



Enabling Rural Transformation and Grassroots Institutional Building for Sustainable Land Management and Increased Incomes and Food Security

IFAD Grant No. 1228

Project Progress Report

January 1st – December 31st 2012

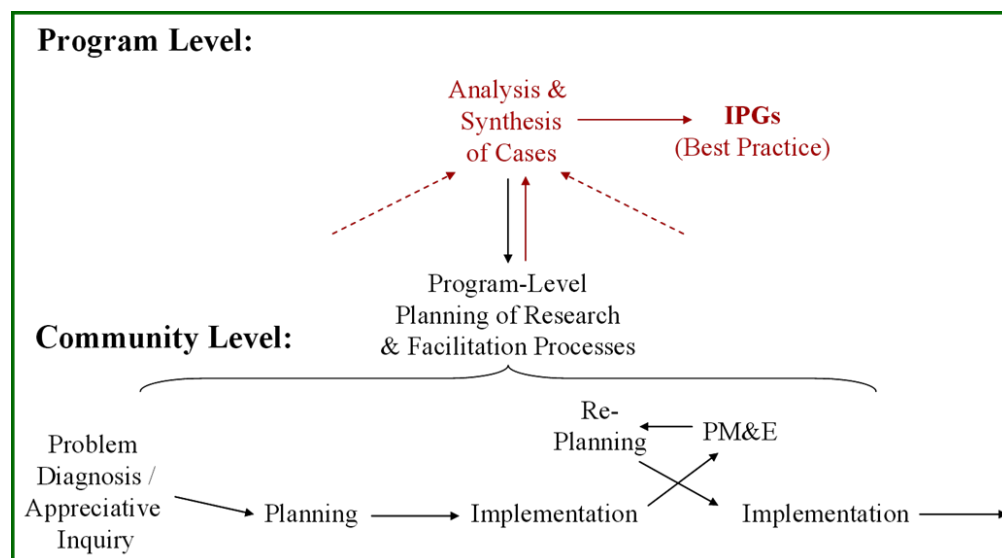
Introduction

The east African region is characterized by heterogeneous smallholder farming systems fraught with challenges that threaten their ability for livelihood improvement, food security and vulnerability to agro-ecosystem shocks and uncertainties. This notwithstanding, the region, does present opportunities for improved productivity, based on developing strategies that undertake conservation within the context of smallholder market development. A number of initiatives and interventions have been undertaken in the region. This interventions targeting smallholder farmers have had mixed results, primarily showing promise in pilot sites but without clear scaling up methodology. Further, smallholder collective action has often faded out after cessation of external funding. Thus the rural institutional strengthening project aims at describing the rural space, and defining opportunities for improved capacities amongst smallholder farmer groupings.

The project aims to catalyze a sustainable rural transformation process through developing the requisite 'institutional infrastructure' for Integrated Natural Resource Management (NRM), food security and poverty alleviation. Based on the Landcare experience in fostering collective action, it is contributing directly to IFAD's target outcomes and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that include environmental sustainability, gender equality and partnerships for development.

The projects main goal is to foster support for variants of grassroots organizations, to meaningfully participate in governance processes where their livelihoods and well-being, and the environment are at stake, with the main purpose of developing a model for strengthening grassroots institutions for effective engagement in policy processes that enable poor rural households to aggregate, mobilize, and access rural services. In order to achieve the projects goal and objectives, we are undertaking action research (see **Figure 1**) in six sites in east Africa, making up a total of two sites per country. These include Embu and Bungoma for Kenya, Pemba and Lushoto for Tanzania and Kapchorwa and Masindi for Uganda.

Figure 1: Multi-Level action research and Learning



Project implementation

This report is building on the biennial report submitted June 30th 2012 to provide the agreed annual report which will cover all activities for 2012. It provides a summary of main activities and lessons attained during the year under review.

During the period under review), progress has been made in data analysis for the development of a maturity analysis toolkit, fieldwork research and the drafting and implementation of a capacity needs assessment strategy which included group capacity and strategy development workshops, drafting of group work plans and gaps analysis at both group and site level. A communication strategy and participatory monitoring and evaluation plan have been prepared and the site steering committees have agreed on Terms of Reference.

