Practitioner Guide

for G-PPP, a collaborative market systems framework

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Foreword

Spices, including peppercorn, are associated with complex and diverse supply chains with products being sourced from a variety of businesses ranging from large-scale producers to small-scale farmers from around the world. Spices are vulnerable to a number of food safety risks: excessive pesticide residue levels; pathogen contamination (i.e. *Salmonella*); adulteration and substitution. Efforts to overcome these challenges is enhanced through collaboration between buyers and sellers, underpinned by support from local support structures.

The G-PPP Guide is the culmination of collaborative efforts by stakeholders who actively engaged in workshops designed and facilitated by Suzanne Neave (CABI), Grant Vinning and Mary Nguyen. These workshops were integral to the STDF-funded project: STDF/PG/619, titled "Safer Spices: Food Safety and Market Access for Peppercorn in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Lao PDR". The main objective of this guide is to support the adoption of best practices among farmers and the private sector involved in the production and processing of peppercorn, leveraging the strength of collaborative action to achieve better outcomes.

It is our hope that this guide will serve as a useful resource for stakeholders promoting the uptake of the latest technologies, quality and safety measures, and sustainable practices in agriculture trade. Although primarily designed for the peppercorn sector, the approaches are adaptable for anyone exploring the dynamics of buyer–seller relationships, navigating the complexities of market systems, or looking to drive sustainable changes through collective action.

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

Welcome to the G-PPP guide. This guide was designed as part of the STDF-funded project (STDF/PG/619) "Safer Spices: Food Safety and Market Access for Peppercorn in Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR". It has been designed for practitioners working with groups to improve quality of peppercorn by adopting the Peppercorn Code of Practice. It is a comprehensive journey through the participatory, collaborative process of connecting buyers and sellers in market systems. It's not technical training; it's a toolkit for navigating and facilitating the complex relationships and collaborations between market actors. The guide is therefore intended to complement the e-learning course (G-PPP model) which has been conceived to provide a more experiential learning experience.

Starting with an introduction to the G-PPP and its underlying principles, it guides the reader through real case examples. You'll discover the importance of perception in risk management, the value of public–private collaboration, and the power of collective action.

The guide begins with the foundational concepts of market systems and moves into practical applications, including value chain analysis, partner engagement strategies, and techniques for fostering collaborative problem solving.

The guide aims to equip you with the skills and knowledge needed to foster meaningful collaborations in the agricultural sector, whether you're exploring the dynamics of buyer–seller relationships, navigating the complexities of market systems, or looking to drive sustainable changes through collective action.

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2 Underlying principles of G-PPP

Challenges in food supply, quality and food safety in market systems are often attributed to farmers' lack of appropriate skills. Whilst technical capacity does play a role, addressing the barriers and catalysts for behaviour change within the market system can unlock the potential for improved food quality and safety, and derisk investments. Through our work in the STDF-funded Safer Spices project, we have explored factors that are important to drive behaviour change in market systems:

- Perceptions of risk and articulation of a problem
- Understanding the system from different market actors' perspective
- Amplification through collective action
- Public–Private Collaboration

Starting with the building blocks of IFOAM's Participatory Guarantee Systems model, the approach in the project assumes that if the buyer and seller (private) and support structure (public) collaborate within a framework of agreed guidelines and commitments, an environment of collective problem solving, and action will be a catalyst for behaviour change.

Collaboration in market systems is not a new concept. Market Systems Development looks at the incentives and capacities of the different market actors: understanding how the system operates, working towards a vision, working with actors that can stimulate change and supporting partners to catalyze behaviour change.

Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) is one such example. PGS was adopted by IFOAM[1], in 2008. PGS is a low-cost quality assurance mechanism based on the active participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the inspection and monitoring process. It is essentially a participatory certification system designed and adapted by stakeholders putting localism at the very centre.

How is G-PPP different?

Our approach puts people at the centre rather than the output. So, it seeks to forge a culture of understanding and to myth-bust misconceptions between buyers and sellers that often become barriers to a successful relationship. Aware of the complexities of interactions, it adopts approaches to encourage listening, cultivating trust, and facilitation dialogue, rather than directing how things should be done. To distinguish the approach from its origins we have named it Grassroots-PPP, or G-PPP.

The approach is based on three key principles:

- Willing buyer, willing seller, and willing support
- Collaboration through a public–private collaborative working group
- Peer-to-peer learning and collective action

There are five key steps to the approach:

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[1] https://www.ifoam.bio/our-work/how/standards-certification/participatory-guarantee-systems
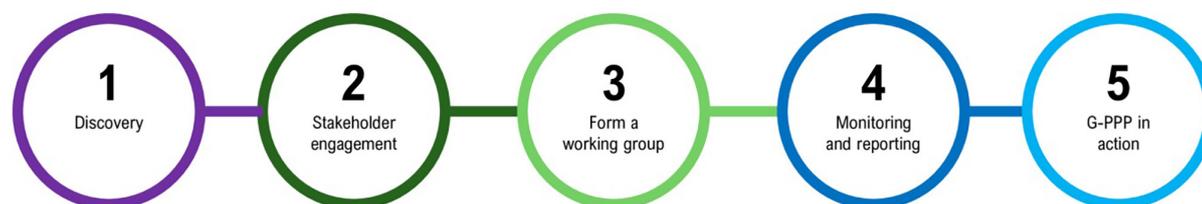
Willing buyer, willing seller, willing support

The approach relies on stakeholders being willing to participate fully in the process, open to challenging their thinking and trying new things. The first two steps of the model: **Discovery** and **Stakeholder engagement** focus on gathering evidence of need, insights to inform actions and understanding of challenges and opportunities from different perspectives, realizing the value to working together. It introduces tools for experiential learning and discovery resulting in shared vision that forms the long-term destination.

Collaboration through a public–private collaborative working group

The approach focuses on forming an informal collaboration, albeit guided by a signed agreement, underpinned by agreed guiding principles and rules that steer the group. **Forming a working group** step supports buyers (processors, traders, retailers, service sector), sellers (farmers) and support function (local government extension) in creating a group that suits local context, and becomes a mechanism for joint planning actions and checks. The result is an infrastructure that helps steer the direction of travel.

The involvement of local public-sector support also presents an opportunity to connect the groups with technical and financial resources from National and International partners.

Peer-to-peer learning and collective action

G-PPP includes tools that foster collaboration between seller and seller, sellers and support, buyers and sellers. These tools are used throughout the model, but particularly support **Monitoring and reporting** and **G-PPP in action**. The tools help to facilitate interactions between the different actors and include:

- building capacity – advisory and training, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing;
- collective action – managing risk, problem solving, SWOT; and
- checks and measures – internal audits, monitoring change and reporting.

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3 Step 1 – Discovery

To inform actions it is important to understand the industry and what its challenges are and the opportunities to solve those challenges. Information is gathered using a value chain analysis.

A value chain is a set of activities carried out to create value for the market. Every business in the value chain takes a collection of inputs and produces an output. The output has more value than the inputs.

In G-PPP a simple value chain analysis is undertaken, mapping members/actors of the value chain and gathering information to add to knowledge which will help to inform actions.

To illustrate this let's look at Tara and her supply chain…

Tara is a dairy cow from Birantnagar, Nepal. Tara is part of a value chain.

Tara is 6 years old and produces milk for her owner, Mr Jiwan Sapkota, who sells to his customers in the city. To understand how her owner can be supported, we use a value chain analysis to learn more about the journey that Tara's milk takes; and identify the challenges and intervention points.

We will come back to Tara's story in a moment, let's start by looking at what a value chain analysis is.

An analysis of the value chain is the method used to identify each activity along the value chain, determining who's involved directly and indirectly, costs and the value they deliver, and exploring challenges and opportunities that will help to address a particular problem or simply to optimize efficiency or profit.

A value chain analysis is used for multiple purposes and complexity. It helps to identify:

- Who should the core group be, who should also be involved and those kept informed, who influences change and who generates barriers.
- What other initiatives have happened in the past, current or planned, that may influence our actions.
- Where the problems, or opportunities for involvement occur.
- How cultural and social norms influence behaviour and attitudes.

There are several parts of a value chain analysis: mapping, data collection, analysis, reporting. In the early stages, reviewing existing reports is a good place to start. These will give insights on chain structures, product attributes and challenges to investigate. The information from existing reports or projects will help to establish 'what we already know' and 'what we need to find out'.

In its simplest form, we can split a value chain into three parts: you produce it, get it ready to market it, and then market it. There are actors and activities in each of these parts, and each with different perspectives, motivations and priorities. We need to identify who all the actors are in the supply chain, and how they interact. We can illustrate this by creating a value chain map.

3.1 Mapping the value chain

Let's take a look now at Tara's story…

Tara's Story

Tara is a 6-year-old Jersey cow from India. She has had four calves since she has been at Fikkl[2]. All the calves came from artificial insemination (this is a breeding technique that involves placing semen directly into the uterus of a cow or heifer). Her owner, Mr Jiwan Sapkota, does not know anything about the bulls from which the AI came.

Because she (and her latest calf) is permanently tethered in an area about seven metres by three metres, all her feed is brought to her. Tara is given quite an extensive range of grass-based feeds: rice straw, fresh grass, and a mixture of grasses that is chopped in a shredder Mr Sapkota bought especially for her. Feed is Mr Sapkota's main problem with Tara: she gets no compound feed (a commercial feed that has balanced ration of ingredients using advanced animal nutrition science and feed processing technology), as the source is just too far away and thus too expensive to bring in. Disease is the other major problem for Tara. Tara's manure is mixed with the left-over grass and straw to provide farm-yard manure for Mr Sapkota's vegetable production. Mr Sapkota's main income earner is tea, followed by vegetables. Whilst Tara's milk is only his third most important form of income, the fact that she provides fertilizer is important.

Tara's milk is taken to the Chipetar Dairy Cooperative a short walk away.

The Cooperative has 80 members and 70 non-fee-paying members. Most members, like Mr Sapkota have just the one cow: some two, a few rare ones have five. Combined, Chipetar handles around 500 l a day.

