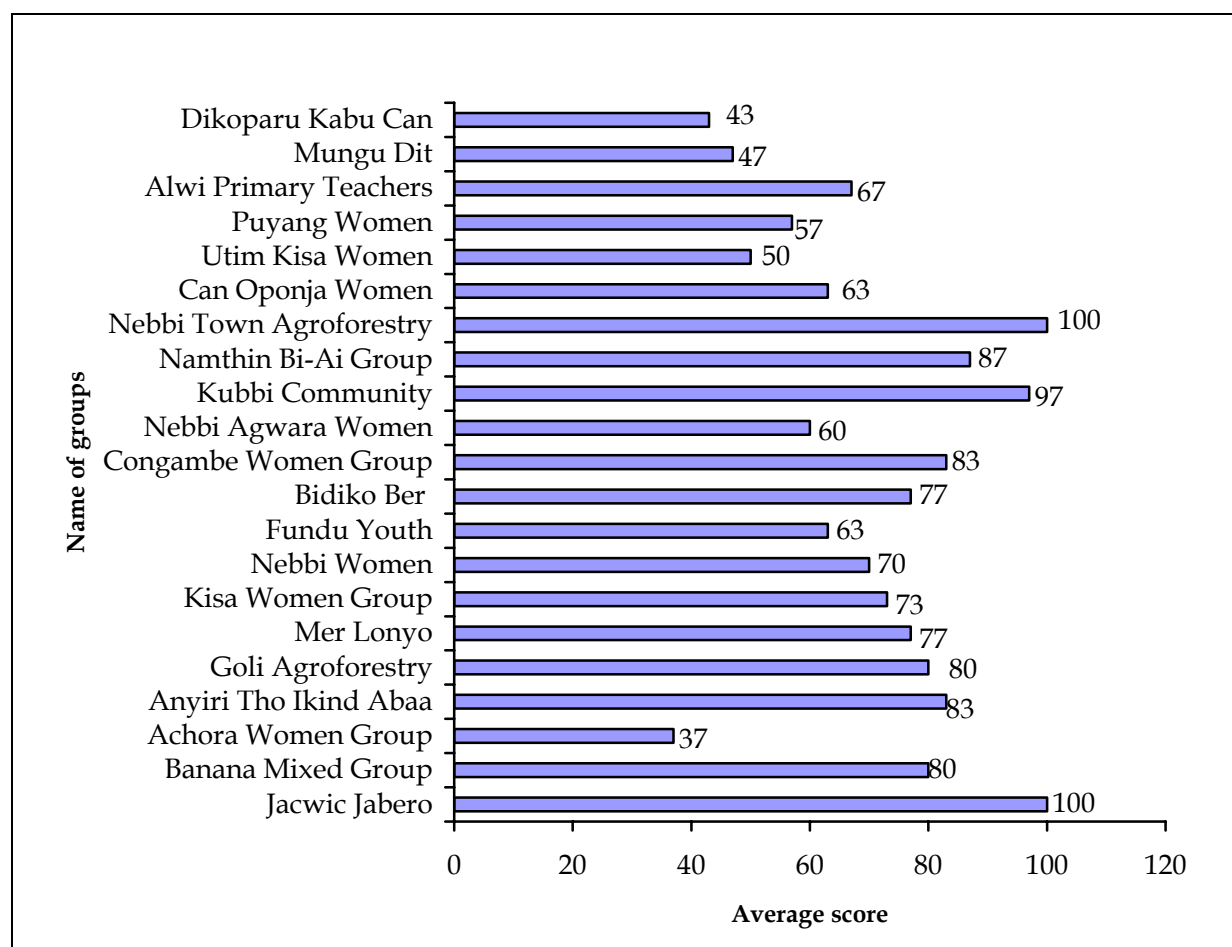
Average score- 71%; Maximum score- 81%; Minimum Score- 49%

Areas of greatest weakness

1. Different members did not hold executive positions over time. In five groups, executives never or hardly ever changed at all. In another five groups the change was unsatisfactory. In only 4 groups did members report frequent rotation in leadership. This was in spite of the fact that all groups had members professedly capable of leadership. Some capable or potential leaders lacked confidence to take up leadership position.
2. Accountability of leaders for their actions was poor. In two groups leaders were completely not accountable while in another three groups, accountability to the members were not questionable and this leaves a lot to be desired.
3. The scores for the other indicators were above 67% but there were still some worrying statistics. For instance one group did not have a vision; the visions of two other groups were not clear even to the members themselves in a sense that the members could not agree on a common vision.
4. Objectives of five groups were not so clear to all members
5. Strategies and activities of six groups were not quite agreeable to all members
6. One group did not have a byelaw; another five had byelaws that were drafted in English, used as a requirement for registration with government and filed away. In all cases where groups had a byelaw (in English or Alur), most members were not familiar with the contents of their byelaws and did not keep any copies.

Strengths scored.

- Entrusting leadership in executive committees present the first step towards accepting the roles of leaders among the elected and the led.
- There was also a sizeable leadership potential among members.
- There was considerable sharing of tasks among members.
- Agreeableness of the strategies being employed.

Figure 1: Capacity Assessment Result on Governance

Observations and implications for future interventions

It can be observed that the governance of the group has internal structures commensurate with the envisaged control, chain of authority and the division of roles and responsibilities. Members are loyal to their executive committees and are committed to their overall goals. However, although the group accepted their status quo, there is lack of a competent leadership for a change management that involves transforming problems into actions. With monopoly of positions, the ability of groups to act as a limp-stick for exposure of members to leadership thus community democratisation is restricted.

On the one hand, the availability of byelaws by the groups presents a stimulant for formal registration with government authorities. It also set a legitimate status for the groups to *demand* from government for their due consideration. However, experience has shown that the low voice and incapacitation of groups through non-forward looking leadership persist in inhibiting the exploitation of these opportunities.

Therefore, effort should be made to ensure that all groups develop clear vision shared by all. Training in participatory and democratic leadership

skills should be carried out for the whole group in order to encourage those with potential to also assume leadership. There should also be a clear and internalised mechanisms of behaviour and a system of redress as enshrined in the group's byelaws/constitution that must, of necessity be understood by all members.

2.2 Management and Operations

The effectiveness of a group is dependent on its day-to-day transformation of decisions into actions. Thus the dynamics within groups is considered important- for instance the adequacy of information flow as indicated by frequency of meetings, participation in these meetings and decision-making processes in general. All these help to knit groups together.

Table 3: Groups responses on indicators for Management and operations

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator n= 21			
		Score 0	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3
1) Are meetings held frequently as desired by the members?	59	2	6	8	5
		14.3%	28.6%	38.1%	23.8%
2) Are the meetings well attended?	57	3	6	6	6
		14.3%	28.6%	28.6%	28.6%
3) Are proper records of the meetings kept?	62	3	5	5	8
		14.3%	23.8%	23.8%	38.1%
4) Do the members consider these meetings productive?	70	2	6	9	4
		9.5%	28.6%	42.9%	19.0%
5) How are the decisions made in the meetings (consensus, Chairman decides)?	83	1		10	10
		4.8%		47.6%	47.6%
6) Do members participate actively and without hindrances or fear in the meetings?	76	1	3	12	5
		4.8%	14.3%	57.1%	23.8%
7) Do women members participate as actively as men?	63	2	4	5	10
		9.5%	19.0%	23.8%	47.6%
8) Are problems within the group solved in a participatory manner?	75		6	5	10
			28.6%	23.8%	47.6%
9) Does the group have capacity or experience in replacing ineffective leadership or allowing others also to participate in leadership?	56	3	4	6	8
		14.3%	19.0%	28.6%	38.1%