Through action research as depicted in figure 1, lessons are emerging that are influencing the research and engagement process with feedback coming from site level as well as from our development partners including IFAD project and country personnel. The insights emerging from the project activities have been not only exciting but also very informative. Through engagement with our research and development partners, we have further improved our ideas on useful tools on grassroots institutions that we need to deliver. Table 1 provides a summary of emerging deliverables and status summary achieved during the review period.

Table 1: Summary of Deliverable status

Deliverable	Use	Status and next steps
1.Rural institutional development Model Algorithm	Decision tool on grassroots institutions development process	Based on emerging insights, currently developing and testing significant factors to be applied
2.Institutional development model	Defining, institutional growth process	Draft model and Key case studies to be drafted
3.Capacity development Manual	Capacity needs assessment for grassroots institutions	Module based steps, graphics and layouts and field testing
4.Grassroots institutional maturity assessment tool	Providing an empirical and qualitative assessment of grassroots institutions	Draft tool finalized and software development of the tool to enable easier user interphase linked to statistical analytical platform
5.Participatory monitoring and evaluation	Develop module for self- evaluation at various levels	Draft undertaken and tested

The project report includes: an introduction on the achievements of the implementation process, followed by an account of the activities carried out during the reporting period. It concludes with an overview of the progress and an indication of the way forward.

Summary of preceding project period highlighting ongoing activities

The project implementation involved five major components: Capacity building strategy; communication strategy; monitoring and evaluation strategy; research strategy/agenda and baseline and landscape-level facilitation of activities.

Between October and December 2011 the Project Team worked in cooperation with the Focal Point Persons in each of the six sites addressed in the project to carry out an awareness-raising meeting where Site Implementation Teams (SITs) were formed. The SITs include the focal point persons, key local government officers and extension workers, farmer representatives and other relevant stakeholders in the area.

The awareness raising meetings included a group maturity exercise the aim of which was to gather empirical information on group maturity in the local context as the starting point in the development of the rural institutions maturity assessment toolkit.

The meeting also served as an initial contact to develop further activities, such as the conducting a baseline survey encompassing a number of questions on group characteristics (i.e. origin, purpose, affiliation, age, membership type and main challenges faced) that targeted 584 grassroots rural organizations across the three project countries and sites.

Table 2: No. of grassroots organisations surveyed by Project site

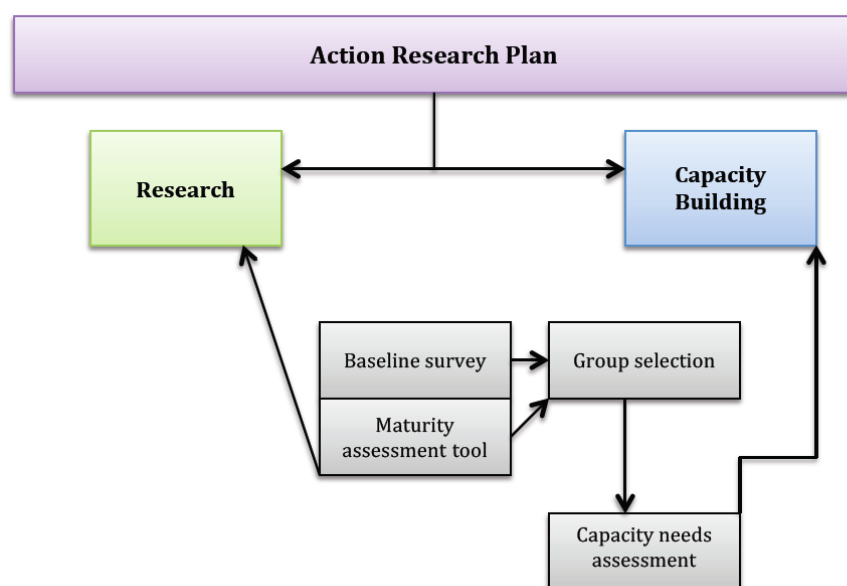
Site	Projects (sponsor)	No. of Grassroots organisations surveyed	Focal point person(s)
Embu, Kenya	MKEPP (IFAD)	88	Faith Muthoni and Paul Njuguna
Bungoma, Kenya	SHOMAP / SDCP (IFAD)	124	E. Ogola / S. Wafula
Masindi, Uganda	DLSP/VODP (IFAD)	45	Adeline Muheebwa / Peter Abong
Kapchorwa, Kenya	KADLACC/VODP (Landcare)/(IFAD)	187	Awadh Chemangei and Simon Nyangas
Pemba, Kenya	ASSP (IFAD)	86	Asha Omar
Lushoto, Tanzania	AHI	53	Munisi Ndeshi and Charles Lyamchai SARI