Proudly, the Cooperative owns its own building and all the stainless-steel cans to handle the milk. It has two full-time employees. Usually, the Manager receives the milk without conducting any chemical tests but every now and again if he suspects that a supplier is not providing a quality product he will conduct tests. All members keep a detailed

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[2] "Fikkl" locally, "Fikkal" elsewhere

record of their supplies to the Cooperative. Members consider that their cows' biggest problems are tonsillitis, worms, and mastitis. They are quite happy to pay for competent veterinary advice. They want training on feeding and herd management.

About 20% of the Cooperative's milk is sent to the DDC collection centre up the road towards Ilam. The rest goes to the Nobel collection centre quite close to Tara. DDC pay within 15 days of receival whereas Nobel pays after 30 days and even then, only after continual follow-up.

Mr Dotaram Adhikary operates the Nobel Dairy Products Collection and Chilling Centre at Fikkl.

This is one of 8 collection centres operated by Nobel. The milk is received, tested, and chilled before being transported to Biratnagar in one of the company's two chiller transporters. Tara can be assured that the equipment that handles her milk is well and truly washed down each day. In all, Nobel Dairy Products deals with around 2000 households.

In the Biratnagar facility the milk is received and tested before being processed. Nobel makes a series of milk products: ice-cream, paneer, and yoghurt. However, these are only a minor part of the business: whole milk constitutes 90% of the output. To make efficient use of equipment, Nobel is now bottling water.

Nobel Dairy Products employs 40 people. The plant has a capacity of 2058 litres per hour. Mr Dhiroj Shrestha, the Managing Director, has invested more than Crore INR 5 (USD 603,000) in the plant. Very little of this was provided through the formal banking system. Nobel pays NR27 (USD 0.33) per litre at the collection centre and NR25 (USD 0.30) per litre when it buys directly from the farmer. This means that the Chipetar Dairy Cooperative earns around NR1000 (USD 12) per day, from which it has purchased its own facility and acquires milk cans for its operations.

Processed milk is a good business. Mr Shrestha estimates milk demand in Biratnagar to be around 30,000 litres per day. Even so, he must compete with five other milk factories for his market share. Nobel would like to enter the Bangladeshi market to get a share of the country's estimated milk deficiency of 80%. However, to do that the factory needs aseptic packaging. As it is, Mr Shrestha would like to have aseptic facilities because with the current poor state of packaging he is limited to supplying just the local area. With aseptic packaging he could explore markets further afield.

Mr Shrestha identified as his 'burning issues' the lack of quality all along the dairy value chain. He includes himself as part of the quality issue. He feels that the government dairy department should not be competing with private operators such as himself. He would like to see steps taken to increase productivity during the dry season. The only thing he would like for himself is access to better technology and milk processing management training.

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From the story we can establish that in Tara's value chain there are a number of people and groups involved. We can map these as below:

Producer	Bit in middle	Market
Farmer Semen supplier	Cooperative Trucking company Bankers Nobel Dairy Gov quality control	Retailers Consumers
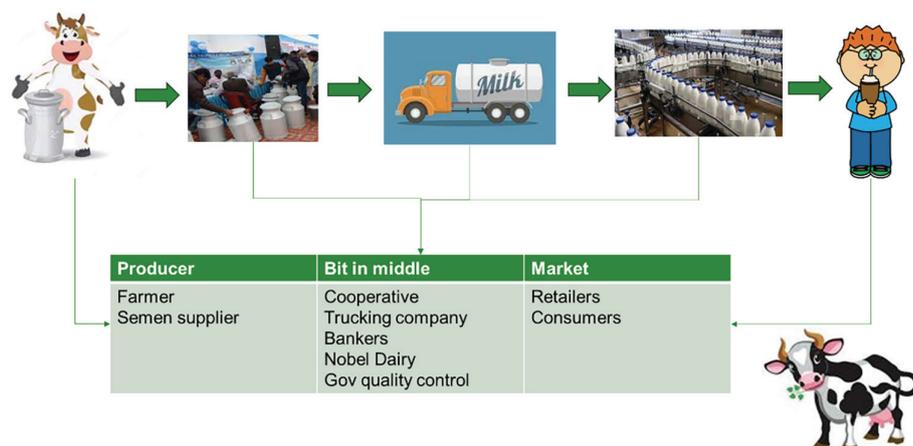
Once the actors are known, we next need to learn more about them. We do this through desk research and interviews.

3.2 Desk research

Desk research can help with learning more about how the value chain works, and how actors interact with each other, as well as key information about potential intervention points. We can also gather information about the partners that we are planning to work with.

In Cambodia, the GDA team did this exercise together, in a workshop.

"First we captured what we knew about the buyer and the seller, and then brainstormed what we wanted to know. We decided what information could be found on the internet, or by reading reports, and what information we may need to ask the actors directly.

We wanted to know about: Size, locations – one site or multiple, diversity of products and services, domestic/international presence/markets, who their customers are – are they an intermediary or final consumer, are they high end or bulk market, published financials.

We also looked up other information around the industry such as international trade data, Regulatory framework overseeing the industry. This helped us to understand more of 'what we know'."

3.3 Gathering additional information

3.3.1 Interviewing

It is not always possible to find out everything about the value chain and the partners from a desk study. Additional information is gathered from interviews. This can be challenging but is a great opportunity to not only gather information, but also help to create connections that will help support activities.

Interviews can be in small groups or individual. Certain actors may prefer one-to-one to avoid confidentiality concerns – a processing company, for example. For other actors it may be easier to talk to them as a group, such a farmers.

When organizing interviews, consider the following:

● Always establish what you already know and what you need to know before going to the interview.

● Select a location and time for the interview that suits the interviewee.

● Respect people's time: they are busy, stick to time.

● Ideally have one person to lead and another to take notes.

● Use open-ended questions. This allows the interviewees to provide detail in their own words, and may provide information that you hadn't considered relevant at the time of planning, so also be flexible with your questions. Some responses may mean that some of your questions are no longer relevant, or need to be reframed.

● Be respectful of details that they will consider confidential. You may consider prices and sales figures to be important for you to understand the full picture; pushing for details may cost in trust and respect. Try asking for information that is less of an issue, comparisons, or percentages.

● Order the questions – start with general queries first, build a rapport, and then narrow down. Leave any possible contentious questions to later in the conversation.

● Openings and closures are very important, people need to know why you are interviewing them, and what you plan to do next. The note taker needs to be able to identify what you still need to know that may require more questions and list any action points that may arise.

● Always offer to share insights or provide a copy of the report.

3.3.2 SWOT

The SWOT analysis plays a versatile role within G-PPP, serving multiple purposes across various contexts. Whether it's enhancing a value chain analysis (as will be described here), facilitating discussion among farmers, or engaging with a company, the SWOT framework proves invaluable for eliciting critical insights without direct questioning. Its effectiveness lies not only in information gathering but also in sparking interest and engagement among participants. Through this process, previously unconsidered issues often emerge, adding depth to the analysis.

A SWOT analysis is a tool to help a group to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats related to business competition or project planning. It starts with a question that you would like to answer: Is our group working effectively together? What do we need to consider in taking advantage of a new business opportunity?
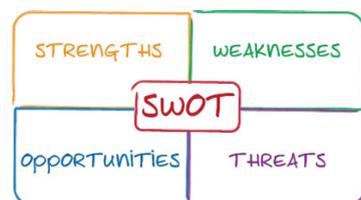
Strengths and Weaknesses are both internal factors, things the group is in control of or have direct influence over.

Opportunities and Threats are external factors, things that the group does not have much control of or influence over.

Strengths are what you are doing well or better than others and something that makes the group special.

Weaknesses are what the group needs to improve.

Opportunities are things that result in something positive.

Threats are things that affect the group in a negative way.

Let's return to Tara's story…

Tara's story - Chipetar Dairy Cooperative

A SWOT analysis is used to discuss issues with the Chipetar Dairy Cooperative. Below is the output of that discussion:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Well respected Own our building and equipment Reliable supply base High literacy amongst members	Weak bargaining power Limited resources to invest in business Poor transport infrastructure High costs since Covid-19 Temperatures and humidity limit year-round production
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
Nobel will pay for premium milk supply Buying our own truck will enable us to be in control of logistics	Nobel's payment terms and slow payment Limited access to finance for growth Nobel cannot afford to pay a high price for our milk, as market is competitive Cheaper, but low-quality imports Weather - monsoons

In the Discovery Phase, the SWOT helps to reveal some of the issues that may need to be considered when designing actions. They may not be problems to solve but may become barriers that will need navigating.

Rambo and his team were working with Sela Pepper Co. Ltd who were buying black peppercorn from six associations in their local area. Representatives from the groups were brought together. They had already interviewed the company and the representatives for the farmers' groups. They then brought them together and used the SWOT tool to gather more insights about the effectiveness of the group.

"Farmers were put into groups and asked to complete the SWOT analysis answering the question: How effective is their group? The farmers captured their ideas onto post-it notes.

We then collated the ideas from all three groups, creating a combined SWOT.

We then took the 'Weaknesses' cards and asked the participants to vote on which ones were the most important to them as individuals. This generated the top three weaknesses.

We gave each group one the of the 'weaknesses' and asked them to discuss what they could do to overcome that weakness. They needed to think what they could do themselves and what they needed help with.

The discussions when the groups shared their thoughts were valuable… with people sharing their own experience of the problem, and how they addressed it in their groups, or sharing ideas to add to those already captured."

A value chain analysis can provide us with a wealth of information that helps to plan our activities. In Tara's story we learnt about the actors and processes involved, and many challenges that her owner faces. With the information gathered we were able to identify key areas of support needed for the group.

Tara's story – Identification of interventions

In the table below are a list of key issues in Tara's value chain and the suggested interventions.