Average score- 60%; Minimum score- 56%; Maximum score- 83%

Areas of weakness

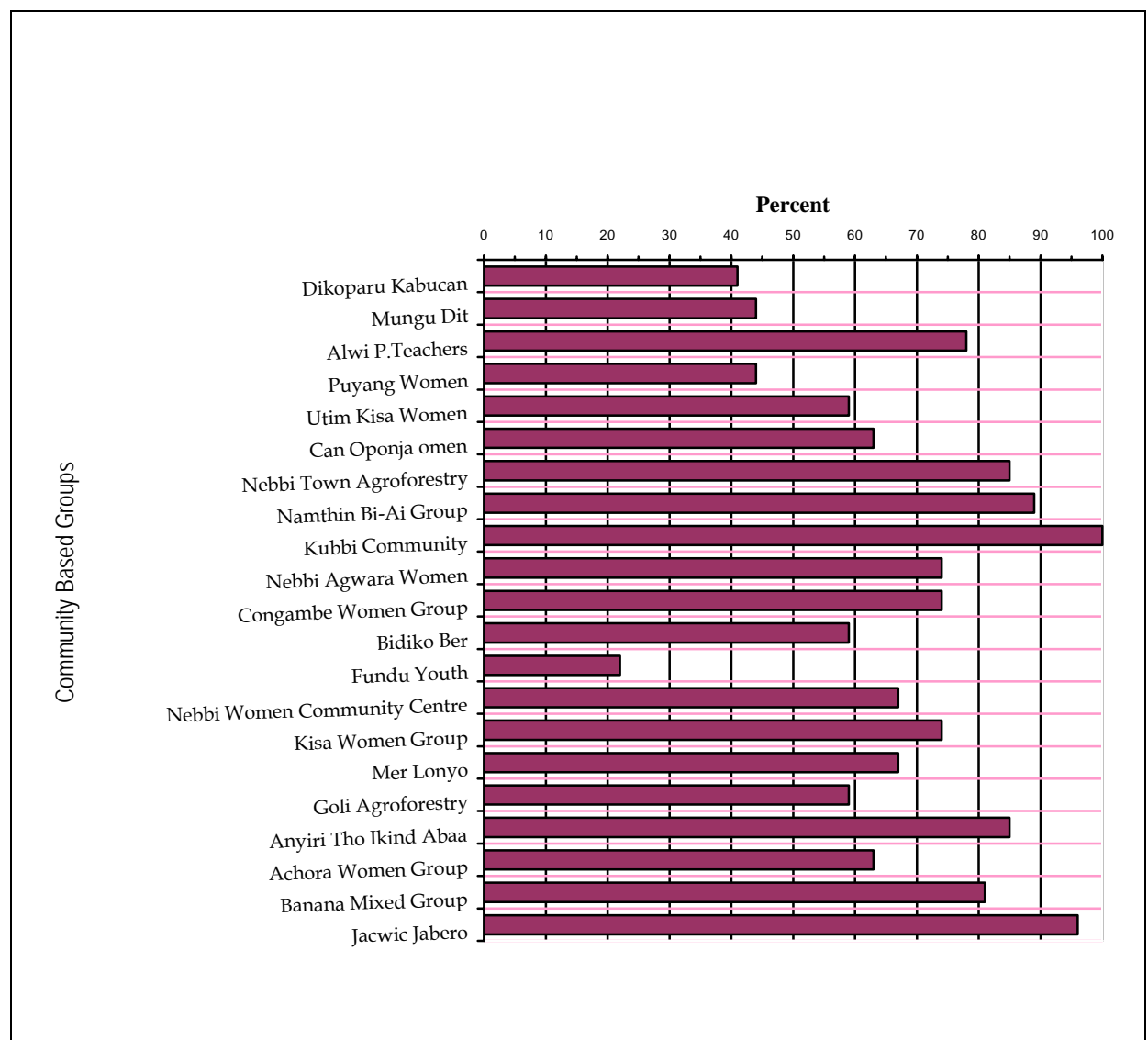
1. Meetings were not held as frequently as members would have liked. This view was expressed by eight groups (42.9%).
2. Meetings were not well attended in nine groups.
3. Women did not participate as actively as men in 6 groups.

4. Records of meetings were generally not kept well. Three groups did not keep any records of meetings at all. Five groups kept records that were as good as useless.
5. There was inadequate capacity and experience in changing ineffective leadership (seven groups).

Strength

- Decision-making was participatory and the views of the majority held sway.
- Generally people talked without hindrance in meetings except in four groups where members feared to express opinions that were too divergent from those of the leaders
- Meetings were considered productive for groups' operations.

Figure 2: Group Average Scores on Management and Operation



Observations and implications for future interventions

The findings suggest that no clear methodical systems are in place in regards to administrative, planning, monitoring, auditing, and smooth flow of information. However, members collectively participate through meetings in deciding on what to do, who to do what, and how what should be done. This has also provided for equity in decision-making. The position of women in terms of their *voice* in decision-making is an indicator of women empowerment in society.

People's participation during meetings and decision-making could be built upon in order to enhance equity in decision-making. However the poor attendance of meetings, some degree of oppression during the meetings by leaders, showing little inclination to allow others assume leadership were weaknesses that were likely to erode the cohesion within the groups and negatively affect the commitment of members, the growth and ultimately the very viability of the groups.

2.3 Strategic Planning:

Strategic management provides the interlink between a groups' vision, resource endowment and its activities on the one hand and the continued monitoring of implementation success, benefits accrued, impacts and relevance, the overall coherence and benefits creation on the other hand. Thus the way members develop plans and implement them was important for the smooth running of the group.

Table 4: Responses of groups on indicators for strategic management

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator n=21			
		0	1	2	3
1) Are all members involved in the problem identification?	84			10	11
				47.6%	52.4%
2) Are all members involved in opportunity identification?	71	3	3	7	8
		14.3%	14.3%	33.3%	38.1%
3) Are all members involved in activity selection?	78		2	9	10
			9.5%	42.9%	47.6%
4) Do all members contribute as planned during implementation?	62	2	7	5	7
		9.5%	33.3%	23.8%	33.3%
5) Are all members involved in the assigning of tasks during implementation?	70		5	10	6
			23.8%	47.6%	28.6%
6) Does the group have a proper work plan that is followed?	49	7	1	8	5
		33.3%	4.8%	38.1%	23.8%
7) Are members satisfied with the growth in membership of the group?	65	1	4	9	7
		4.8%	19.0%	42.9%	33.3%

8) Are members satisfied with the reasons for which the group was formed?	83		3	7	11
			14.3%	33.3%	52.4%
9) Are members satisfied with the current activities the group is engaged in?	67	1	6	7	7
		4.8%	28.6%	33.3%	33.3%
10) Do all members have access to information the group possess and communicate their views easily to all other members?	57		4	10	7
			19.0%	47.6%	33.3%
11) Does the group have established procedures for getting feedback and evaluation of performance?	54	2	5	11	3
		9.5%	23.8%	52.4%	14.3%
12) Does the group use participatory methods in all its activities including evaluation?	57		9	6	6
			42.9%	28.6%	28.6%
13) Does the group have a habit of experimenting with new ideas and knowledge?	63	3	3	9	6
		14.4%	14.4%	42.9%	28.6%