Research and capacity building components

This year has witnessed a steady progress in the shaping and implementation of the Action Research Plan, combining theoretical research and a capacity building strategy.

The Action Research Plan aims at producing two main outcomes: an increase in theoretical knowledge on rural institutions analysis and strengthening and enhanced capacities of those grassroots organisations addressed by the project. The results of the Action Research process will feed into the *Dynamic Model for Institutional Analysis and Strengthening*.

Figure 2: Action Research Plan scheme



During the period covered, a number of activities have been undertaken that served to progress towards both the project goals under the two components:

1. Finalization of the baseline survey results collection.

The collection of the baseline survey results of all the grassroots organisations in the project sites has been completed. From this information, representative and case study groups have been selected in conjunction with the focal point persons for each site for the capacity needs assessment and capacity building activities.

2. Data analysis: maturity tool development and determination of maturity levels

The main accomplishment of the first period of the year under review is certainly the completion of the data analysis of the maturity exercise data gathered in the six project sites during the awareness raising workshop series conducted at the end of 2011.

Through a teamwork effort, qualitative data from the sites were collated, cleaned and analyzed through a Multi-criteria Analysis method, using the scores given by the workshop participants. The final product resulted in a **Maturity tool worksheet**, where organizational characteristics are listed and scored based on a participatory exercise. The maturity tool is meant to be a dynamic, empirically based and adaptable instrument that can be utilized by a variety of users to determine grass-roots organizations' level of maturity.

The use of the maturity tool has been tested by applying it to the baseline questionnaire results and creating a maturity index of the organizations surveyed. The characteristics of the organisations as collected by the baseline survey have been assigned a score, based on the maturity tool and have been therefore divided into three levels of maturity: beginners, intermediate and advanced.

The determination of the three groups has been backed up statistically through running several significance tests that confirmed the validity of the approach.

The 'maturity levels' constituted the first criterion in the selection of grassroots organizations to conduct a capacity needs assessment.

3. Group selection and capacity needs assessment strategy

Among the 584 organizations, a sample of groups to conduct the capacity needs assessment was selected, taking into account both statistical viability and good representation of different characteristics across the sites. Purposive sampling was used to select groups by uniquely differentiating the groups according to project site, group functionality, level of group maturity, membership typology (by gender), level at which the group operates (local, cluster or platform) and group age (number of years the group has been functioning).

The overall number of groups that was considered sufficient to conduct the capacity needs assessment has been set to 10 for each project site, giving budget and time limitations. Only in Embu (Kenya) ,15 groups have been included as it served as the first pilot site to conduct the workshop in.

To reach the ideal number, the sample size obtained with the sampling technique described above has been further reduced by calculating a ratio between the number of groups sampled for each site and the overall number of groups actually working there. The ratio was based on two criteria which emerged to be statistically the most significant in diversifying the groups one from another, namely group functionality and level at which the group operates.

4. Validation questionnaire

The indicators used during the maturity exercise were more than those used in the baseline survey, carried out in 2011. This resulted from the fact that the baseline survey served as an inventory of the grassroots rural organizations currently functioning in the six project sites while the maturity exercise, and therefore the maturity tool worksheet (section above) were meant to capture more in-depth the characteristics of organizational maturity.

Considering the gap between the two instruments, a new questionnaire, containing all the criteria and indicators used in the maturity tool meant to capture all the information missing in the baseline, was developed, namely the **validation survey**.