Value chain	Tara value chain issues	Suggested interventions
Production	- Low productivity in dry season - Poor feed - Disease - Lack of veterinarian service - Poor herd management skills	- Provide farmer training in herd management, disease control - Provide subsidies for irrigation - Provide tax relief for vets to move to the countryside - Develop Stage #1 veterinarians ('barefoot vets') linked to central lab
Bit in the middle	i. **Chipetar Dairy Cooperative** - High proportion of non-fee-paying members - Limited access to credit - Cash flow - Dependence on limited transport to link to bigger centre ii. **Biratnagar** - Testing after receival at Biratnagar (*ambulance at the bottom of the cliff*) - Low technology - Limited access to finance	- Educate the finance sector on the financial viability of the dairying sector and its ancillary service providers (transport) - Develop beneficiary benefit scheme for fee-paying members - Allow accelerated depreciation - Subsidize testing regimes at the primary level
Marketing	- Good local market - Inappropriate packaging facility	- Allow duty-free importation of necessary equipment - Consider school lunch program

The group will benefit from working as a group for many of these interventions. Working closely with their buyer and the advisory services that support them, will help them to address their issues more effectively.

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4 Step 2 – Stakeholder engagement

4.1 Benefits of working in a group

It may seem obvious that a farmer group would appreciate the benefits of working together. However, many groups are put together through projects, the members of the group benefit from what the project is delivering.

An irrigation project in Ghana, for example, put farmers into groups around a centralized irrigation scheme to grow vegetables for local markets. The farmers did not work together to market the produce they were growing, often competing, and none really meeting the market requirements. One group complained about gossiping and poor leadership.

It may also seem obvious that a buyer would work together with the farmers supplying them. The level of involvement of a buyer with the farmers varies greatly. But as the farmer groups in Ghana discovered when introduced to a buyer who was willing to collaborate with them, working together has many benefits. This was also true for groups of farmers we worked with in Solomon Islands and Fiji.

Farmers in Solomon Islands meeting the head chef of Honiara Hotel.

The farmer groups working in our project also discovered the same thing.

So, Step 2: Stakeholder engagement, focuses on exploring the benefits of working together to foster collaboration that goes beyond basic transactions. It leverages a range of techniques to encourage stakeholders to discover the mutual benefits of working together. These techniques include: peer-to-peer learning (4.2), basic principles of marketing (4.3), and shared vision (4.4).

Here are just a few benefits of working in a group.

- **Diverse Skills and Perspectives**: Groups bring together individuals with different skills, knowledge, and experiences. This diversity can lead to more creative and innovative solutions to problems than an individual might achieve alone.

- **Increased Productivity**: Collaboration can lead to a division of labour, where tasks are distributed according to each member's strengths. This can increase the efficiency and productivity of the group.

- **Support and Motivation**: Working in a group provides a support system that can help motivate individuals. Group members can encourage each other to stay focused and persevere through challenges.

- **Enhanced Learning:** Collaborating with others provides opportunities for learning from each other. Members can gain new insights, perspectives, and skills from their peers.
- **Improved Communication Skills**: Group work necessitates communication, which can help individuals improve their ability to articulate ideas, listen effectively, and resolve conflicts.
- **Accountability**: When working in a group, members often feel a sense of responsibility towards each other. This accountability can lead to higher levels of commitment and effort.
- **Problem Solving and Decision Making**: Groups can leverage collective intelligence to solve complex problems more effectively. Brainstorming and discussing different viewpoints can lead to better decision making.
- **Increased Confidence**: Participating in successful group projects can boost individuals' confidence in their abilities and their capacity to work with others.
- **Sense of Belonging**: Working closely with others towards a common goal can foster a sense of community and belonging. This can be particularly beneficial in educational and workplace environments.
- **Opportunity for Leadership Development**: Groups provide individuals with opportunities to take on leadership roles, develop management skills, and learn how to navigate the dynamics of leading a team.
- **Risk Sharing**: Working in a group allows for the sharing of risks associated with the tasks at hand. This can reduce the pressure on individual members and encourage more innovative approaches.

Of course, groups do not always naturally work well together. It is important to manage group dynamics effectively to overcome potential challenges such as free-riding, conflicts, and unequal participation. It takes effort and key factors that need to be in place for a group to be successful.

Some key elements that are important for a group to be successful include:

- **Clear Objectives:** The group should have clear, well-defined goals that are understood and accepted by all members. This helps to ensure that everyone is working towards the same end.
- **Strong Leadership**: Effective leadership is crucial for guiding the group, making decisions, resolving conflicts, and keeping the team on track. Leadership can be formal or emerge naturally within the group.
- **Defined Roles and Responsibilities**: Each member should have a clear understanding of their role within the group and what is expected of them. This helps to distribute work evenly and utilize each member's strengths.
- **Open and Effective Communication**: Successful groups prioritize open lines of communication. Members should feel comfortable sharing ideas, giving and receiving feedback, and discussing progress and challenges.
- **Mutual Respect**: For a group to function effectively, members must respect each other's ideas, contributions, and perspectives. This fosters a positive and supportive group dynamic.
- **Collaborative Environment**: A collaborative mindset is essential, where members are willing to share knowledge, work together on tasks, and support one another in achieving the group's goals.
- **Problem-solving Skills**: Groups often face challenges and conflicts. The ability to approach problems constructively and find solutions together is key to maintaining progress and cohesion.
- **Adaptability**: Successful groups are flexible and able to adapt to changes in their environment, tasks, or membership. This resilience helps them overcome obstacles and stay focused on their objectives.
- **Trust and Accountability**: Trust among group members is crucial for collaboration and productivity. Each member should be accountable for their contributions and commitments to the group.
- **Diversity**: A mix of skills, experiences, and perspectives enriches the group's discussions and decision making, leading to more innovative and effective outcomes.
- **Recognition and Reward**: Acknowledging individual and group achievements can motivate members and reinforce the value of their contributions to the group's success.
- **Effective Decision-making Processes**: The group should have agreed-upon methods for making decisions, whether through consensus, majority vote, or leadership direction, to ensure that decisions are made efficiently and are supported by the group.
- **Regular Reflection and Feedback:** Successful groups regularly assess their progress, processes, and dynamics. This reflection allows them to celebrate successes, address issues, and make adjustments to improve effectiveness.
- **Forming, Storming, Reforming, Performing:** Be open the development process of groups. This is described in psychologist Bruce Tuckman's model. Teamwork is not like a light bulb; you can't simply form a group and expect it to work from the outset.

4.2 Peer-to-peer learning

It is widely recognized that farmers can often gain more practical, applicable knowledge from their peers than from formal educational programs or outside experts. Learning from each other provides local insights and cost-effective strategies, enabling participants to learn from real-world applications and successes (and failures). It strengthens community bonds and supports a collective approach to problem solving, as individuals work together to tackle challenges. This hands-on, experiential learning method not only facilitates the rapid dissemination of best practices but also fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among farmers, leading to more sustainable and productive agricultural systems.

In G-PPP knowledge transfer between farmer groups is active, encouraging groups to meet regularly to share knowledge and ideas. This knowledge sharing builds on the good agriculture practice presented in the Code of Practice.

Peer-to-peer learning

"The farmer groups in the project were brought together regularly to attend training courses. We wanted to do something different. In Cambodia, a farmer invited us to use his farm for our activity. We were working with representatives from three different associations, so mixing them up was important. We put them into groups and asked them to walk through the farm in their groups and answer two questions: what does the farmer do that is the same as me? What does the farmer do that is different?

After a 15-minute exploration, the groups reconvened to exchange insights on their observations. The discussion led to the formulation of three questions they wished to pose to the farm owner. Simultaneously, the farmer was encouraged to think of three questions for the group. This exchange allowed for a deep dive into each other's experiences and practices, fostering a rich dialogue and shared learning experience."

A compelling example of this knowledge exchange occurred when the team facilitated a cross-district farmer exchange in Vietnam. We invited a farmer from the Central Highlands to participate in a farmer-to-farmer session in Vung Tau. This exchange proved to be an eye-opener for the visiting farmer, who was surprised to discover that the local farmers in the coastal area of Vung Tau did not produce their own fish fertilizer, a practice commonly adopted in his region. Seizing this opportunity for knowledge exchange, he eagerly shared his recipe and method for creating fish fertilizer. This became a factsheet included in the project's COP interpretation guide, and was also made available to farmers in Cambodia and Laos. This interaction not only sparked valuable discussions but also highlighted the potential for learning and innovation through sharing diverse agricultural practices.

Starting a workshop with this type of activity can be immensely beneficial. A field session injects a vibrant energy into the classroom atmosphere, sparking lively conversations and interactions among participants and carries over to subsequent activities, with all members engaging more actively and enthusiastically.

4.3 Basic principles of marketing

In a nutshell…

Consumers buy benefits, not products

Consumers are primarily interested in what a product or service can do for them, rather than the product itself. It's the benefits or solutions to their problems that drive purchasing decisions. For example, when buying a smartphone, a consumer is not just buying a piece of technology but the convenience, connectivity, entertainment, and efficiency it provides.

Consumers buy consistency

Consistency in brand experience, quality, and messaging builds trust and loyalty among consumers. When a brand consistently meets or exceeds expectations, consumers feel more confident in their purchasing decisions. Inconsistencies can lead to confusion and erode brand trust, ultimately affecting consumer behaviour and preferences.

Consumers buy value, not prices

Price is certainly a factor in consumer decisions, but it's the value that they get for that price that's more important. Value can be seen in terms of quality, convenience, service, and the overall brand experience. A higher-priced product may offer better value if it delivers superior benefits or saves time and money in the long run.

Marketing is a battle of perceptions, not products

The consumers' perception of a product or brand is more influential than the product's actual features or quality. Marketing efforts aim to shape and manage these perceptions through branding, messaging, and customer experience. Successful brands are those that create a positive and memorable image in the minds of consumers, even if their products are not significantly different from competitors'.

Successful marketing is defining consumers' benefit and your uniqueness

Successful marketing strategies hinge on clearly defining the unique benefits that a product and you offer to consumers. It's about articulating why a consumer should buy from you. This involves identifying and communicating a unique selling proposition (USP) that highlights the distinct advantages you and your products have to offer and how it meets the consumer's needs in a way that no other product does.