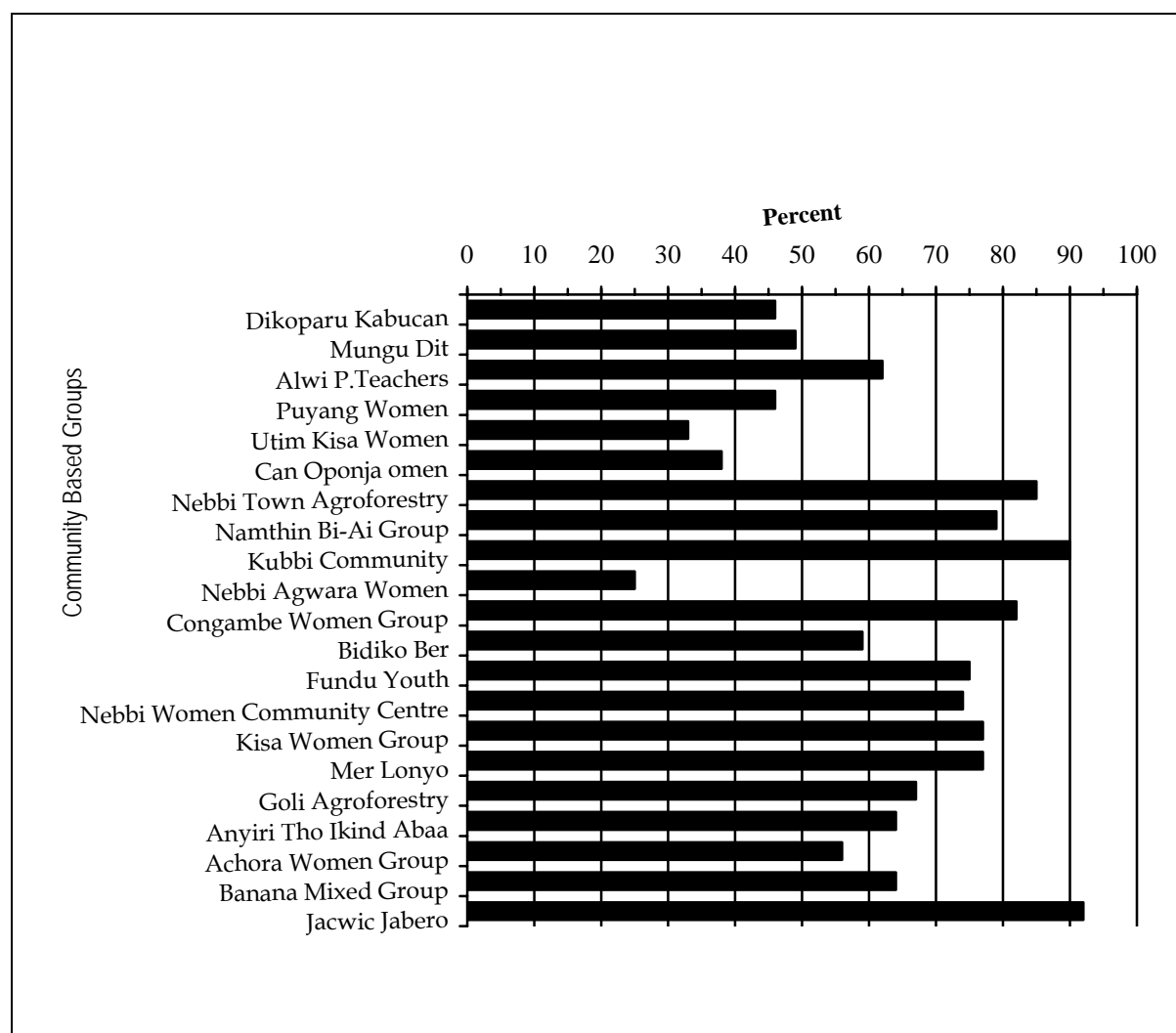
Average score- 66%; minimum score-54%; maximum score-83%

Areas of weakness

1. Not all members (42.8%) contributed as planned despite high participation during planning.
2. Seven groups did not have proper work plans.
3. Within four groups, access to information was low.
4. Lack of established (or poor) procedures for getting feedback was reported in seven groups. Given the poor information flow within the groups themselves, it was therefore not surprising that several groups (7) were not satisfied with the activities the groups were engaged in.
5. Six groups were not in the habit of experimenting with new ideas.

Strengths

- Participatory planning process right from problem identification (52.4%), opportunity analysis (71.4%), activity selection (90.5%) and assigning of tasks (76.2%).
- Satisfaction with the original reasons for which groups were formed (18 groups).
- Satisfaction with the growth in group membership (16 groups).

Figure 3: Group Capacity Assessment Result on Strategic Management

Observations and implications for future interventions

Members did participate well in planning. Their inability to contribute effectively in the implementation of plans they participated in making however deserves comment. Some of the reasons can be deduced from the weaknesses above, for instance, lack of clear vision, objectives, and strategy (work plans) that could guide groups, and poor information flow within the groups including poor feedback mechanism. This also limits the effectiveness of leaders to transform into actions the decisions so passed by members and best suit the situation of *ad hoc operations*.

It was also possible that many members shared the mentality that groups require grants to implement activities, thus the lack of commitment to tasks they agreed to during planning. This is possible within most of the groups formed to tap donor or government resources and not a common vision on which to mobilise commitment.

2.4 Human Resource Management:

It is the human resources in a group that provides a niche for the group in its operation, image, and vision. The collective efforts of the people provide the favourable base with which a group can grow or die. It is thus important to assess the institutional competence of a group from the point of view of its human resources among other indicators. This is because the efficacy, or lack, of the skills commensurate with the tasks within groups can determine whether a group grows or dies; and accepted or not.

Table 5: Responses on indicators for Human Resource Management

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator n= 21			
		0	1	2	3
1) Are there many members with specialized skills such as accounting skills?	19	14	2	1	4
		66.7%	9.5%	4.8%	19.0%
2) Is the group familiar with and capable of resolving conflicts within the group?	57	3	7	5	6
		14.4%	33.3%	23.8%	28.6%
3) How smooth is the interpersonal relations among the members?	67	4	2	9	6
		19.0%	9.5%	42.9%	28.6%
4) Is the group able to generate benefits not only for the group, but also for the individuals within the group and the wider community?	44	7	4	4	6
		33.3%	19.0%	19.0%	28.6%

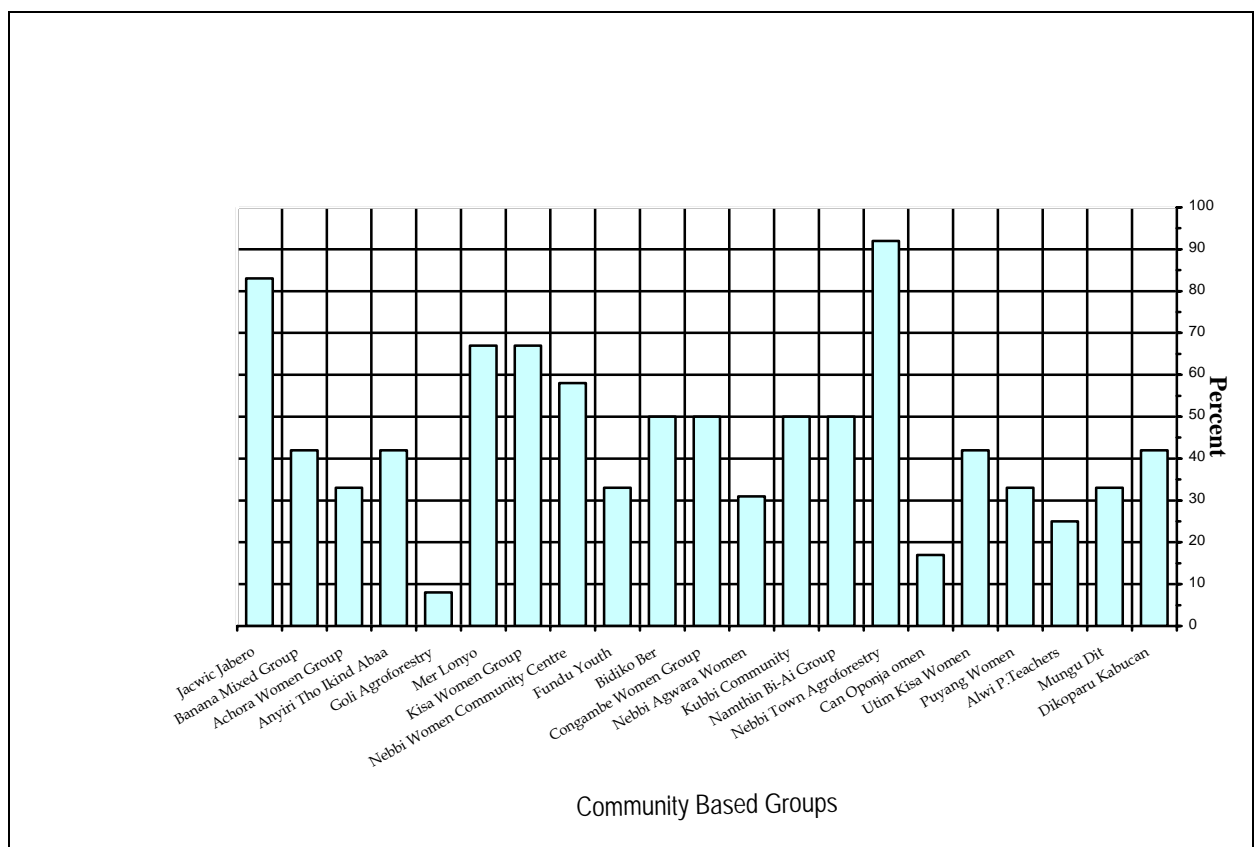
Average score- 47%; Maximum score- 67%; Minimum score-19%

Areas of weakness

1. Paucity of members with specialized skills. Only four groups had at least one such member; 14 groups (67%) did not have any at all.
2. Inability and or lack of experience in solving conflicts were reported in 10 groups. In some groups even local councils of the area and elders were involved.
3. Six groups reported poor interpersonal relationship amongst their members
4. 11 groups (52%) lacked the ability to generate benefits for the groups and the wider community.

