

Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop on Capacity Building of Board of Directors of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) June 6 – 8, 2019, at DSC Bopal, Ahmedabad



Arpit Jain and Abhishek Saxena share their experience from the Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop. This workshop was based on the trainers' manual: 'Capacity Building of Board of Directors of FPOs - A Trainers Guide', that was generated after a training programme conducted at the Development Support Centre (DSC), Ahmedabad, from 6 to 8 June, 2019. The workshop was organized by the IRMA incubator, ISEED (Incubator for Social Enterprises and Entrepreneurs Development), in collaboration with Skill Green Global, Green Innovation Centre, Development Support Center, and Aga Khan Rural Support Program (India) (AKRSP(I)).

CONTEXT

A trainers' manual was developed as per the ASCI (Agriculture Skill Council of India) framework under the Green Innovation Centre Programme and Skill Green Global, an incubator of WHH (Welthungerhilfe) and NSFI (National Skills Foundation of India). The manual was designed primarily for trainers who will work with farmers and farmer producer organizations (FPOs), planners, monitoring teams, and other stakeholders of FPOs. A three-day Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop, based on the trainers' manual: 'Capacity Building of Board of Directors of FPOs - A Trainers Guide', was conducted at Development Support Centre (DSC), Ahmedabad from 6 to 8 June, 2019. The workshop was organized by IRMA incubator, ISEED (Incubator for Social Enterprises and Entrepreneurs Development), in collaboration with Skill Green Global, Green Innovation Centre, Development Support Centre, and Aga Khan Rural Support Program (India) (AKRSP(I)). Twenty-one participants from eight organizations – Yuva Rural Association, Naman Seva Samiti, BASIX Consulting & Technology Services Ltd, Shashwat Trust, Jaljeevika, Gujpro, DSC and AKRSP (I) – attended the workshop.



Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshop participants and organizing team members

The idea for such a workshop was conceived during the National Workshop on 'Strengthening Farmer Collectives' which was organized by ISEED in collaboration with APMAS, NAFPO and Green Colleges on 7 March 2019. During the national workshop, a need was felt that managers and trainers from intermediary organizations involved in promoting FPOs in various parts of the country, should be exposed to the contents of the trainers' guide so that they could also suggest changes and improvements based on their practical experiences. Hence, the present workshop was a step in that direction in the western part of India.



Launch of "Capacity Building of Board of Directors of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) – A Trainer's Guide"

The objective of this workshop was not only to help trainers associated with promoting organizations to conduct practical and effective on-site training on the issues that the Board of Directors of an FPO face while trying to successfully govern collective farmer enterprises, but also to seek suggestions for improving the trainers' guide. The workshop was unique as it used participatory learning methods to train the participants in the contents of the trainers' manual; it also helped the participants to learn facilitation methods during participatory learning sessions.

Day 1

Mr Mohan Sharma, Executive Director of Development Support Centre (DSC), welcomed the participants and hoped for the successful completion of the workshop, thus officially inaugurating the event. The introductory session began with an ice-breaking activity, where participants had to provide information about themselves and their organizations, and had to interact with as many



Dr Maya Mascarenhas and Mr Partha Sarathy facilitating the introductory session

people as possible within 10 minutes. After this activity, participants were asked to recall the specifics of the other participants with whom they had interacted, and the inauguration concluded with individual participants from the teams introducing themselves briefly.

After the ice-breaking activity, Dr Maya Mascarenhas led the facilitation and asked participants to share their answers to questions such as “What are their concerns about motivating a Board of Directors (BODs) to run FPOs?”, “One word that they associate with their role?”, “What is the one feeling you have when thinking about farmers and FPOs?”, etc.

Participants shared their concerns and challenges while managing FPOs. Some of the common concerns shared were: ‘lack of transparency’, ‘weak leadership skills’, ‘capacity of BODs to understand governance and business activities’, ‘language barrier’, ‘lack of initiatives from BODs’, ‘availability of farmers to be a part of FPO’, ‘challenges in explaining benefits of collectivization’ and ‘trust issues’.

Dr. Maya gave a brief introduction to facilitation and its utility vis-à-vis other training techniques, and the participants were asked to share their views on facilitation and the role of a facilitator. Some of the responses were: to be a motivator and to give correct information, to be at the level of participants, to manage the group well, obtain the best possible outcomes from the sum of the parts, and observe group dynamics.