So whether selling peppercorn to a processor, or vegetables to a local retailer, clearly identifying the unique selling proposition is very important. We call this "Why should I buy from you?" challenge.

Challenging conventional thinking about marketing strategies is crucial for businesses today. Rather than leading with price, successful businesses prioritize presenting themselves in a way that highlights quality and reliability. Customers are increasingly seeking assurance of quality and trust in a company's ability to consistently deliver. This necessitates businesses to foster strong, dependable relationships with their suppliers, ensuring that the quality promised to customers is met with unwavering consistency. Viewing these interactions not just as transactions but as partnerships is a more effective approach. It shifts the focus from merely competing on price to building a sustainable, value-driven connection with customers, grounded in trust and quality assurance.

It's often noted that the friction between buyers and sellers stems from disagreements over pricing and commitment levels in purchase agreements. These issues can undermine the trust that forms the basis of their relationship. To achieve successful collective action, both parties must understand each other's business perspectives and appreciate the rationale behind key decisions. It is for this reason that we introduce these concepts as a part of stakeholder engagement, hoping to myth-bust misconceptions between groups, and build a better understanding of what is needed for a business relationship to be successful.

To help buyers and sellers to think through this concept, we introduce the Ask and Offer table. Simply put, a buyer is asking for value and benefits and offering money and buying expectations; a seller, the opposite.

So, when a buyer or a seller engages to discuss market opportunities it is important to know what 'the ask' is and what 'the offer' is. There will be some things an actor must have and some things that are nice to have. It helps to capture these in a table:

	ASK	OFFER
Must haves		
Nice to haves		

This 'ask and offer' lays out the stall, essentially the Value Proposition. Once everyone has thought about what it is they want, it always helps to play a scenario out using role play. This is a good way to allow farmers to explore the idea that they are not simply selling a product for a certain price, but first and foremost selling themselves, as a reliable supplier that the buyer can trust. This trust is what creates the foundation for a good working relationship.

Ask and Offer in Vietnam

"We'd like to share an idea with you about using role-play to get a group to engage with a subject. In Vietnam, the Harris Freeman team jumped in, with one person playing a farmer and the other playing the company. It was a fun exercise, but it really drove home the point that both sides bring something to the table and are willing to offer something to get what they want. And then there's that all-important red line. You have to know at what point you're willing to walk away from a negotiation.

Take relationships—they're all about negotiation. I know this firsthand from my marriage. In any relationship, you need to understand the other person's perspective, find common ground, and realize that it takes effort from both sides. But that effort is rewarded for everyone."

4.4 Shared vision

An effective way to culminate sessions on collaboration involves crafting a shared vision. By uniting efforts, members can harness their collective strengths to achieve shared objectives, demonstrating the power of working together towards a common goal.

You can of course tackle this in many ways, but one effective way is by drawing, we used this approach with the groups in the project.

The phrase "a picture says a thousand words" means that a single image can communicate complex ideas more effectively than a lengthy description. Images convey a lot of information quickly and universally. Just like how you can understand what's happening in a scene by looking at a photo, the idea is that sometimes visuals can tell a story or express a concept more efficiently and vividly than words alone. It is for this reason that drawing a vision is a valuable approach. It stimulates discussion amongst the group and is a fun activity to engage in, often leading to much laughter as people attempt to convey a discussion point into a single image.

> *"In Laos, we ask the groups to divide their page in half, using one section to illustrate their current situation and the other to depict their aspirations for the next five years. We split the participants based on their roles—either as buyers or sellers. Observing the reactions when it becomes apparent that the visions of both buyers and sellers are strikingly aligned is always insightful. This realization reinforces the notion that collaboration can facilitate the achievement of their visions. Moreover, it highlights the interdependence between buyers and sellers in realizing their shared future visions."*
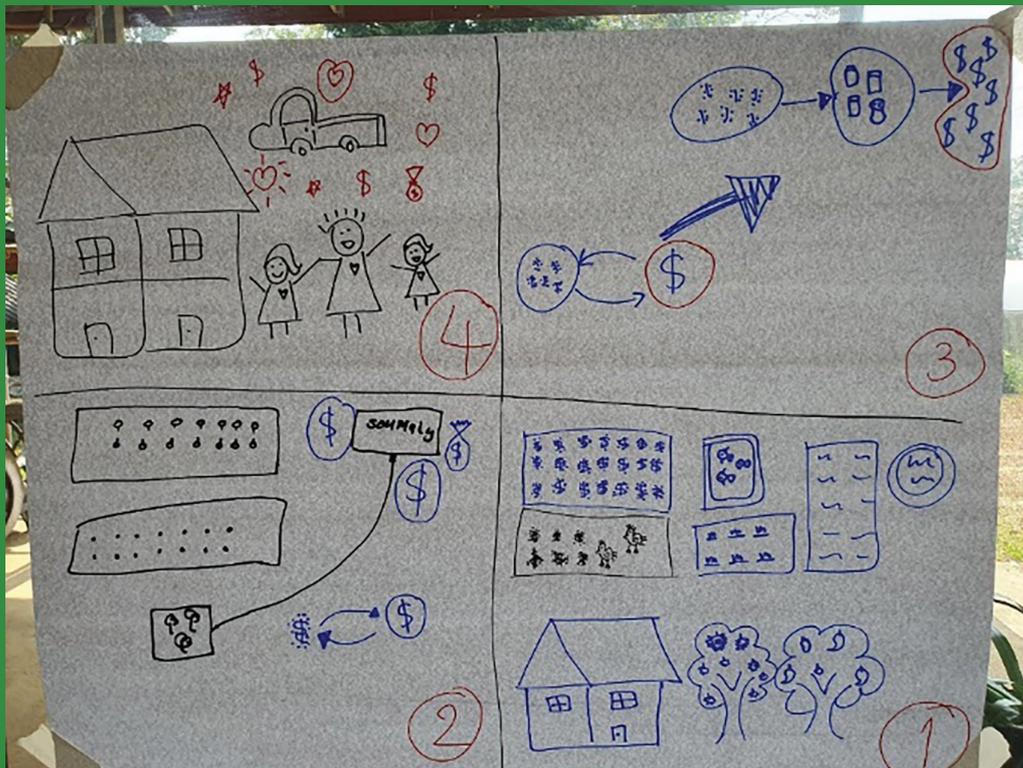
4.5 Bringing together exploration of collaborative action

Step 2 unfolds naturally, fostering personal connections. Each group's reaction to our activities varies, largely depending on their group dynamics and relationships with buyers.

Holding extensive sessions isn't always feasible. Time constraints, unpredictable weather, and logistical hurdles can complicate plans. The activities are designed for flexibility—they're impactful whether conducted jointly or individually. Take, for instance, our experience in our project. The farmers there initially sold their produce separately to the buyer. By introducing a SWOT analysis in our first workshop, we highlighted the collective strength in unity. This led to a newfound enthusiasm among the farmers to collaborate, setting a precedent for the effective combination of our subsequent activities to benefit both sellers and buyers.

In Lao PDR, we introduced farmers to the farmer-to-farmer method, stressing the significance of collaboration. For them, the idea was a novel one. This approach quickly showcased the benefits of mutual support, prompting the farmers to embrace collaborative efforts and eventually establish a working group (Step 3).

The overall aim of Step 2 is to get buy-in from those involved. The whole journey is underscored by benefits of collective action and shared understanding in achieving common vision. If you have a willing buyer and willing seller you can then move on to the next step to form a working group.

5 Step 3 – Form a working group

Step 2 has been all about getting buy-in, taking participants through a journey of discovery hopefully reaching an agreement that working together and following this approach is right for them. It is important to note that this approach does not work for all situations, but where it does you are ready to take your group to the next step: **Form a working group**.

In PGS this is known as an inter-group. Selecting the type of group and the language to use is very important. In the context of PGS an inter-group is a formal structure, and this works well within the structure of PGS. However, in this project, the idea for forming an inter-group was met with resistance, mainly due to what the word 'inter-group' conveyed in people's minds. People also felt more comfortable with the idea of a more informal nature to the relationship, still with a written agreement and commitment.

This section focuses on how to form a 'working group'. It is based on the principles of the PGS inter-group, but with some of the structure stripped away. When forming a group you can make it as formal or informal as the group feels comfortable with. You may find the structure of the group will change over time as the group progresses, it is important that any procedures or rules put in place allow the group to evolve.

Purposes of working group:

- organizing the inspections related to compliance and progress;
- technical support and training; and
- reporting, planning and problem solving.

The commitment of the group starts with a signed agreement. In Annex 1 you will find the agreement drawn up for this project. In each country the experience of putting together a commitment form was very different. In Lao PDR for example, the Department of Agriculture, worked alongside Provincial and District departments, head of the village and the company to compile a suitable agreement. Once in place, Etu Green, the company, was able to start working with the farmers as a group for the first time. In Cambodia, General Directorate of Agriculture assisted Sela Company and the Farmer Associations to agree on the content of the agreement, which everyone then signed.

Creating an agreement is an important step as it sets out how the group will work. As mentioned earlier it takes effort for a group to work effectively, so it is important that everyone agrees to participate fully to ensure its success.

To ensure a group functions effectively, several key elements must be addressed:

- **Shared Vision**: Establish a common goal that serves as the group's guiding star, keeping everyone's objectives aligned.
- **Roles and Responsibilities**: Clearly define who is responsible for essential tasks. This doesn't mean they must complete the tasks themselves, but they should oversee the work and report on progress.
- **Rules and Regulations**: Set clear operational and behavioural guidelines for group members. Like any organization, whether a sports team or social club, it's important to establish boundaries.
- **Action Plan**: Develop a roadmap that guides the group toward achieving its vision.

With these elements in place, the group will have a solid foundation to work effectively. The shared vision we have covered in an earlier session. The group needs to take the shared visions, collate and turn them into one clear statement. The roles and responsibilities, rules and regulations and action plan are presented in the following sections.