The survey has been applied to a sample of 211 groups, including the 65 groups engaged during the capacity and strategy development workshops, randomly selected among the 584 previously surveyed.

By gathering all the missing information about group maturity the validation survey serves a double purpose: to gather all the relevant information and complete the database of information to determine the maturity of the groups and to countercheck the information gathered during the maturity exercise. The latest has been in fact conducted only with representatives of the organizations and of the local government working closely with the grassroots organizations.

The validation survey has been so far successfully carried out in four sites (Embu in Kenya; Masindi and Kapchorwa in Uganda; Lushoto in Tanzania) and data collection is foreseen to be completed by the end of January 2013.

Group capacity and strategy development workshops and analysis

The Group Capacity and Strategy Development Workshops were held in each of the six sites between May and September, 2012. The sites were Embu and Bungoma in Kenya, Masindi and Kapchorwa in Uganda, and Pemba and Lushoto in Tanzania. The objectives of the workshops were to identify the groups' capacity needs in terms of the knowledge, technology and the externalities affecting the groups operation, and secondly, develop a manual for assessing the capacity needs of grassroots institutions. Participants were selected from 10 sampled grassroots groups from each site and engaged in a 4-day workshop that enabled the participants to start developing their work plans which they would share with other group members to finalise. The activities in the workshop included role plays, analysis of groups' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), stakeholder analysis, vision mapping, assets identification, gender roles identification and introduction to work plan development. The project team also engaged the steering committee from each site to provide feedback on the project progress at the site level. The information captured in the workshops was analyzed to identify the capacity needs of the participating groups, with workshop reports compiled for each site.

The activities in the six workshops contributed to the development of the Group Capacity and Strategy Development Workshop Manual. The manual is designed based on an appreciate inquiry process that

takes participants through the four stages of appreciative inquiry, namely; discovery, dreaming, design and destiny as illustrated in Figure 3 below. The workshop manual was designed to facilitate participatory methods such as group discussions and presentations to enable participants to develop group workplans and interact with their peers to facilitate shared learning outcomes. The manual is organized into different modules containing what to do, how to do it and the resources required for each. In each module, there are notes and suggestions for the facilitator on best practices from the workshop preparation stage and engaging participants in different activities and evaluation of the workshop. These were based on the observations, comments received and engagement of participants in all the six sites.