From their own responses participants put together a definition of facilitation, “Facilitation is about making it easy for groups to learn/solve problems/generate new ideas, and it is also about enabling individuals and groups to take responsibility and ownership for their decisions and achieve appropriate learning outcomes”.

After the first half of the day, the Training Manual was distributed among the participants and they were asked to explore the manual that consisted of five modules, viz., overview of FPO, legal compliances, marketing, aspects of management, and making a business plan.

After going through the manual briefly, the participants were divided into 11 pairs and each pair was allotted one module from the manual. The pairs were supposed to facilitate the allotted modules one by one in the course of three days. Mr Yeshwanth, Ms Shubha and Mr Partha Sarthy from the organizing team were allotted as mentors for the groups, to assist them in the process.



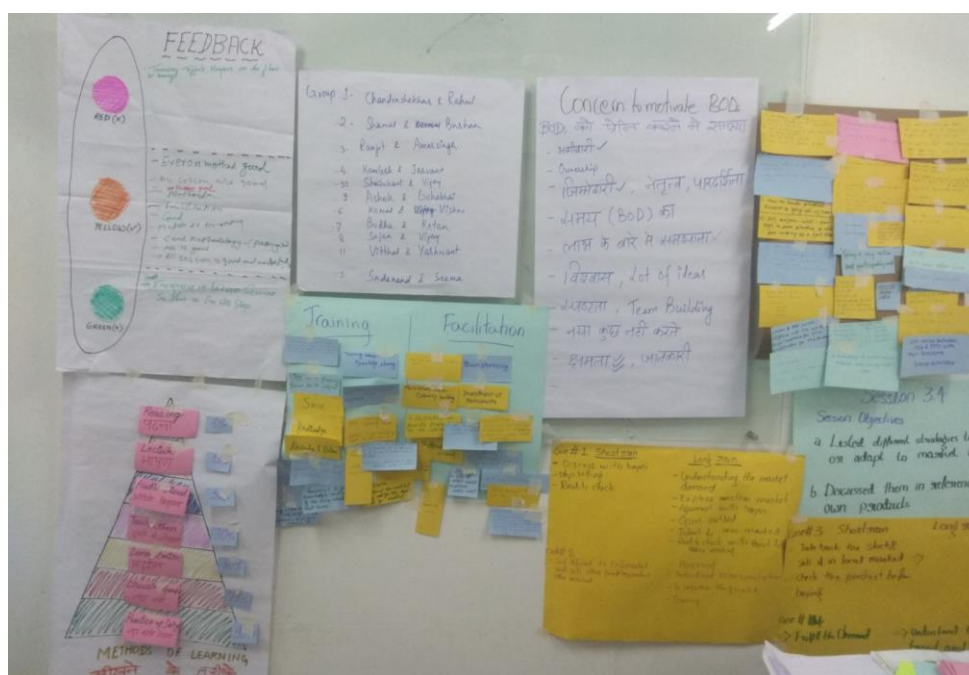
Group discussions

Session 1 revolved around the topic of farmer interest group (FIG), and FPO and their functions. With the help of interesting activities such as ‘Animal Game’ and ‘Picture Activity’, the participants shared their own understanding of the functions of FIG and FPO, and also discussed the roles of BODs and CEOs. The participants also responded to the situations where they were expected to write down the steps taken by BODs and CEOs, as part of the ‘Buzz Group Activity’.

After lunch, the session on ‘Statutory Compliances’ was facilitated by those participants who were allotted the module. The rest of the participants were divided into groups of three and the facilitating group asked different questions: “What is share capital?”, “Why does an FPO need to collect share capital?”, etc., to each group. They then had to discuss and reply within 10 minutes. Further, each group was asked to present their responses. They were asked to fill in the columns on a chart and other groups were encouraged to add more responses. All the points were reviewed and agreed upon before the end of the day with feedback activity in which each participant shared the pros and cons of the sessions, and gave suggestions to improve the sessions.