5.1 Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities are similar to that of the PGS intergroup. The size of the group is not so important, but there should always be the core members who steer the group's direction. These are listed in the table below along with their responsibilities.

Key roles	Description of role
Overall leader	Facilitates meetings; mediates disagreements; keeps group on mission. This role could be rotated amongst group
Accountant	Receive membership fee; keep accounts; report at monthly meetings
Secretary	Could be selected at beginning of meeting or an elected position Takes notes; keeps action log updated
Leader of Inspection	Coordinates inspection activity; creates and maintains inspection schedule; reports activities and non-compliance at meeting
Leader of Technical	Coordinates training schedule; advises on what can be used and not; finds information and shared with group
Leader of Planning	Coordinates preparation of plan, monitors and reports on progress

"In our group we wanted to decide on who would be responsible for each role using a voting system. All the roles and the responsibilities were written up onto cards, and below individuals were asked to either nominate themselves or another for the role based on their interest and experience. Once all the names were listed. Each member voted for the person they felt was best suited for each role. If two people received an equal number of votes for a role, each member was given the opportunity to present their case to the group for taking on the role. The rest of the group then vote with a show of hands for who they think will be more suitable.

Something that was also important to the group was that the Chairmanship was rotated. Starting with a member of the buyer and then rotating between seller, support and buyer. This would give everyone a chance to fulfil this role and reduce any dominance or bias."

5.2 Rules and regulations

Like any social club, rules and regulations are crucial because they establish clear expectations for behaviour and operations, creating a safe and harmonious environment for all members. These guidelines ensure that everyone understands the group's values, acceptable conduct, and the consequences of rule-breaking, which helps prevent conflicts and promotes inclusivity. Additionally, they provide a framework for decision making and conflict resolution, contributing to consistent and fair governance. Ultimately, well-defined rules and regulations foster a sense of community and belonging, allowing members to engage in activities with a shared understanding of norms and responsibilities.

An example of rules and regulations agreed on by the group in Cambodia are presented in Annex 2.

"We kicked off by thinking about the rules and regulations of the clubs and societies we're already part of. We even took a trip down memory lane to recall some of the rules from our school days.

To make things simple, we sorted them into two groups: 'Must haves' and 'Nice to haves'. We didn't want to overcomplicate things with too many rules, but we knew we needed the essentials to keep the group running smoothly. We separated the rules into two types: operational and behavioural. The operational ones dealt with the day-to-day stuff, while the behavioral rules set the tone for how we treat each other."
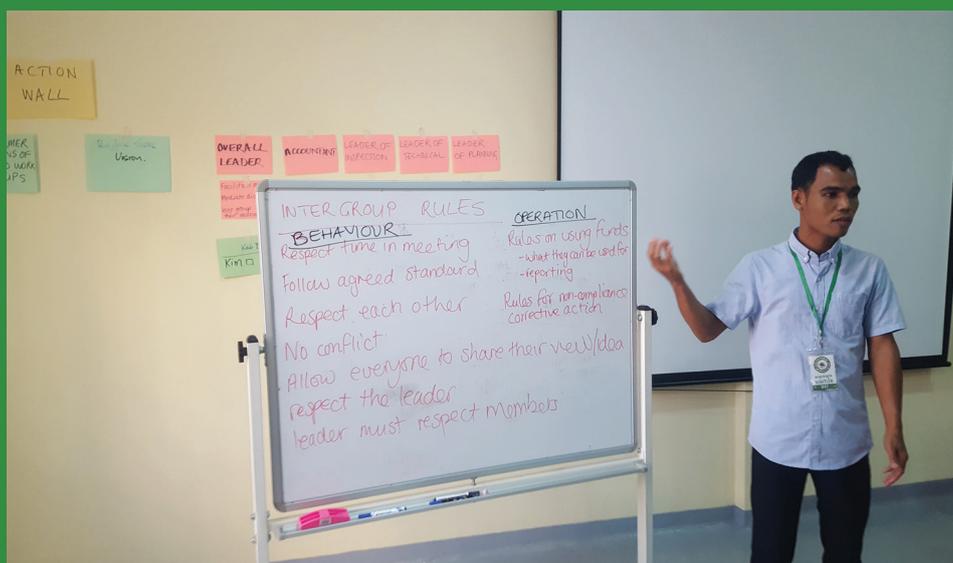
5.3 Action plan

An action plan consists of several key components that guide the successful execution of the group's tasks. It starts with a clear objective (shared vision), the action plan will then set out the route that is taken to achieve that shared vision.

Each task should have an assigned responsible person or team, ensuring accountability. A timeline or schedule establishes when each task should be completed, providing a sense of urgency and helping track progress.

Additionally, an action plan should include resource requirements, outlining what materials, tools, or personnel are needed to execute the tasks.

Finally, there should be a mechanism for monitoring and evaluation to measure progress and adapt the plan as needed. It is important that the action plan is both effective and adaptable.

In this approach some of the key tasks that may need to be in the plan include:

- Meeting schedule
- Peer audits
- Training schedule
- Peer-to-peer learning sessions
- Reporting

An action plan in a farming environment requires careful consideration of various commitments. A crop calendar is a useful starting point, as it lays out the farm's activities by month, providing a clear overview of what's happening throughout the year. This calendar can also include important social events, ensuring that farm work and community activities are considered in the planning.

The crop calendar is helpful for scheduling training sessions on specific topics, allowing you to coordinate group activities and account for everyone's time constraints. This approach ensures that training is delivered when it's most effective and least disruptive.

Additionally, the crop calendar can guide the timing of farm audits. It's wise to align these with periods of high risk, such as peak pest management, harvesting, or on-farm processing. By using the calendar as a framework, you can create an action plan that addresses the unique demands of the farming environment while considering key operational and social factors.

	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Propagation				X								
Soil preparation	X	X	X	X								
Planting					X	X	X					
Weeding	X	X	X	X				X	X		X	X
Harvesting	X	X					X	X	X		X	X
Water management	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Fertiliser					X	X			X	X		
Pest management							X			X	X	X
Crop inspection			X	X			X		X	X		
Pruning					X	X	X					

Crop calendar created by Laos working group

"There are several training modules that accompany the project's Code of Practice interpretation guide:

Planting and site selection (COP 1,2,3,4)	Shade and wind management (COP 2.4)	Water management (COP 6.1)	Weed management (COP 6.2)	Soil management (COP 6.3)
Training section 1 and 2	Training section 5	Training section 4	Training section 6	
Crop nutrition (COP 6.4)	Crop protection (COP 7, 8)	Harvesting (COP 9)	On farm processing (COP 10)	Farm Hygiene (COP 11)
Training section 3	Training section 7	Training section 8		
Record keeping (5, Farmers' diary)				
Environmental stewardship				

To determine the best timing for delivering training modules, we organized a group activity with the farmer associations. We began by creating a crop calendar to identify the most convenient time slots. Participants highlighted the busiest periods and marked the months to avoid. Then, using cards labelled with each module, they placed them in the appropriate locations on the calendar. This collaborative approach allowed us to identify optimal times for training while considering the farmers' schedules and key farming activities."

5.4 Organizing a meeting

Organizing a meeting involves several key considerations to ensure it is effective and productive.

- **Purpose and Objectives**: Clearly define the meeting's purpose and what you hope to achieve. This helps guide the agenda and ensures everyone is on the same page.
- **Agenda and Structure**: Create an agenda outlining the topics to be discussed, the order of discussion, and time allocated for each item. A well-structured agenda keeps the meeting focused and on track.

Beginning	Middle	End
Introductions Explain purpose Set parameters	Content for meeting the purpose	Q/A Summary Closing

- **Participants**: Identify the essential participants for the meeting, ensuring that those with the most critical roles and insights are included. Inclusivity is key when discussing significant topics, so aim to incorporate a wide range of perspectives. However, remember that a large group can hinder productivity during decision making. In such cases, consider gathering feedback from the broader group beforehand, then select a smaller number of representatives to express those views during the meeting. This approach balances inclusivity with efficiency, allowing for effective discussions and decisions.
- **Date and Time**: Choose a convenient date and time for all participants. Consider other commitments to maximize attendance.
- **Pre-meeting Preparation**: Preparation is a crucial step in ensuring a successful meeting. Both organizers and participants should be well prepared to maximize productivity. Sharing the agenda and any relevant materials with attendees ahead of time allows everyone to arrive informed, which minimizes the need for lengthy explanations during the meeting. This advance preparation fosters more focused discussions and enables participants to contribute meaningfully, ultimately leading to more effective outcomes.

Agenda item
1 Agree on shared vision
2 Select people for key roles
3 Draft rules and regulations
4 Action plan

- **Facilitation and Roles**: Designate a meeting facilitator or chairperson to lead the discussion and keep it on track. Assign roles like note-taker (and timekeeper if needed).
- **Follow-up and Action Items**: At the end of a meeting, summarize action items, deadlines, and responsible parties. This ensures accountability and continuity.

The first meeting of the working group will include items on the agenda that have been discussed in the previous sections: Share vision, roles and responsibilities, rules and regulations and action plan.

The role of the chairman is very important in these meetings. It is not their role to command what the group does, but instead act as facilitator. A chairman guides a group toward better collaboration, a shared understanding of common objectives, and a plan for achieving them during meetings or discussions. They generally stay 'neutral', not taking a particular stance during discussions. They ensure that the group sticks to the agenda and time. They should be:

- **Unbiased**: They maintain neutrality, allowing the group to explore different perspectives without pushing their own agenda. The goal is to foster meaningful dialogue.

- **Attentive Listener**: Facilitators need to listen actively, validating and clarifying points. When a question arises, they should encourage the group to respond before offering any input. This approach often uncovers a wealth of wisdom within the group.
- **Skilled Questioner**: They ask open-ended questions to encourage discussion, like "What do you think about..." or "Why do you believe that?" If a response is a simple "yes" or "no," they prompt for elaboration.