Strengths recorded

- Some degree of smooth interpersonal relationships among members
- Group members have commitment to their goals.

Figure 4: Group Capacity Assessment Result on Human Resource Management

Observations and implications for future interventions

The ability of the people in the groups in terms of technical skills is extremely low. Group members are to a large extent implementing their activities on the basis of interest and commitment *but not suitability for the activities in terms of expertise*. This makes performance and group productivity low and thus portrays the organizational incompetence to handle its objectives through the production of quality products.

Besides, the ability to sustain group coherence in terms of conflict management is another limitation. Change and process management are characterized by conflict of interests, expectations, among others and unless a group is able to internally retain its togetherness, disintegration probability is highest.

2.5 Financial Management:

In Alur there is a saying that 'a poor (wo)man has no voice'. Implicitly, full autonomy of a group can come by when it is able to adequately fund its own operations. To do this, a group must be able to have sufficient, diverse, practical, and steady sources of income. It should also have adequate infrastructure. All these requires a better management system that can ensure

compliance with the rules and regulations of the group, free access by members, and above all a clear way of utilization. At no moment for instance should a group fail to balance and spell out its income and expenditure.

Table 6: Scores made by groups on indicators of financial management

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator n=21			
		0	1	2	3
1) Does the group have a budget (prepare a periodic budget)?	0	20 95.2%			1 4.8%
2) Does the group have proper financial record?	44	5 23.8%	5 23.8%	8 38.1%	3 14.3%
3) Do all members have free access and understand them?	60	2 9.5%	9 42.9%	8 38.1%	2 9.5%
4) Does the group have enough physical assets to carry out its planned activities?	24	6 28.6%	13 61.9%	2 9.5%	
5) Is the group capable of raising enough income to sustain and expand its activities?	32	4 19.0%	15 71.4%	2 9.5%	
6) Does the group have other sources of income such that it can still survive when adversities strike?	27	9 42.9%	10 47.6%	2 9.5%	
7) Does the group have a group savings scheme that is working properly?	38	6 28.6%	8 38.1%	5 23.8%	2 9.5%
8) Can the group members rely on the group for production credit or emergency loans?	27	8 38.1%	8 38.1%	3 14.3%	2 9.5%
9) Does the group keep an inventory of its assets?	49	4 19.0%	7 33.3%	7 33.3%	2 14.3%
10) Are the physical assets of the group well maintained and utilized profitably?	54	3 14.3%	8 38.1%	7 33.3%	3 14.3%
11) Is the group utilizing improved technologies for production?	54	6 28.6%	7 33.3%	4 19.0%	4 19.0%
12) Do the groups repay loans properly?	37	8 38.1%	6 28.6%	5 23.8%	2 9.5%
13) Does the group have a proper accounting procedure including budgets and financial reports?	37	10 37.6%	6 28.6%	3 14.3%	2 9.5%

Average score: 37%; Maximum score- 60.6%; Minimum score- 0%

Areas of weakness:

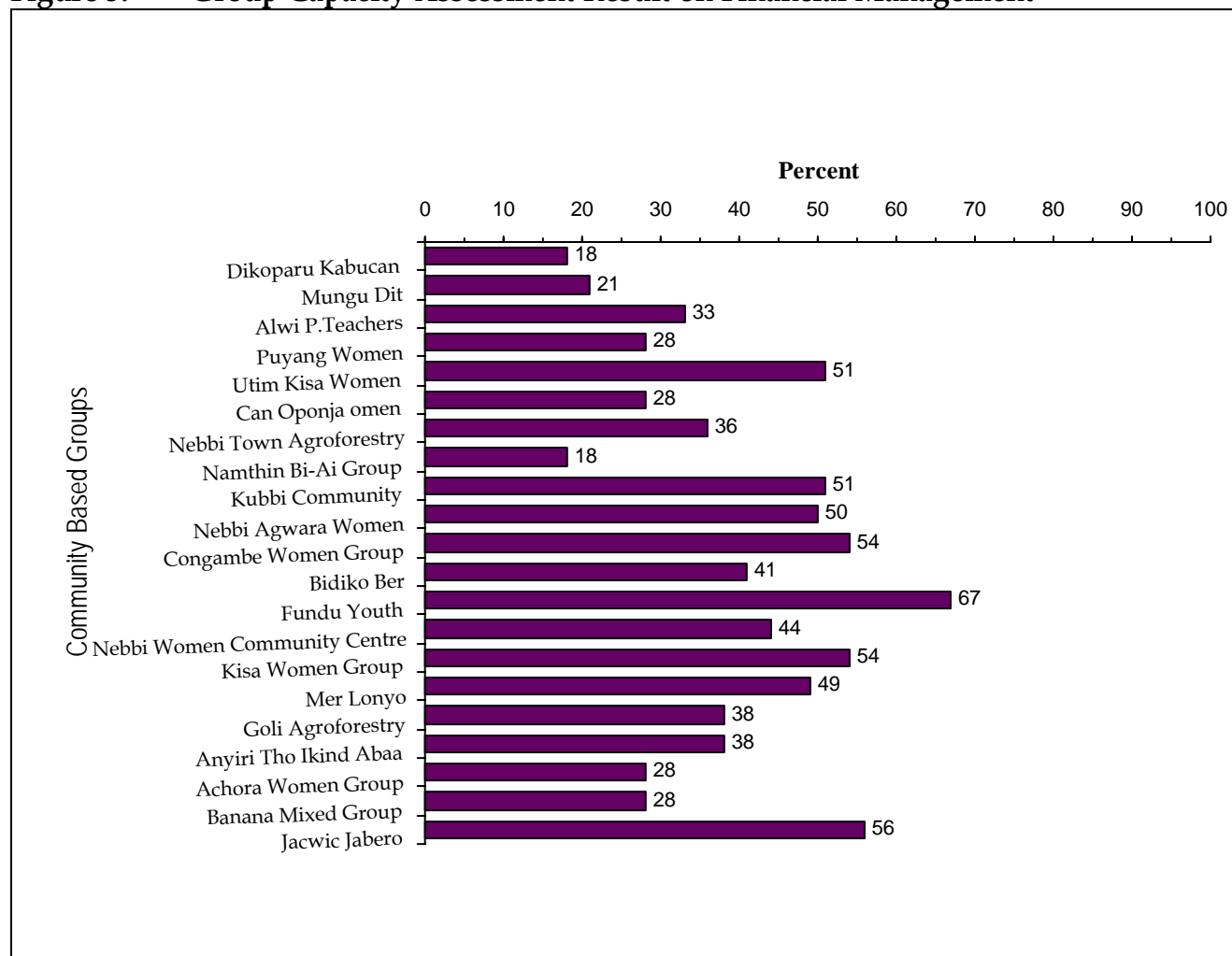
1. The groups were deficient in all the indicators listed above. The worst score was with respect to budgets where only one group had a budget. 11 groups claimed to have good financial records but on closer scrutiny the records were found grossly wanting. In any case they did not have a budget to

begin with. Access to whatever records existed was also poor and many members did not understand the records.

2. The savings schemes were not working properly and loans were not repaid promptly. Only 6 groups (28.6%) don't operate a savings and credit scheme, while 15 groups are running a rotational savings and credit schemes. Of these, only 2 (9.5%) had fairly well established schemes with good repayment and 13 groups have started but without a clear direction as 8 groups have poor repayment performance internally.
3. Accounting procedures is wanting. 16 groups (76.25%) lack accounting procedures of cash inflow and outflow. 10 groups (47.6%) don't have financial records of their transactions. In 11 groups (52.4%) members lack access to financial records of the groups.
4. Asset availability and maintenance is poor. Records of assets were not kept at all in four groups and poorly kept in another seven groups. 11 groups (52.4%) lack asset inventory and also reported inability to know whether group assets are well maintained. 19 groups (90.5%) have assets that are inadequate for the activities they are undertaking currently.
5. Group revenue base is narrow. 90.5% (19 groups) reported not having any other sources of income apart from their own membership contributions, and sales of products and the inability to raise funds for their activities. Further, 85.7% (18 groups) reported having inadequate resources to meet their activity needs. This is linked to the lack of strategic planning skills.

Strength scored

- 10 groups are maintaining and utilizing their assets in line with group principles.
- Inventories are kept in 9 of the 21 groups.
- In 10 groups there is free access to financial records.