Day 2

This day began with a discussion on the difference between ‘facilitation’ and ‘training’ and participants were asked to sit in a semi-circle and share their learnings from the previous day. After discussion, participants came up with various points, including ‘Facilitation is a two-way learning process’ and ‘Training focuses on input/output while facilitation focuses on the process of learning’. There was also a discussion regarding the ‘learning pyramid’ and the percentage of retention during various kinds of teaching/facilitating methods. Dr Maya assisted the groups in deciding the order of the learning methods with the aid of a ‘prioritization matrix’.



Discussions and group activities using vibrant colourful chart papers

Sub-module of ‘Market and Networking’ was facilitated by another group of participants, who used activities such as ‘Role Play’ in which participants were asked to play the role of BODs, member farmer, and non-member farmer. A short skit was performed to emphasize the importance of networking and marketing acumen. Market value chain was demonstrated to the participants using the ‘Oval Cards Activity’, that involved groups of participants arranging the activities that constitute each step of the value chain on the tables. These were written on oval cards. Every five minutes, the

group had to leave its own table and cards, and move to the next one and arrange the cards on that table. The activity concluded by discussing the final arrangement with the facilitators and the participants' acceptance of it.

The sub module of 'FPO management' was facilitated by another participant group through the activity of '**Blindfold Obstacle Course**' to demonstrate the difference between planned and unplanned activity. In this activity, participants were divided into two groups; the first group was asked to direct a blindfolded participant from their group to the destination while the second group was asked to discuss among themselves and plan, before repeating the same activity. The second group was able to execute the activity in a better way as compared to the first one due to planned execution.

The last session on Day 2 was on '**Training Needs Assessment**' in which participants were asked to identify the topics from the manual which will be helpful for the Board of Directors' staff and CEOs, for efficient management of FPOs.

Day 3

BODs of FPOS, promoted by DSC and AKRSP (I) joined the sessions on the last day and the participants shared their learning one by one with all those who were present. The facilitators provided the participants with feedback on the sessions that they had conducted. After the introductory session, the activity of '**Business model canvas**' was conducted to build an understanding of business model development. Participants were divided into two groups and each group was asked to respond to some questions that corresponded to components of the business model. The following are the questions that were put up by the facilitator:

1. What are the costs involved in running the business? - Cost structure
2. How do they make money? - Revenue streams
3. Who is the target customer? Who are the important customers? Customer segment
4. Who are the suppliers/partners of the business? – Key partners
5. What is the business about? What do they sell? – Key resources
6. How do they sell? - Channels
7. What do they do to keep the customers happy? What distinguishes it from its competitors? - Customer Value Proposition
8. What are the different activities you do as part of your business? - Key Activities



Discussion over elements of the Business Model Canvas

The workshop concluded with reflection and discussion on some questions- 'Beneficial aspects and difficulties they faced during sessions', 'Five topics that they will implement in their FPOs', 'List of elements that any trainer needs to make sure of before, during, and after the workshop'. As part of the feedback, participants greatly appreciated the method of facilitation during the whole workshop as it was mostly done through games, discussions, and activities and not through any PowerPoint

presentations. Participants expressed their gratitude towards everyone, after which certificates of completion of the workshop were presented to them.



Certificates being distributed to participants.

OUR IMPRESSIONS

The workshop was a success as the participants' confidence increased and they were eager to implement these newly acquired skills. All participants were glad to meet and network with other professionals working with FPOs. The mutual interaction and coordination among resource persons and participants resulted in the smooth functioning of the workshop. On the whole, the workshop sessions were interactive and the workshop schedule was systematic. The organizers of the program took utmost care to implement the sessions according to a well-planned schedule. Each session of the day was well-planned and focused on the concerns related to the management and efficient working of FPOs. Development Support Centre (DSC) made this three days' residential workshop successful by making good arrangements for food, accommodation, and the workshop resource material in a hassle-free manner.

However, such workshops should be happening more often, and that too in various parts of the country. One of the most important objectives of the workshop was to invite suggestions for improvements in the training manual. The feedback provided by the participants should be treated as data for the improvement of the manual. Also, the organizations involved in the workshop should keep on interacting with the participants' organizations so as to evaluate how well the manual is being used while training the BODs. Based on regular feedback from managers and trainers, the manual should be improved; and another workshop should be conducted in the western region to test the introduced changes.

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