They are also responsible for the closures: summarizing key points, agreements and action points in the meeting.

6

6 Step 4 – Monitoring and reporting

6.1 Monitoring change

Monitoring progress is a crucial aspect of the G-PPP approach, beginning with a clear Shared Vision—the ultimate destination. To reach this vision, the group must track their direction and decide what changes are needed to stay on course. This vision helps determine what change the group would like to make, but these might differ among group members, such as buyers, sellers, and support staff.

For example, buyers might aim to increase the number of farmers supplying high-quality peppercorn with lower pesticide residue risk. Sellers might focus on improving safety and quality to increase their sales to the buyer. Meanwhile, support staff could target an increase in farmers complying with Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards.

Once the 'what' is defined, the group must determine the 'how' and the 'who'. The 'how' could involve farm records (see 6.2), farm audits (see 6.3), market data, or pesticide residue test results. Each of these metrics provides valuable information on the group's progress. The 'who' refers to the group members responsible for gathering, aggregating, and analysing this data—buyers, sellers, or support staff.

By compiling and evaluating this information, the group can gain insights into their progress and identify areas that need attention or improvement. This ongoing monitoring helps ensure they stay on track to achieve their Shared Vision while allowing for flexibility and adjustments as needed.

6.2 Keeping records

The importance of keeping detailed farm records cannot be overstated. It serves as a fundamental component of successful farm management, enabling farmers to monitor progress, identify problems, manage resources and stock efficiently, make informed decisions to improve practices and business operations, learn from cropping history, and ensure traceability. Essentially, farm records act as a comprehensive diary of daily activities, offering invaluable insights into the farm's operational dynamics. It is for this reason, they are an important part of Codes of Practices, and GAP standards.

6.2.1 Why keep farm records?

- **Track Progress and Identify Problems**: By meticulously recording daily operations, farmers can track the progression of their crops and livestock, quickly identifying any issues that arise. This proactive approach allows for timely interventions to mitigate problems.
- **Make Informed Decisions**: Access to historical data on farming practices and outcomes enables farmers to make evidence-based decisions that can lead to improvements in farm productivity and sustainability.
- **Learning and Improvement:** Analysing records from previous seasons helps in understanding what practices worked well and which did not. This reflection is crucial for adapting and refining strategies for future cycles.
- **Ensure Traceability**: In today's market, consumers and regulators demand transparency in the food production process. Keeping detailed records supports traceability, from field to fork, enhancing consumer trust and compliance with regulatory requirements.

The peppercorn Code of Practice Interpretation Guide includes an example of records that could be kept on the farm. These include:

- **Production Records:** These include details about the site, planting schedules, input usage (such as fertilizers and pesticides), and yields. Keeping such records helps in planning and optimizing the use of resources.
- **Financial Records**: Documenting income and expenses is vital for financial planning, budgeting, and analysis. It helps in understanding the farm's financial health and planning for future investments or cost savings.
- **Comprehensive Activity Logs**: This encompasses a wide range of information, including: Site information and production details. Observations of pests and diseases, planting and harvesting records, offering a timeline of farm operations.

6.2.2 Special consideration: Pesticide record keeping

Pesticide application records are particularly crucial due to Maximum Residue Limits (MRLs) being a significant barrier to market entry. These records should detail when and why a pesticide was used, how it was applied, and in what quantity. Such meticulous record-keeping ensures compliance with safety standards and supports market access by demonstrating adherence to regulatory requirements.

Records relating to pests and pesticides are useful not only at the time, but also providing an historical log that can be used to correlate against other data like weather, financial, etc. For example, the graphs below are taken from field records in a tea estate. These records helped the farm manager to monitor progress on reducing pesticide risk.
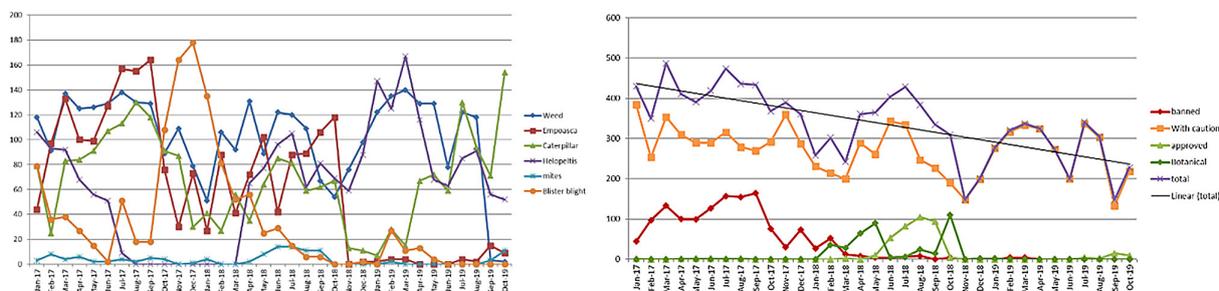
Graphs illustrating pesticide use trends on a tea estate

In summary, farm record keeping is an essential practice that underpins successful farm management. By maintaining a clear and comprehensive record of farm activities, farmers can enhance their operational efficiency, financial performance, and market competitiveness.

6.3 Auditing farms

Conducting farm self-audits is a crucial practice for several reasons, pivotal to both the operational success and the long-term sustainability of farming operations. Likewise the G-PPP promotes peer-audits. These audits involve a systematic review of farming practices, processes, and outcomes, enabling farmers to assess their compliance against the Code of Practice, and allow the group to monitor the performance of the group members to ensure all the participants are following best practices.

By regularly checking processes and outputs, farmers can identify and rectify issues that may compromise quality. This vigilance ensures that the highest standards of product integrity are maintained, fostering trust among consumers and retailers. Additionally, farmers can evaluate the efficiency of their farming practices, identifying areas where resources such as water, feed, and fertilizers can be used more effectively. This not only leads to cost savings but also promotes environmental sustainability, a crucial aspect in today's agricultural practices.

The process of conducting audits fosters a culture of continuous improvement within the farming community. It helps in setting, reviewing, and achieving operational goals. This iterative process is vital for ensuring that farming practices remain current with the latest research, technology, and methods. Through continuous refinement and adaptation, farms can increase their efficiency and productivity over time.

Conducting regular audits also serves a critical role in demonstrating to customers and stakeholders that farms are adhering to quality standards and regulatory compliance. Many buyers, especially those in highly regulated markets, now require evidence of good farming practices as part of their procurement criteria. This aspect of audits is particularly important in the management of risks. Early detection of potential issues allows for timely mitigation strategies, reducing potential losses and ensuring business continuity. Through these practices, farms can secure their operations and maintain a competitive edge in the market.

6.3.1 Creating a checklist for monitoring farm practices

To audit the farms, it was necessary to create a checklist from the different risks listed in the Code of Practice. The first step though was to understand the perception of risk of the different sections in the Code. This was achieved by using our 'risk perception' task.

"Cards outlining various points from the code of practice were produced. The participants were split into groups according to type: seller, support, buyer. Groups were then tasked with categorizing these cards into one of three boxes, each representing a different level of risk: High, Medium, or Low.

The outputs of this exercise were different for every group. Whilst some of the groups placed cards in the same boxes, a large number were different, demonstrating the difference in the perception of risk. This exercise provoked discussion about why certain groups placed cards in specific places. After much discussion the groups came to a consensus on what points were high risk and needed to be included in the checklist.

The agreed list was put into a checklist, and taken to the field to test, and make further adjustments based on observations."
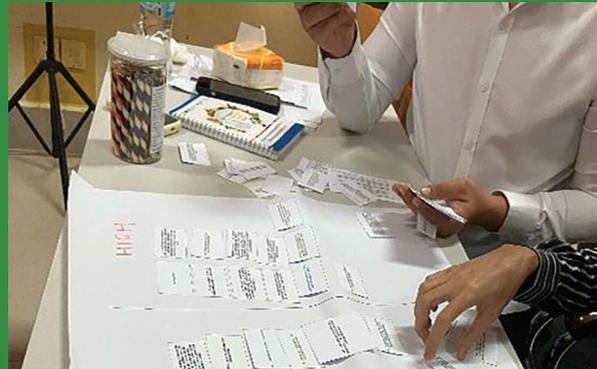
6.4 Dealing with non-compliance

6.4.1 Psychology of punishment

Punishment creates more negative behavior, and can shift a focus to avoiding punishment, often by getting more skilled at not getting caught, rather than making choices based on morals, respect, or love.

Farmers are being asked to comply with practices that if not done correctly will put the produce and their business at risk. But some circumstances may occur where a farmer is not able to comply. It is also common for someone to not get things right first time. To accommodate this three levels of actions (three-strikes and you are out) are taken depending on the level of risk.

Remind	Use checklist to make recommendations to farmer on how to improve practice	Strike 1
Re-educate	Use checklist to identify repeated challenges of farmers and deliver training to help solve problems	Strike 2
Re-enforce	First understand why the problem still occurs. Second decide what reinforcement is needed – fining, temporary suspension, written warning	Strike 3
Out		

7 Step 5 – G-PPP in action

This step involves the ongoing activities that keep the group functioning smoothly. Now that the group is established with a clear destination and direction, it's crucial to maintain momentum through consistent monitoring and regular reporting. These practices ensure that the group stays on track and can address any issues as they arise.

The important thing for the group is to continue collaborating and supporting growth of its members. The tools in this guide are used repeatedly during this step.

The SWOT analysis, for example, can be used for many situations. In Cambodia, for instance, the company was presented with a new business opportunity, the group used the SWOT analysis to identify what they needed to do to meet the market requirements.

The peer-to-peer learning is a great tool to share information but also to identify what training or information is needed by the group. Several farmers in our project expressed interest in sharing their skills, for example in pruning, or record keeping.

The checklist will not be static, market opportunities and requirements will change, risks can change. Observations made during audits may also lead to changes being needed. For example, if many farmers repeatedly fail to comply with a particular criterion it may be necessary to review and modify the requirement, accommodating the local context. The group can work together to review and update the checklist at an agreed period, maybe annually.