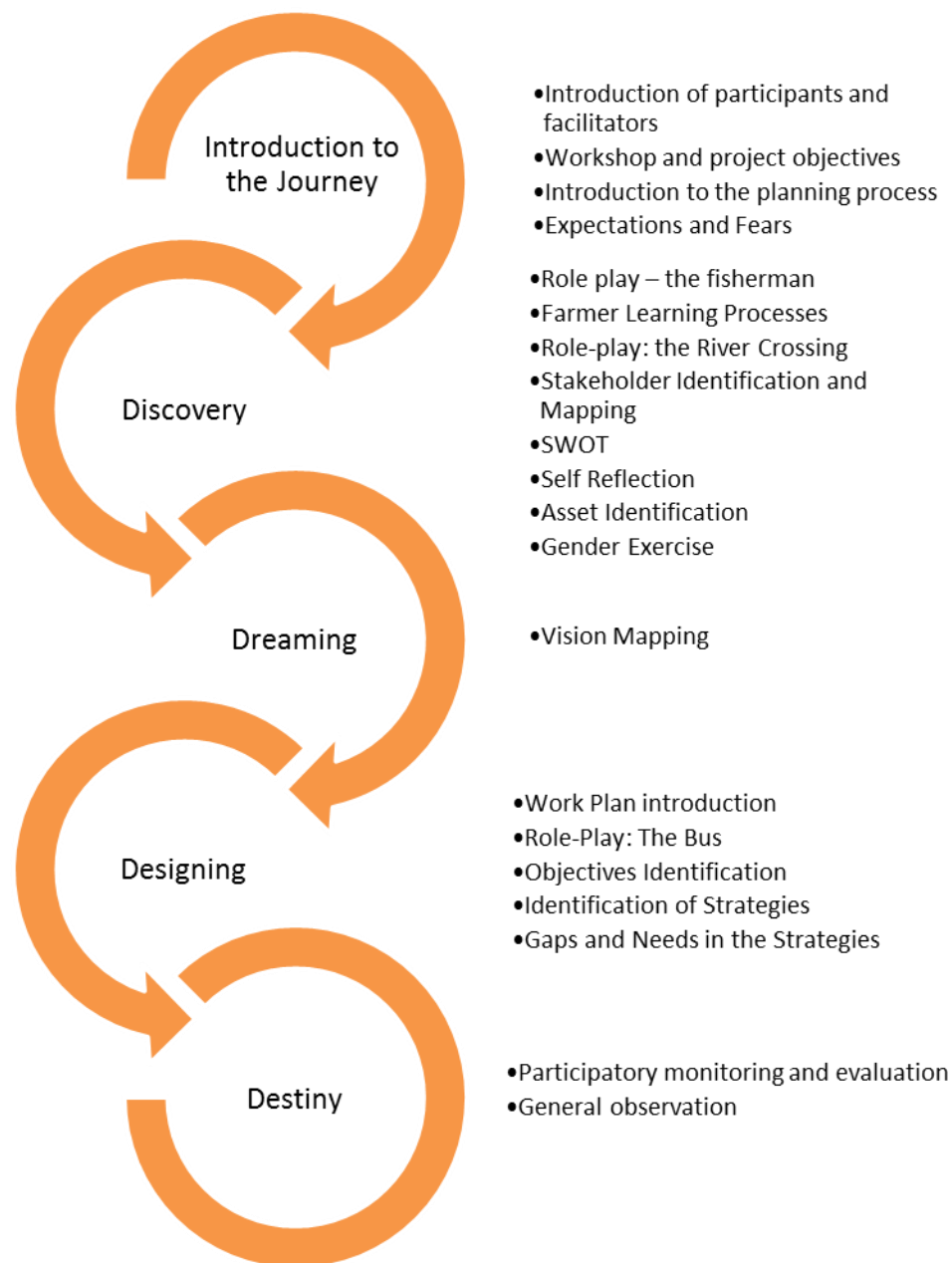


Figure 3: Summary of the Group Capacity and Strategy Development Workshop Manual Process

Following the Group Capacity and Strategy Development Workshop, group workplans were submitted for analysis to identify Group Capacity Needs and Site Needs. The analysis process identified skills and knowledge gaps amongst groups to develop a workplan at both a group and site level to address capacity needs. The analysis was based on identified group vision and objectives formulated during the workshop. Specific data used in the analysis included the groups identified assets, stakeholders, skills/training, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and gaps. Other information collected relating to the groups as part of the group characterization and environmental scan were also used to undertake the analysis, such as the group maturity ranking. Outputs from the analysis were grouped into four categories including Group Development, Platform Development, Enterprise Development and Enabling Environment factors. These analyzed group needs were tabulated into a group and site needs workplan and presented back to the groups and site steering committees to commence the process of implementation of project activities.

Formal research-through partnership with Universities in East Africa

During the review period a number of Masters level students engaged last year have progressed in their fieldwork research and dissertation writing. The students were in various stages of their research and they were supervised ICRAF and their respective universities.

Table 3: Masters students research progress

Name	University	Research topic	Progress outputs
REGINA JOHN	Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA)	Feasibility for scaling up local level rural institutions for sustainable land management; a case of Lushoto District	First thesis draft complete
Ronald Wabwire	Kampala	The role of Rural Institutions in promoting uptake of sustainable land management practices in Uganda: A case study of Masindi and Kapchorwa Districts.	Dissertation completed, awaiting approval from supervisor. Expected graduation date: January 2013
LEILA KIHWELE	SOKOINE	Feasibility for scaling up local level rural institutions for sustainable land management; a case of Pemba District	Completing first thesis draft
Verrah Otiende	Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT)	Assessing success factors of partnership building and rural institutions development in smallholder systems	First draft completed, awaiting approval from supervisor. Expected graduation date: June 2013
Douglas Bwire	Kenyatta University – School of Environmental Studies	Understanding Rural Institutional Strengthening: A cross-level Policy and Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development in Kenya (<i>Working Paper</i>)	Already defended concept note and Proposal in progress