Figure 5: Group Capacity Assessment Result on Financial Management

Observations and implications for future interventions

The inability to meet groups' own resource needs requisite for winning future independence added to the lack of technical infrastructure and administrative equipments has perpetuated low productivity and the need for grant in aid. Meanwhile, the lack of accounting procedures and systems that the groups use inhibit their ability to explore their resource envelop, maximise results from the limited resources, and mobilise adequate resources locally and externally to meet with their activity target. Groups that are coping with savings and credit are very new to the whole scheme and are at a position that hamper growth and transformation into viable entities that can serve not only members but the wider community.

A small group with very little money (say US \$ 20) and with hardly any activities in the year can afford to keep their plans and budget as well as their financial records in their heads – but to the detriment of strategic planning. As activities multiply and increase in complexity this type of scenario becomes untenable. In the 21 groups, what was remarkable was the lack of seriousness with which groups approached record keeping. Given that all activities of groups including

timely operations, accountability by leaders to their members and the viability of their savings were directly dependent on the quality of records kept one would have expected them to have good records.

2.6 Integration and Partnership:

No man is an island is a common adage. While a group exists as an entity, its operations are influenced by- and must take into consideration- the activities and relationships with a number of actors, for instance, local government, donors, NGOs, fellow CBOs, members as individuals, and the entire community of a groups' operation. Sustainability requires that the group fits well within the existing environment.

Table 7: Responses on indicators of Integration and partnership

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator			
		0	1	2	3
1) Does the group have links with government and other development agencies in the area?	43	7	4	5	5
		33.3%	19.0%	23.8%	23.8%
2) Does the group have links with other local development organizations in the area?	35	9	5	4	3
		42.9%	23.8%	19.0%	14.3%
3) Is the group aware of current development issues that are relevant to their area? e.g. activities of government, other NGOs, groups, gender issues, sources of credit?	46	5	8	4	4
		23.8%	38.1%	19.0%	19.0%
4) Does the group enjoy the full support of the local community?	59	2	5	10	4
		9.5%	23.8%	47.6%	19.0%

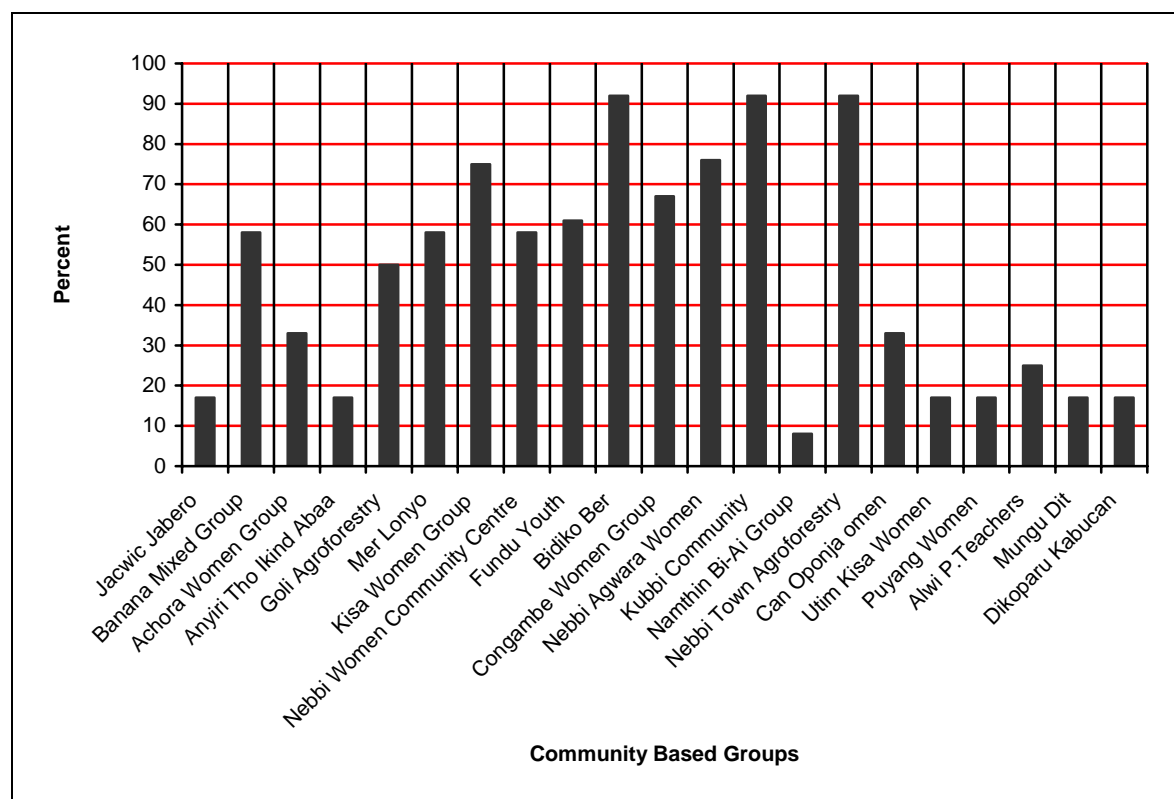
Average score- 46%; Maximum score- 59%; Minimum score-35%

Areas of Weakness:

- 11 groups had no or non-functional links with government or other development agencies from where they could get support.
- 14 groups did not have any linkage with other local development organizations such as the NGO forum and neighbouring groups with whom they could share information.
- 13 groups were not aware of current development issues within the district.
- It also partly explains the inability of the groups to enjoy support from the local community (for instance non-members, the private sector and lower level government councillors).

Strength scored

1. Linkages with other actors is evolving (10 group with government; 7 of the 10 groups also had links with local development actors).
2. Awareness of current development partners is gradually filtering the local levels. 8 groups were aware of other actors in their arrears.
3. 14 groups have the support of the local community.

Figure 6: Group Result on Integration and Partnership

Observations and implications for future interventions

The inability of groups to effectively integrate within the community, work closely and collaboratively with other stakeholders would certainly have a deleterious effect on the growth and sustainability for the groups. It has in part contributed to the weak alliance within the CBO fraternity. For these groups to grow, they need to become learning organisations, abreast with current information and opportunities, in touch and working relationship with all types of stakeholders with who and from who they can share experiences, resources and learn. Increasing local community support can evolve with better networking and advocacy.

2.7 Independence and self-reliance:

Building autonomous institutions requires a sense of independence in the groups. This stem from the collective solidarity with which a group was formed vis-à-vis its vision. It is also apparently clear now that a number of groups loose tract of their independence due to loosing the path of their initial vision in the process of change management.

Table 8: Responses on indicators of Independence and Self-reliance

Indicators	Average score %	Scores given for each indicator			
		0	1	2	3
1) How independent is the group from the group facilitator?	48	4 19.0%	8 38.1%	5 23.8%	4 19.0%
2) How able is the group to operate without the direction or intervention of the facilitator?	41	5 23.8%	9 42.9%	5 23.8%	2 9.5%
3) How well does the group carry on its meetings without the facilitator?	54	3 14.3%	7 33.3%	6 28.6%	5 23.5%
4) Can the group mobilize resources (funds, information, skilled personnel etc) without the facilitator?	33	8 38.1%	9 42.9%	2 9.5%	2 9.5%
5) Can the group raise enough resources for planned activities without outside assistance?	25	8 38.1%	10 47.6%	3 14.3%	
6) Do members help each other even apart from group activities?	60	4 19.0%	3 14.3%	8 38.1%	6 28.6%
7) Do members share new information and knowledge e.g. from training with others?	73	3 14.3%	6 28.6%	8 38.1%	4 19.0%
8) Do members show increased self-confidence as a result of participation in the group activities?	67	2 9.5%	5 23.8%	6 28.6%	8 38.1%
9) Can the group withstand pressures from other stakeholders in the area?	65	2 9.5%	4 19.0%	9 42.9%	6 28.6%
10) Do the members have a strong sense of belonging, pride, and faith in the group?	86	1 4.8%	1 4.8%	4 19.0%	15 71.4%
11) Are members confident that they can continue operating even if there is no outside support?	65		4 19.0%	13 61.9%	4 19.0%

Average score- 56%; Maximum score- 86%; Minimum score-25%

Areas of Weakness:

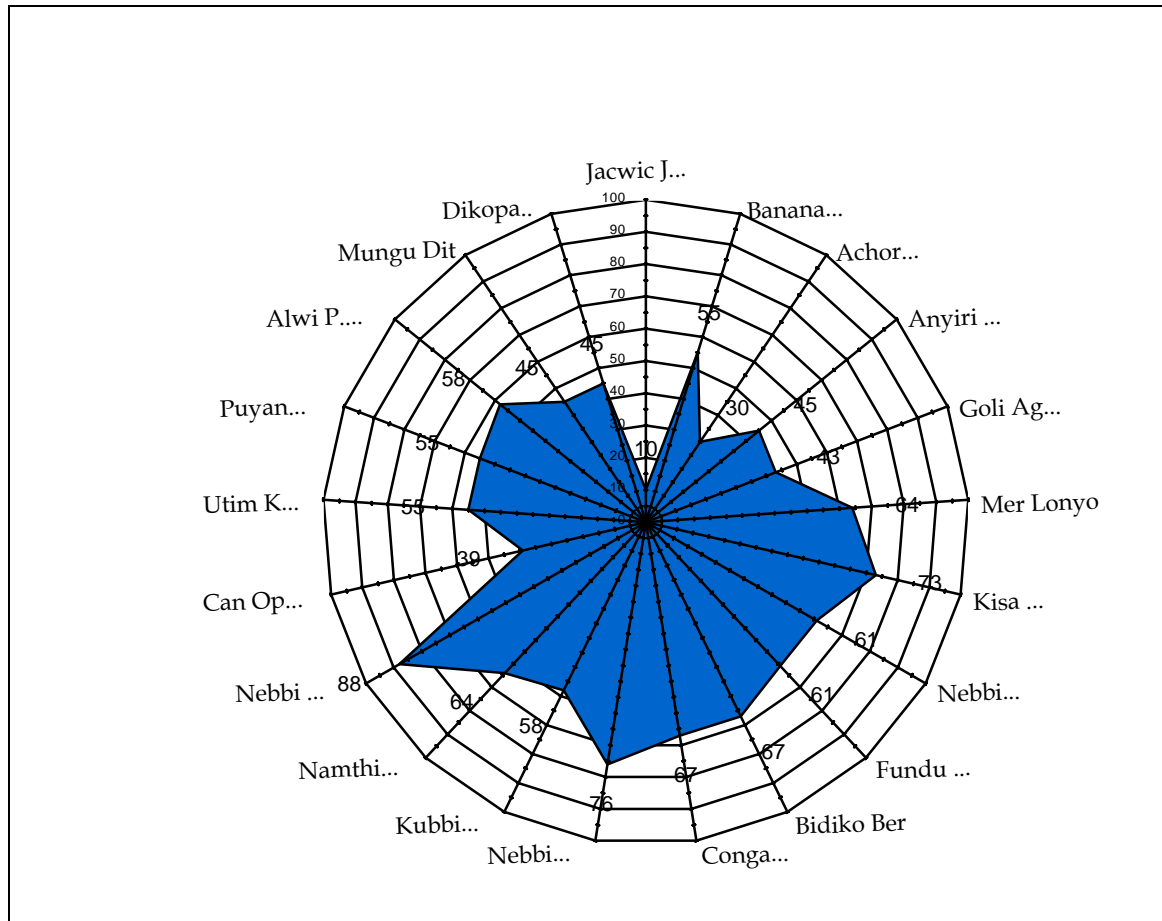
1. Inability of the groups to carry out their activities without external facilitation (14 groups). Yet, 12 groups consider themselves not independent from external facilitation.
2. 10 groups reported that they could not even carry out productive meetings without external facilitation. 18 groups reported inability to raise adequate resources for planned activities.
3. 17 groups cannot mobilise resources without external facilitation.

Strengths recorded

- Sense of belongingness (19 groups) and self-confidence (14 groups) in their groups.
- Determination to continue even without support (17 groups).
- Strong interpersonal relations (19 group) and in 14 groups members are helping each other outside group work.

- Information sharing among members is strong (12 groups).
- Ability to stand external pressure (15 groups).
- Community support for CBO operations (66.7%).

Figure 7: Group Capacity Assessment Result on Independence and Self-reliance

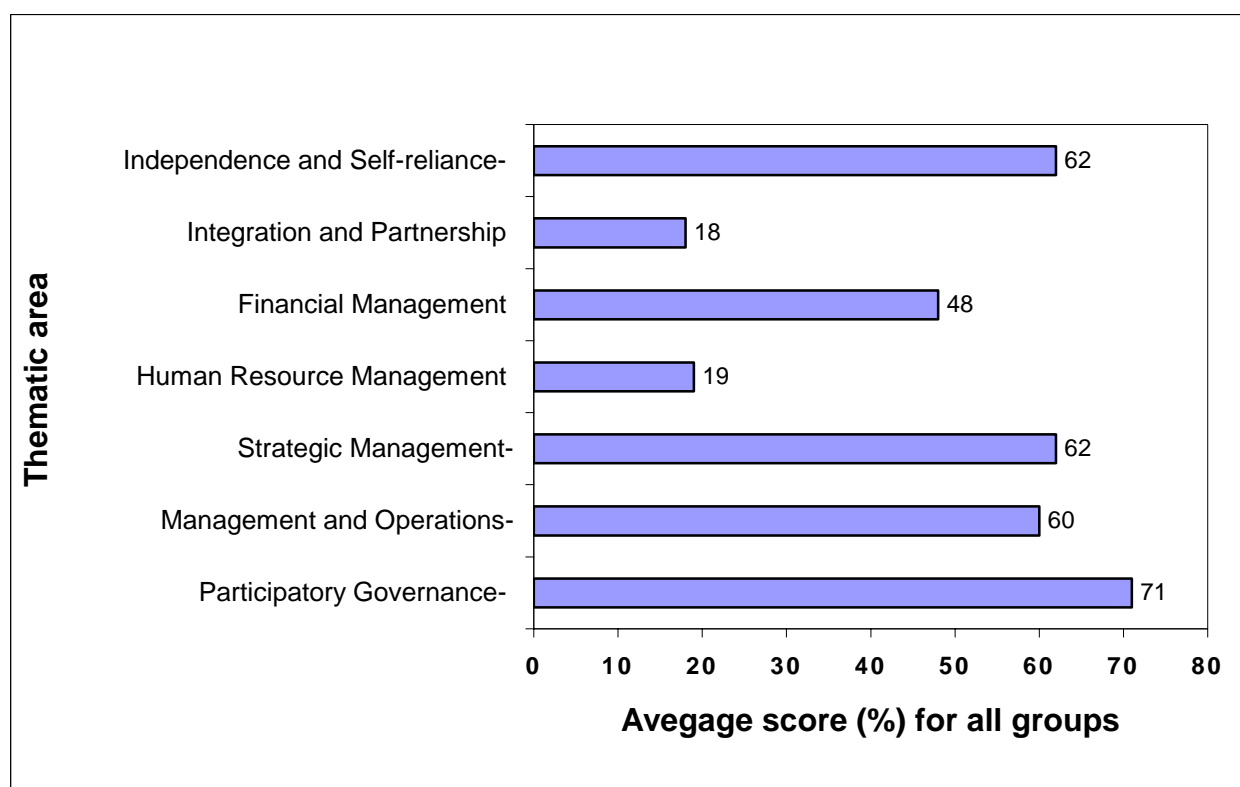


Observations and implications for future interventions

Groups are unable to mobilise resources and implement planned activities without external intervention/facilitation. This situation reflects the underlying reasons why they were formed in the first place. Many groups were formed by NGOs for the purpose of implementing their own programmes. They hired facilitators that guided the groups through pre-planned activities. It was almost invariably difficult when the NGOs were finally pulling out of the projects that they started looking at issues of sustainability of the groups they were leaving behind yet they are not ready to “hand over the stick”. Thus, the groups remain begging, dormant and without any sense of self-direction for establishing a permanence status for themselves.

PART 4: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Figure 8: Overall scores for all groups in capacity assessment key areas.



It was only in participatory governance that the average score for groups was above the acceptable limit. The lowest scores were in areas of Human resource management and Integration and Partnership. Thus the picture that emerged was of groups that had a low capacity to survive, fit within the environment and grows and flourishes sustainably.

