

Improving facilitation of soft skills development to strengthen grassroots rural institutions

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The Strengthening Rural Institutions (SRI) project facilitated a five days successful facilitators' write shop at Brackenhurst hotel, Limuru, Kenya from 26th-31st May 2013 to develop a facilitator's manual to support group dynamics and soft skills development amongst grassroots rural institutions. The write shop brought together skilled site level facilitators including ICRAF staff from the East African Region to develop a manual for facilitators to build group soft skills.



SRI team (ICRAF staff and Site FPP) posing for a group photo during the write-shop

Mieke Bourne, the SRI project Coordinator highlighted on the overall objective of the write shop as aiming at developing a facilitators manual be used at the project sites to foster the building of soft skills within our groups and the growth of which will be monitored by the maturity tool. “Soft skills in groups” are simple skills which are required to build social capital and make groups grow stronger. These include leadership, governance, Conflict management, Resource mobilisation, communication, partnership development and maintaining Record keeping, vision setting and sustainability as well as negotiation, lobbying and advocacy. These skills are often missing in group work plans and yet are essential in group development and therefore need to be addressed with skilled facilitators.

The write shop was conducted following a participatory process and engagement of site level facilitators through use of open discussions, stories based on experiences from the sites, drawing pictures and group work sessions after plenary discussions to establish ownership of the manual. Topics identified during the capacity needs assessment workshops which cuts across all the groups in the project sites were discussed in details. These topics included facilitation, governance, leadership, partnership identification and management, Conflict management, negotiation, entrepreneurship resource mobilization, financial management, and record keeping skills. “Facilitator’s tips” were also summarized on each topic based on the stories and experiences from the sites as well as lessons learnt and how to facilitate and develop groups to encourage building of soft skills amongst their group members. This Manual is still being reviewed and will be shared with stakeholders and availed on the Link once it’s completed.