Carolin Dieterle	Humboldt University, Berlin (Germany)	Understanding conflicts in grassroots institutional development: The case of smallholder farming in Embu County	First draft almost completed (missing conclusions).
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Completed students' research topics

Carolin Dieterle, a BA student attachment from Humboldt University, Berlin has carried out a research titled 'Understanding conflicts in grassroots institutional development: The case of smallholder farming in Embu County.' The study explores conflicts and collective action within natural resource management in grassroots organizations in Embu County. The research aimed at understanding the barriers for collective action both looking at internal and external sources of conflicts by using a sample of thirty organizations performing different functions and comprised both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Ms. Verrah Otiende, a graduate student currently enrolled in an MSc Research Methods degree in the Faculty of Horticulture of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), conducted a study to investigate the success factors of partnership building and rural institutions development amongst smallholder systems. For the period of May and June she collected her fieldwork research data in two of the six project sites (Embu, Kenya and Kapchorwa, Uganda), where the networks are already in place and have been considered successful in influencing collective action, unveiling the connection between strong organizations and functioning networks. Her research also included an analysis examining outcomes of institutional linkages against the backdrop of power relations. Her research feeds into the institutional strengthening model by providing intrinsic factors that define successful grassroots networks and their roles in training, capacity development, and information sharing to the smallholder member groups.

M&E and process documentation

Over the last twelve months the Monitoring and Evaluation component of the project has been further developed. In particular the project M&E strategy has been drafted, the logframe has been updated, and specific monitoring activities designed and implemented. These activities are described in more detail as follows:

M&E Strategy

The M&E strategy for the project takes a two-track basis – project level and intervention level to consider both the project processes and project impacts. At the *project level*, monitoring will track project activities and outputs, inform adjustments as required to project strategies, reporting to the donor, and to ensure the achievement of the project objectives and goals. At this level, most indicators are quantitative such as number of people reached, date by which achieved, number of products developed etc.

At the *intervention level*, the M&E component will assess the effectiveness of the intervention methods proposed, develop a sense of ownership of the capacity development process amongst the partners and

help refine strategies that contribute towards the achievement of the higher level objectives. Furthermore, M&E activities at the intervention level will also attempt to assess the impacts on group achievements and changes in rural institutional strength as a result of the interventions applied. The indicators used at this level will be a mix of quantitative and qualitative data sources.

Logframe

A series of meetings were held with the project team between June and October 2012, to update the project logframe given the lessons learnt during the first year of the project. Some of the activities and outputs mentioned in the log frame were adjusted to better reflect the evolving nature of the project and the new activities that the project will look to undertake. A draft of the updated log frame was shared among the project management team for comments, and when finalized will be used as the backbone of the project level M&E system, as described in an M&E strategy.

Design and implementation of monitoring tools

A series of M&E tools for tracking progress and outcomes of the interventions were developed prior to the first workshops held with the groups. Some of these tools were incorporated into the workshop program and its accompanying manual, while others formed a set of group workplan tracking sheets that were introduced at the end of the workshop as part of the M&E strategy for each group.

Upon the commencement of the capacity building activities in January 2013, further tools will be adopted by the groups as part of the participatory M&E approach. These tools are currently being refined with input from the groups, through one on one meetings and discussions.

Process Documentation

Process documentation classes were held for all the project team members, with the intention of capturing the major processes in place within the project. The process documentation exercise will be used as a knowledge management tool, whereby the documented processes can be shared with people outside the project, as well as a continuous improvement tool, whereby the team members make gradual improvements to the process based on lessons learnt.

Partnership building with site implementation teams

During the year under review, the partnership between the Project team and the on-ground IFAD, Landcare and AHI projects teams as well as grassroots representatives in the six project sites has been revived and strengthened.

Steering committees comprising both local government and civil society representatives have been formed in consultation with the local partners, and at least one meeting including ICRAF representatives, have been organized. One focal point person in each site has been selected by the committee as well as in the ICRAF project team (one team member per site) to facilitate communications between the six sites and the project.