A clear content analysis of the groups' situation is presented below:

Thematic Focus	Observation
Governance	<p>++ the groups have a leadership structure in place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the relationship between the organizational structures and the activities is weak leadership is generally not rotational leading to monopoly of power and experience. In addition, leaders are less accountable for their actions <p>++ a big number of groups have bye-laws, but are not well internalised and practiced by members</p>
Management and Operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> non of the groups have a work plan activities are implemented in an ad hoc manner and are not related with the problems under consideration i.e., the kaleidoscopic nature of groups meetings are regular but lack adequate productivity. Records kept for meetings are not reliable. meetings are not fully participatory with most women in mixed groups shadowed by men.

Strategic Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groups have ad hoc vision and strategies that are not shared by all ++ activity implementation takes the form of team work • few members see that the activities the groups are implementing now is in line with the reasons for the group formation • information available within reach of the groups despite being inadequate are not shared. • No M&E exists
Human Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • groups have untrained and unskilled members in relation to their activities • conflict resolution is weak building no room for group cohesiveness and unity ++ group members' interpersonal relationships is strong • benefits are marginal and mainly concentrated in the hands of the executives and community benefit is only spillage related.
Financial Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • non of the group has a working budget and accounting procedures • financial records for income and expenditures is flimsy. The records are not accessed by members but confined within the executives • there is inadequate assets (inventory, utilization) and income for group activities ++ there is collective savings and credits in the form of cash and seeds. ++ there is local resource mobilization for groups' activities e.g., membership and subscription fees, members' time and efforts
Integration and Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is a weak network amongst and between groups ++ some of the groups are collaborating with government and other NGO programme to enhance their activities • even awareness of ongoing development issues such as PAF is low
Independence and Self-reliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all the groups are still unable to stand on their own without external support • all groups adhere to external pressure without internal resistance • all are non-sustaining ++ strong will for continuity exists

Note: ++ = strengths and • weaknesses.

It can therefore be concluded that the groups are characterised by:

- ⊗ Lack of clear visions which are also shared by all.
- ⊗ Static leadership that is not accountable to the members.
- ⊗ Lack or non-use of constitutions/byelaws.
- ⊗ The considerable degree of oppression during the meetings, especially of women.
- ⊗ Ineffective information flow.
- ⊗ Lack of proper work plan and budget and more generally the lack of seriousness with which groups approached record keeping.
- ⊗ Lack of technical skills requisite for successful undertaking in all group activities.
- ⊗ Inadequacy of finance due to limited and unproductive sources.
- ⊗ Inability of groups to effectively integrate within the community, work closely and collaboratively with other stakeholders.
- ⊗ The inability of groups to mobilise resources and implement planned activities without external intervention/facilitation.

During the capacity assessment process, it was pointed out that the weaknesses of the groups could, in part, be attributed to factors both external and internal to the organisations, viz:

First, many local, national, and international NGOs have their own programmes in which they involve CBOs as a means of implementation

without seriously giving precedence to the long term development of the group even after the exit of the intervening NGO. Thus many such CBOs tended to hibernate and/or remain dormant with the exit of the external agencies waiting for the next bait.

Second, the groups are financially weak because both the groups and the members are themselves very poor. On the one hand, the members are part of the people living below the poverty line and involved in subsistence farming. They don't have adequate cash to contribute to the group coffers for realizing their goal. On the other hand, the groups' major assets are their social capital. Their income generating activities are on a minute scale and so are the profits generated. One reason for this is the lack of inputs a limitation that members come with when they form groups.

Finally, there is the general lack of interest by government in the development of groups as important players in local development. It was hoped that with decentralisation more space for participation would be afforded to local structures thus speeding up local development. Unfortunately, the democratic centralism by the elites and politicians distant and make local development bureaucratic keeping the civil society weak.

Lessons learned

1. The questions in the tool were challenging to the group, especially the leaders. There was a feeling of apprehension initially among many members because they were not sure how the leaders would construe some of the questions, especially those that dealt with leadership styles. Many a member did not volunteer their opinions freely lest they annoyed the leadership.
2. Groups later reported changes in behaviour of members and leaders following the exercise. Attendances in meetings rose, leaders became more participatory and attempts were being made to put in records even before the training that was expected to follow the exercise.
3. The understanding of the groups with respect to each indicator and their perceptions of what score they should give differed from group to group. Thus while for certain groups, any cash record was considered "good", another group would consider a well kept simple cashbook as "good". Thus each group was on its own journey, its perceptions and interpretations of its capacity shaped by the knowledge and experiences of the individual members. These were in turn shaped by many factors including levels of education, age, gender, activities they are engaged in, their aspirations for the group and members, etc. It was therefore possible that as their understanding of what each indicator entailed expands, so will it be reflected in the scores. Thus a score of 3 today may become 1 tomorrow because the existing capacity would not adequately deal with the level of growth and type of activity the group would have entered into. In this sense capacity development is a never-ending process.

4. The exercise underscored the need for team building as an important success factor for the groups. But there was a tendency among certain members to influence the scores. It is therefore possible in future to see what the leaders would score vis-à-vis the ordinary members, women vis-à-vis the men, etc

Preserves for Future Actions

The perspective of capacity development as seen by AFARD and portrayed by the assessment presents a number of weakening hubs for groups to uphold autonomy for self-reliance. The inclination on social capital is a good potential but too incapacitated to yield the desired goal and motivate groups and group members for a long journey towards self-development.

It is clear from this finding that capacity development effort should concentrate on:

- ☞ Eliminating old or inappropriate capacity;
- ☞ Reducing demand on existing capacity;
- ☞ Making better use of existing capacity or strengthening it;
- ☞ Providing space for innovative or creative use of capacity; and
- ☞ Creating new capacity.

It is also important for members of groups to realise that the primary responsibility for success or failure of the groups rests with them. Outsiders are there to only help and they will sooner rather than later leave them to their own devices. In this respect the assessment tool used in this exercise should be seen as a tool they can use as it is, or adapt as they deem fit, and the information generated should be seen as their baseline information on the long road to capacity development.

The general strategies AFARD see inherent in impacting on the groups and their members for a sustainable self-reliant development revolves around:

1. **Skills development:** covering both institutional development and organisational strengthening and technical training.
2. **Participatory Action Research:** so that findings can then be utilized to generate local area-sensitive interventions and influencing policy decisions.
3. **Information Gathering and Dissemination:** Information is power. The generation and disseminating of information provides an impetus for the promotion of knowledge-based growth.
4. **Resources Mobilization:** inclined largely on locally available resources-human, material, physical, and social. External resources should be seen as supplements that can be acquired on a partnership arrangement.

5. **Networking:** Networks and networking - locally, nationally and globally - to share information, useful experiences, skills and other resources is an added value to joint actions.
6. **Advocacy and lobbying:** Using a rights-based approach with the view to making development sensitive to the needs of the “voiceless” marginalized people.

Annex 1: The Capacity Self-assessment Questionnaire

Baseline Questionnaire for CBOs and Local NGOs in Nebbi District, Uganda. (Designed for use by AFARD- Agency for Accelerated Regional Development)

For the attention of the CBOs and Local NGOs

AFARD is pleased to inform you that your organization has been selected for the AFARD Capacity Building Test Run. This form is designed to enable you to assess your organization's capacity to plan and implement your activities in addition to your ability to develop and sustain the group. Below are some of the indicators or questions that could be relevant for your organization's self-assessment. You are to score by making a choice of scale that reflects the true position of your group. The scales are from 0 to 3: 0 for very poor or non-existent capacity, 1 for fair, 2 for good and 3 for very good. Percentages or any other scales could also be used. **Please rate your group honestly and involve everybody, as this information will form the basis of our capacity building exercise with you. AFARD will give you a copy of what it will put in your file but you are being requested to record and keep your own version of the information generated from this exercise also.**

b) Governance

- 1) Do the leaders involve or consult the whole group in the making of decisions?
- 2) Are tasks and responsibilities shared evenly among the members of the group in a team spirit?
- 3) Do different members hold the executive positions over time?
- 4) Are there many members who are capable of leading the group successfully?
- 5) Are leaders accountable for all their actions to the group?
- 6) Does the group have a vision?
- 7) Is the vision clear and shared by all members?
- 8) Are the objectives of the group clear and ascribed to by all members?
- 9) Are the strategies and activities to achieve the objectives agreeable to all members?
- 10) Does the group have bylaws that govern all aspects of the group's management and operations?

c) Management and Operations

- 1) Are meetings held frequently as desired by the members?
- 2) Are the meetings well attended?
- 3) Are proper records of the meetings kept?
- 4) Do the members consider these meetings productive?
- 5) How are the decisions made in the meetings (consensus, Chairman decides)?
- 6) Do members participate actively and without hindrances or fear in the meetings?
- 7) Do women members participate as actively as men?
- 8) Are problems within the group solved in a participatory manner?
- 9) Does the group have capacity or experience in replacing ineffective leadership or allowing others also to participate in leadership?

d) Strategic Management

- 1) Are all members involved in the problem identification?
- 2) Are all members involved in opportunity identification?
- 3) Are all members involved in activity selection?
- 4) Do all members contribute as planned during implementation?
- 5) Are all members involved in the assigning of tasks during implementation?
- 6) Does the group have a proper work plan that is followed?
- 7) Are members satisfied with the growth in membership of the group?
- 8) Are members satisfied with the reasons for which the group was formed?
- 9) Are members satisfied with the current activities the group is engaged in?