Success will require sustained effort. Initially, core members might work on a voluntary basis, but as the group grows, fundraising may become necessary to cover expenses such as meetings, training, and inspections. This could be achieved through membership fees or sales fees to offset costs. Additional funding might also come from supporting organizations like NGOs, foreign agencies, local authorities, or individuals.

Having a well-structured organization that includes both buyers and sellers offers better opportunities for securing loans and attracting investments for future growth. With a solid financial strategy and collaborative structure, the group can support its ongoing activities and pursue new initiatives.

8

8 Summary

The guide brings together all the workshops delivered across three countries between 2021 and 2023 as part of the STDF funded project (STDF/PG/619) Safer spices: food safety and market access for peppercorn in Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR. The guide highlights the value of peer-to-peer learning and collective action, using real-world examples to demonstrate how these concepts work in practice. It emphasizes that successful relationships require an understanding of different perspectives, consistent communication, and a focus on shared goals. Additionally, it discusses the benefits of role-play and other interactive techniques to engage groups and foster meaningful dialogue.

The guide includes various tools and resources to support the G-PPP approach. These resources provide guidance on organizing meetings, creating action plans, and conducting farm audits. The guide ultimately aims to equip practitioners with the skills and knowledge needed to foster meaningful collaborations in the agricultural sector.

Annex 1 Example commitment agreements

Lao PDR Commitment form drawn up by DOA, DAFO, PAFO and Etu Green (2024).

Group name: _____

Code of the
group

Commitment for joining PGS

Name:					
I am a farmer	☐	I am a member of government	☐	I am a member of the company	☐
Address:					
Contact number					

I …………………..….…….. would like to join ……………………..…… PGS group (name of member)
              (Name of group)

I promise to commit to conditions as follows:

1. I will cooperate with other members of the group and fully participate the meetings and trainings which are organized by PGS.	☐
2. I will keep records in accordance with PGS rules. I agree that other members of PGS can check my records.	☐
3. I will follow rules of PGS.	☐
4. I will respect the efforts and decisions made by the intergroup.	☐

I am **a farmer and I** promise to commit to conditions as follows:

5. I will grow my crop in accordance with GAP practice guidelines.	☒
6. I will follow rules of the farmer's group.	☐
7. I agree that other members come to my farm for inspection with advance notice.	☐
8. I will inform the intergroup of any changes to my production practices that are contrary to GAP guidelines and may affect quantity or quality of product.	☐
9. I will be open and honest about any problems on my farm and seek help or advice before using any product that may risk quality and safety of the product and environment.	☐
10. I will accept the decision related to the compliance which is made by the group.	☐

I confirm that the information I provided in this commitment is correct. And I will provide information continuously when any changes happen.

Date ………………
Name of **member**

Date…………………
Name of **Chairman of PGS Group**

…………………………………………
Sign and write down the name

…………………………………………..
Sign and write down the name

Date…………………
Name of **Village head**

…………………………………………..
Sign and write down the name

Annex 2 Example rules and regulations

Rules and Regulations agreed in Cambodia (2024).

<div align="center">

គោលការណ៍ណែនាំស្តីពីការកំណត់ច្បាប់ និងបទប្បញ្ញត្តិសម្រាប់ក្រុម **PGS**

Guidelines on setting rules and regulations for PGS group

</div>

I. សេចក្តីផ្តើម/Introduction

ដើម្បីឱ្យក្រុម PGS គ្រប់គ្រងបានល្អ បទប្បញ្ញត្តិទូទៅ និងច្បាប់ត្រូវតែរៀបចំឡើងដើម្បីផ្តល់ទិសដៅ។ ដើម្បីផ្តល់ការណែនាំពីអ្វីដែលគួរធ្វើ។ សម្រាប់ PGS បទប្បញ្ញត្តិក្នុងការគ្រប់គ្រងទូទៅ និងប្រតិបត្តិការរួមមានសំណុំឯកសារបី ដូចខាងក្រោម/ For a PGS group to be well-managed, general regulations and rules must be developed to give directions on what to do. For PGS, the overall management and operational regulations include three sets of documents:

1. ការណែនាំអំពីប្រព័ន្ធធាតុក្នុងការទទួលរួម (PGS)/Introduction to the system
2. រចនាសម្ព័ន្ធអង្គភាព តួនាទី និងទំនួលខុសត្រូវ/organizational structure and roles and responsibilities
3. តម្រូវការ សិទ្ធិ និងកាតព្វកិច្ចចរបស់សមាជិក/requirements, rights and obligations of members

1. ការណែនាំអំពីប្រព័ន្ធ/Introduction to the system

ផ្នែកនេះផ្តល់ព័ត៌មានទូទៅអំពីក្រុមជាក់លាក់មួយ និងបង្កើតជាមូលដ្ឋាននៃគោលនយោបាយរបស់ក្រុមៗ វាមានព័ត៌មានទាំងអស់ដែលប្រើ ដើម្បីជួយជូនដំណឹងដល់សមាជិកថ្មី/This section provides the general information about a particular group and forms the basis of the group's policy. It contains all the information used to help inform new members.

ឈ្មោះក្រុម: ការជ្រើសរើសឈ្មោះសម្រាប់ក្រុមគួរបង្ហាញពីលក្ខណៈ:ជាក់លាក់។ ប្រភេទផលិតផល ទីតាំងៗ/Name of group: The selection of a name for the group should convey the specific characteristics: type of product, location.

ចក្ខុវិស័យរួមរបស់ក្រុម: ការចក្ខុវិស័យរួមគឺជាអ្វីដែល PGS គ្រោងនឹងសម្រេចបាន និងជាគោលដៅដែលចង់បាន។ ខ្លឹមសារនេះត្រូវបានបង្កើតឡើងក្នុងអំឡុងពេលគ្រូបណ្តុះបណ្តាលចំនួន២ ដែលក្រុមត្រូវបានស្នើឱ្យគូរ ឯកក្រុមវិស័យរបស់ពួកគេ។ ចក្ខុវិស័យរបស់ក្រុមហ៊ុន និងចក្ខុវិស័យរបស់កសិករត្រូវបានបញ្ចូលគ្នាដើម្បីបង្កើតជាចក្ខុវិស័យរួមមួយសម្រាប់ក្រុម PGS ។

Share vision: The shared vision is what a PGS plans to achieve and its desired goals. The content of this is created during the two training sessions where groups are asked to draw their vision. The vision of the company, and the vision of the farmers is then combined to make one shared vision for the PGS group.

ទស្សនៈវិស័យក្រុមកសិករ **Farmer groups' vision**	ទស្សនៈវិស័យក្រុមហ៊ុន **Company's vision**
• សុវត្ថិភាពទៅការផលិត សុវត្ថិភាពនៃគុណភាព សុវត្ថិភាពនៃសុវត្ថិភាព និងសហគមន៍�/Sustainability of productive, quality, safety, community effective.	• ចំការកសិករនឹងឆ្នាយ� ្វTវិញ្ញាបនបត្រូវសុជាងអនៃការអនុវត្តន៍កសិកម្មល្អកម្ពុជា/Farm certify Cam GAP • ផលិតផលគឺមានគុណភាព និងសុវត្ថិភាព/Quality and safety product • អាចនាំចេញទៅកាន់ទីផ្សារអន្តរជាតិ/International market access

បេសកកម្មរបស់ក្រុម: នេះបានពិពណ៌នាអំពីសកម្មភាពដែល PGS ត្រូវធ្វើ ដើម្បីសម្រេចបានចេញនូវចក្ខុវិស័យរបស់ខ្លួនៗ តើក្រុមត្រូវធ្វើអ្វីខ្លះដើម្បីឈានដល់គោលដៅ? **Mission of group:** This described the activities that a PGS needs to conduct to achieve its vision. What must the group do to reach their goal?

ប្រវត្តិ: ប្រវត្តិរួមបញ្ចូលព័ត៌មានអំពីបរិបទ និងកត្តាដែលនាំទៅដល់ការបង្កើត PGS ។ វាជួយឱ្យដំណើរដំណាក់ការមានតម្លាភាព ដោយបង្ហាញប្រវត្តិពីក្រោយ PGSៗ ប្រវត្តិនៃការសង់ដងអគារនាធាតុក្នុងការទទួលរួមគឺ ស្ថិតមានដូចខាងក្រោម/**Background:** The background comprises information about the context and factors that led to the creation of a PGS. It helps make the process transparent, showing the history behind the PGS. The background of a PGS often builds on:

- បំណងប្រាថ្នារបស់អ្នកផលិតដើម្បីភ្ជាប់ផលិតផលរបស់ពួកគេទៅកាន់ទីផ្សារឱ្យកាន់តែប្រសើរឡើង/The desire of producers to better connect their products to the market;
- ការលើកកម្ពស់ផលិតកម្មកសិកម្ម និងជីវភាពរស់នៅរបស់ប្រជាជនមូលដ្ឋាន និងរដ្ឋាភិបាល/The need to enhance the agricultural production and livelihoods of local people and the government;
- គំនិតផ្តួចផ្តើមពីដៃគូសហការក្នុងស្រុក អង្គការក្រៅរដ្ឋាភិបាល អង្គការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ និងក្រុមហ៊ុនឯកជនផ្សេងៗ /Initiatives from local partners, NGOs, development organisations, and/or companies, and;
- ការរួមបញ្ចូលនៃកត្តាទាំងអស់ខាងលើ/The integration of all the factors above.