Through a participatory discussion, Terms of Reference for the steering committee, including roles, responsibilities and allowances, have been agreed upon and drafted in all project sites. The approval of the written version of the ToRs is currently on-going and it will be finalized by January 2013 to ensure clarity and transparency before the commencement of a new round of field activities.

Draft communication strategy

The SRI communication strategy is one of the projects outputs and as a tool on its own it aims at articulating, explaining and promoting a vision and a set of well-defined goals. This therefore seeks to create a consistent, unified 'voice' that links diverse activities and goals in a way that appeals to our partners and stakeholders. This strategy seeks to establish a system that will consolidate all information available from different research and development workers, thus have all stakeholders accessing and using it with ease. In addition to that the strategy also seeks to improve decision making, use and application of the information, and improve the livelihoods of the farming communities. The key objectives of this strategy are to:

- Track and report on the Strengthening Rural Institutions (SRI) project objectives
- Track workplans and ensure project communication deliverables are completed
- Guide effective engagement with project stakeholders thus keeping them informed e.g. IFAD through reports, Steering Committees through minutes, and Community Groups through workshops e.t.c.
- Identify existing gaps in information and its flow and also come up with ways to improve on the same – consider incorporating measures to track performance (ref to Sid & Log Frame)
- Ensure transparency and that all staff know and understand the standards expected of them

The strategy is in a word format that includes various tables outlining the key audiences to the SRI project, the stakeholders importance and influence on the project, the project outputs that are already out and those that underway or yet to be formulated, the project workplan for the year 2012 to 2013 and the projects team members individual workplans. The strategy also includes gant charts that are meant to track all the projects progress in which both the charts and the strategy itself are updated on a bi-weekly basis to make it relevant and consistent.

Project management and next steps

A number of activities are planned for the second half of year 2012. These activities will include the following:

- Further development of the maturity toolkit, its validation followed by the development of a training manual
- Development of a capacity building strategy based on the results gathered during the capacity needs assessment workshop

- Completion of Master students' dissertation and incorporation of their results into the development of a model for institutional strengthening
- Analysis of the capacity building activity results and re-assessment of grassroots' organizations' maturity level
- Institutional strengthening model development

The activities described will be undertaken iteratively with formal research activities that will provide needed information, validation and empirical data necessary for the development of quality outputs.

Project Deliverables

Through an action research process, a number of deliverables have been developed, during the time under review:

1. Draft Model for Strengthening Rural Institutions: Constituting the main achievement of 2012, the first was submitted on October 31st. The Model is built on the practice and lessons from the project action research process and aims at providing a framework to analyse, plan, initiate, implement, monitor and assess the development of greater capacity in rural local grassroots institutions. The model integrates a participatory approach, involving individual groups, a consortium of groups and/or platforms, in every step of the process and is based on the principle that group strengthening should increase the ownership of the developmental process amongst the target groups.
2. A rural institution maturity assessment tool: This is a participatory multi-dimensional toolkit for differentiating rural institutions based on local criteria.
3. Rural institutions capacity assessment draft manual: An appreciative enquiry methodology that links knowledge gap assessment, with technology requirements and a described enabling environment (This takes into account external and internal factors)
4. A participatory monitoring and evaluation approach that links local level indicators of success with regional and project level performance.
5. Two ICRAF working papers in draft form, that provide lessons so far learned, this include:
 1. Understanding rural institutional strengthening: A cross-level policy and institutional framework for sustainable development in Kenya (Authors: D. Bwire, J. Tanui, F. Borgia, J. Mowo, J. Muriuki, L. Miyuki)
 2. Understanding rural spaces: a cross-cutting analysis of critical factors enabling organizational success and sustainability" (Authors: F. Borgia, J. Tanui, , J. Mowo,)
6. Communications strategy whose main aim is to track workplans and ensure project communication deliverables are completed and in good time
7. Logframe that will be used as a backbone of the above named M & E strategy

During the next project implementation phase, the tools developed will be validated and finalized. An interest on these tools, which are components of the institutional development model by development partners, has already been noted. Emphasis will be made on gap filling, aspects of enterprise development and innovation platforms that will be fully developed in 2013.