- 10) Do all members have access to information the group possess and communicate their views easily to all other members?
- 11) Does the group have established procedures for getting feedback and evaluation of performance?
- 12) Does the group use participatory methods in all its activities including evaluation?
- 13) Does the group have a habit of experimenting with new ideas and knowledge?

e) Human Resource Management

- 1) Are there many members with specialized skills such as accounting skills?
- 2) Is the group familiar with and capable of resolving conflicts within the group?
- 3) How smooth is the interpersonal relations among the members?
- 4) Is the group able to generate benefits not only for the group, but also for the individuals within the group and the wider community?

f) Financial Management

- 1) Does the group have a budget (prepare a periodic budget)?
- 2) Does the group have proper financial record?
- 3) Do all members have free access and understand them?
- 4) Does the group have enough physical assets to carry out its planned activities?
- 5) Is the group capable of raising enough income to sustain and expand its activities?
- 6) Does the group have other sources of income such that it can still survive when adversities strike?
- 7) Does the group have a group savings scheme that is working properly?
- 8) Can the group members rely on the group for production credit or emergency loans?
- 9) Does the group keep an inventory of its assets?
- 10) Are the physical assets of the group well maintained and utilized profitably?
- 11) Is the group utilizing improved technologies for production?
- 12) Do the groups repay loans properly?
- 13) Does the group have a proper accounting procedure including budgets and financial reports?

g) Integration and Partnership

- 1) Does the group have links with government and other development agencies in the area?
- 2) Does the group have links with other local development organizations in the area?
- 3) Is the group aware of current development issues that are relevant to their area? e.g. activities of government, other NGOs, groups, gender and environmental issues, sources of credit?
- 4) Does the group enjoy the full support of the local community?

h) Independence and Self-reliance

- 1) How independent is the group from the group facilitator?
- 2) How able is the group to operate without the direction or intervention of the facilitator?
- 3) How well does the group carry on its meetings without the facilitator?
- 4) Can the group mobilize resources (funds, information, skilled personnel etc) without the facilitator?
- 5) Can the group raise enough resources for planned activities without outside assistance?
- 6) Do members help each other even apart from group activities?
- 7) Do members share new information and knowledge e.g. from training with others?
- 8) Do members show increased self-confidence as a result of participation in the group activities?
- 9) Can the group withstand pressures from other stakeholders in the area?
- 10) Do the members have a strong sense of belonging, pride and faith in the group?
- 11) Are members confident that they can continue operating even if there is no outside support?

Date of First Contact	Name of Person from AFARD
Date of Introduction to ACAT	Name of assessors from AFARD
Date of submission of group assessment report	Name of Receiver from AFARD
Date of Joint assessment	Name of assessors from AFARD
Remarks made by	Name of Person from AFARD

Annex 2: Selected Capacity Self-Assessment Overall Result

This is a results (of groups' rating) of a capacity assessment conducted (July 2001) for some partner groups AFARD is working with.

AFARD CAPACITY SELF-ASSESSMENT RESULT BY THEMATIC AREAS BY GROUP	Jacwic Jabero Youth Group	Banana Mixed Farmers Ass.	Achora Women's Group	Anyiri Tho Ikin Abaa	Goli Agro forestry	Mer Lonyo Devt Project	Kisa Women's Group	Nebbi Women Comm. Centre	Fundu Youth	Nebbi Agwara Women's Group	Bidoko Ber Group	Congambe Women's Group	Kubbi Comm. Dev't Project	Namthin Bi-Ai Group	Total
a) Governance															
Total score	30	24	11	25	24	23	22	21	19	18	23	25	29	26	32%
% Score	100%	80%	37%	83%	80%	77%	73%	70%	63%	60%	77%	83%	97%	87%	
b) Management and Operations															
Total score	26	22	17	23	16	18	20	18	6	13	16	20	27	24	30%
% Score	96%	81%	63%	85%	59%	67%	74%	67%	22%	48%	59%	74%	100%	89%	
c) Strategic Management															
Total score	36	25	22	25	26	30	30	29	29	29	23	32	35	31	31%
% Score	92%	64%	56%	64%	67%	77%	77%	74%	74%	74%	59%	82%	90%	79%	
d) Human Resource Management															
Total score	10	5	4	5	1	8	8	7	9	3	6	6	6	6	21%
% Score	83%	42%	33%	42%	8%	67%	67%	58%	75%	25%	50%	50%	50%	50%	
e) Financial Management															
Total score	22	11	11	15	15	19	21	17	13	12	16	21	20	7	17%
% Score	56%	28%	28%	38%	38%	49%	54%	44%	33%	31%	41%	54%	51%	18%	
f) Integration and Partnership															
Total score	2	7	4	2	6	7	9	7	8	6	11	8	11	1	22%
% Score	17%	58%	33%	17%	50%	58%	75%	58%	67%	50%	92%	67%	92%	8%	
g) Independence and Self-reliance															
Total score	10	18	10	15	15	21	24	20	20	25	22	22	19	21	24%
% Score	30%	55%	30%	45%	45%	64%	73%	61%	61%	76%	67%	67%	58%	64%	
Overall Total Score	136	112	79	110	103	126	134	119	104	106	117	134	147	116	53%
Overall % Score	71%	58%	41%	57%	54%	66%	70%	62%	54%	55%	61%	70%	77%	60%	

Annex 3: ABOUT AFARD

Agency for Accelerated Regional Development (AFARD) is a local, membership, non-denominational, and voluntary, non-for-profit organization committed to the belief that the involvement of people for development should go beyond the usual act of contributing 'rubber stamp' ideas, materials and money to empower the people to **initiate, demand for, own, control and sustain** the processes and fruits of development, i.e. a process of empowerment for self-reliant development.

Vision	A society in which the people are informed, healthy, and prosperous.
Mission	"to contribute to the molding of a region in which the local people, including those who are marginalized, are able to participate effectively and sustainably and take a lead in the development of the region."
Objectives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>To harness the knowledge, skills and experiences of the development practitioners within the region and channel it for the accelerated, equitable and sustainable development of the region.</i> 2. <i>To act as a midwife, an interim link between the grass roots and sources of new information, innovations, expertise, and funds required for the type of development that places people firmly in the center of all development efforts.</i> 3. <i>To avail of our expertise by way of consultancy to other development stakeholders interested in the region.</i>
Thematic Strategies	Skills Development; Action Research, Information Management; Networking and Linkages; Advocacy and Lobbying; Resource Mobilisation
Beneficiaries	Community based organisations, local NGOs and other development institution and any other stakeholder with interest in the region.

The mainstay of AFARD's activities is capacity development of community-based organisations and local NGOs through the fostering of a positive change in mindset, leadership, skills and the acquisition of critical tools that promote self-reliant development under an atmosphere of iterative and flexible partnership, joint action, local ownership and community empowerment.

The importance AFARD attaches to capacity building is based on a careful analysis of the institutional environment in AFARD's area of operation that revealed the gaps delirious neglect of true capacity development due to *time-span limitations* for existence; limited coverage of government services; persistent attitude of "government shall provide", etc.

Our basic argument is that the nature, direction, and pace of development should be dictated by the wishes and aspirations of the local people. External agencies, however well meaning, will sooner or later leave. The outsiders can therefore play a catalytic role of widening the perspectives and visions of the locals, creating a hunger for sustainable development, helping in accessing the critical resources required for the transformation of their dreams into realities. However, such ideal partnership requires 'equality, trust, subsidiarity, transparency and accountability'.

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