វិសាលភាពនៃប្រតិបត្តិការ៖ វិសាលភាពនៃប្រតិបត្តិការសំដៅទៅលើដែនកំណត់ប្រតិបត្តិការរបស់ PGSៗ វាអាចត្រូវបានកំណត់តាមរយៈស៊េរីនៃកត្តាមួយក្នុងចំណោមទាំងនោះមាន/Scope of operations: The scope of operations refers to the operational limits of a PGS. It can be determined through a series of factors amongst which:

- លក្ខណៈគ្រួសារកសិករ ក្រុមផលិត និងអន្តរក្រុម(ឧ.ការផលិតកសិកម្មលក្ខណៈគ្រួសារខ្នាតតូច ចំនួនក្រុមផលិត ទំហំផលិតរបស់សហគមន៍)/The characteristics of farming households, production groups, and inter-groups (for example: small scale production households, number of production groups, production scale of the cooperatives);
- ដែនកំណត់ភូមិសាស្ត្រនៃតំបន់ផលិត ឬអន្តរក្រុម (ឧទាហរណ៍៖ ភូមិ ឃុំ បណ្តុំភូមិ)/Geographical limits of the production area or intergroup (for instance: commune, village, group of villages);
- លក្ខណៈផលិតផល/Product characteristics

សិទ្ធិ និងកាតព្វកិច្ចរបស់ **PGS**។ សិទ្ធិរបស់ PGS តែងតែភ្ជាប់មកជាមួយនូវកាតព្វកិច្ចរបស់សុតដងនេះៗ។ ទៅពេលកំណត់អត្តសញ្ញាណ សិទ្ធិ និងកាតព្វកិច្ចរបស់ក្រុម PGS គឺត្រូវតែពិតគួរពីកត្តាខាងក្រោមៗ/**Rights and obligations of PGS:** The rights of a PGS always come together with its obligations. When identifying the rights and obligations of a PGS group, one must take the following factors into account:

- វិសាលភាពនៃប្រតិបត្តិការរបស់ PGS / Scope of operations of the PGS
- វិសាលភាពនៃប្រតិបត្តិការអាជីវកម្ម រចនាសម្ព័ន្ធអង្គភាព មុខងារ និងប្រតិបត្តិការ/Scope of business operations, organisational structure, functions and operations
- ធនធាន និងសម្ភារៈដល់លក្ខួរការ/The resources and materials needed
- នីតិវិធី និងឯកសារទាក់ទងនឹងប្រតិបត្តិការ និងការបង្កើតប្រព័ន្ធ PGSឡើង/The procedures and documentations related to PGS operations and establishment

2. រចនាសម្ព័ន្ធអង្គការ តួនាទី និងការទទួលខុសត្រូវ / Organisational structure and roles and responsibilities

រចនាសម្ព័ន្ធសំខាន់នៃ PGS គឺផ្តោតលាលើការបង្កើតអន្តរក្រុមៗ ក្រុមមួយតំណាងឱ្យភាគីពាក់ព័ន្ធទាំងអស់ដែលចូលរួមក្នុងសកម្មភាព PGS ។ មានតួនាទីមួយចំនួនដែលផ្តល់ឡើងពៅក្នុងអន្តរក្រុម ដែលធានាថា ខ្លួនអាចអនុវត្តកាវទទួលខុសត្រូវរបស់ខ្លួនទៅពរសមាជិកទាំងអស់របស់ខ្លួន/The main structure of the PGS is centred around the formation of an intergroup. A group that represented all stakeholders involved in the PGS activities. There are a number of roles held within the intergroup that ensure it is able to undertake its responsibilities to all its members.

តារាងខាងក្រោមបង្ហាញពីតួនាទី និងការទទួលខុសត្រូវនៃតួនាទីនីមួយៗ។ អ្នកដែលដាក់ខ្លួនឯងឆ្ពោះទៅមុខដើម្បីបំពេញតួនាទីទាំងនេះគួរមានជំនាញចាំបាច់ដើម្បីបំពេញការកិច្ចៗ អ្នកដែលកាន់តួនាទីមួយគួរតែផ្ដាស់ប្ដូរយ៉ាងហោចណាស់រៀងរាល់ពីរឆ្នាំម្តង ដូច្នេះអ្នកគ្រប់គ្នាអាចទទួលបានការបង្ហាញពីសកម្មភាពក្រុមៗ តួនាទីប្រធានអាចជ្រើសរើសពីក្រុមតំណាងផ្សេងៗគ្នារៀងរាល់ពេលវេលាៗ ដូច្នេះប្រហែលឆ្នាំដំបូងគឺក្នុងក្រុមហ៊ុនជាប្រធាន អ្នកបន្ទាប់អាចកសិករ និងអ្នកបន្ទាប់មកទៀតគឺមគ្គុទេសក៍ការកសិកម្មជាបុរស្ថានមូលដ្ឋាន (GDA)/The table below lists the roles and the responsibility of each role. People who put themselves forwards to fulfil these roles should have the necessary skills to do the tasks. In an ideal situation the person in each role should be rotated at least every two years, so that everyone can get exposure to the group activities. The Chairman role could be selected from a different representative group each time. So maybe the first year it is the company representative, then farmer, and then GDA.

តួនាទី/**Key role**	បរិយាយអំពីតួនាទីនីមួយៗ/**Description of role**
ប្រធានគ្រប់គ្រងទូទៅ/Overall leader	សម្របសម្រួលការប្រជុំ សម្របសម្រួលការខ្វែងគំនិតគ្នា ផ្ដល់ឱ្យក្រុមមានសកម្មភាព/Facilitates meetings; mediates disagreements, keep group on mission.
គណនេយ្យករ/Accountant	ទទួលសមាជិកភាពដោយទទួលយកការបង់ថ្លៃ ផ្ដល់វៃចំណូលចំណាយ រាយការណ៍អំពីការប្រជុំប្រចាំខែ/Receiving membership fee; keep accounts; report at monthly meetings.
ប្រធានផ្នែកត្រួតពិនិត្យ/Leader of inspection	សម្របសម្រួលសកម្មភាពត្រួតពិនិត្យ បង្កើតនិងរក្សាកាលវិភាគអធិការកិច្ច រាយការណ៍សកម្មភាពនិងការមិនអនុលោមតាមក្នុងការអនុវត្តន៍របស់សមាជិកនីមួយៗ/Coordinates inspection activity; creates and maintains inspection schedule; report activities and non-compliance at meeting.
ប្រធានផ្នែកបច្ចេកទេស/Leader of Technical	សម្របសម្រួលកាលវិភាគបណ្ដុះបណ្ដាល ណៈនាំអំពីអ្វីដែលអាចប្រើវៃបាន និងមិនអាចប្រើបុ្រាស់បាន សុវែងរកព័ត៌មាន និងចែករំលែកជាមួយក្រុម/Coordinates training schedule; advises on what can be used and not; finds information and shared with group.
ប្រធានផ្នែករៀបចំផែនការ/Leader of Planning	សម្របសម្រួលការរៀបចំផែនការ តាមដាន និងរាយការណ៍អំពីវឌ្ឍនភាព/Coordinates preparation of plan, monitor and reports on progress.

3. តម្រូវការ សិទ្ធិ និងកាតព្វកិច្ចរបស់សមាជិក/Requirements, rights and obligations of members

ការប្រជុំ/Meetings

ការប្រជុំទៀងទាត់ត្រូវតែផ្តល់វៃឡើងដោយអន្តរក្រុមៗ ទាំងនេះអាចសម្រេចដោយក្រុម ប៉ុន្តែគួរតែរួមបញ្ចូលដូចខាងក្រោមៗ/Regular meetings need to be held by the intergroup. These are can decided by the group but should include the following:

- មហាសន្និបាតពេញអង្គជាធម្មតាផ្តល់វៃឡើងរៀងរាល់ ៣ ឬ ៥ ឆ្នាំម្តង ហើយបើកចំហសម្រាប់សមាជិកទាំងអស់/Plenary general assembly usually taking place every 3 or 5 years, and open to all members
- កិច្ចប្រជុំទូទៅប្រចាំឆ្នាំ/Annual general meeting
- កិច្ចប្រជុំទៀងទាត់ដើម្បីពិភាក្សាអំពីបញ្ហា និងផែនការ/Regular meetings to discuss issues and planning
- ការប្រជុំក្រុមតូចសម្រាប់ការត្រួតពិនិត្យកាលវិភាគ និងការផ្តល់ផែនការ/Sub group meetings for inspection scheduling, and planning.
- កិច្ចប្រជុំពិសេស (កិច្ចប្រជុំដែលមិនបានរំពឹងទុក) គួរមានឡើងពៅពេលចាំបាច់ ឬពៅពេលដែលបញ្ហាបន្ទាន់ត្រូវតែដែលបោះស្រាយ ដូចជាការតវ៉ាពីអតិថិជន និងការរំលោភលលើវៃស្តង់ដារផលិតកម្ម/Special meetings (unexpected meetings) are held when required or when urgent issues must be addressed such as complaints from customers, and violations of production standards

ច្បាប់ និងបទបញ្ញត្តិ/**Rules and regulations**

ច្បាប់ និងបទបញ្ញត្តិត្រូវបានឯកភាពដោយអនុក្រុម។ ទាំងនេះគួរតែជាសំណុំនៃគោលការណ៍ណែនាំពីអំពីការប្រព្រឹត្ត ដើម្បីធានាឱ្យមានដំណើរការប្រកបដោយសណ្តាប់ធ្នាប់របស់ក្រុម។ វានឹងមានច្បាប់មួយចំនួនដែលក្រុមយល់ព្រមត្រូវតែបញ្ចូល ហើយច្បាប់ទាំងនោះនឹងល្អមានវិមាន/Rules and regulations are agreed by the intergroup. These should be a set of guiding principles about conduct to ensure that orderly functioning of the group. There will be some rules that the group agrees must be included and those they will be nice to have.

ក្នុងអំឡុងពេលកិច្ចប្រជុំអនុក្រុមដំបូង សំណុំនៃច្បាប់ណែនាំទាំងល្បែបញ្ចូលទាំងអាកប្បកិរិយារបស់សមាជិក និងប្រតិបត្តិការរបស់ក្រុម។ តារាងខាងក្រោមអាចត្រូវបានបញ្ចប់ក្នុងអំឡុងពេលគ្រានេះ/During the first intergroup meeting, a set of guiding rules both covering behaviour of members and operation of the group should be decided on. The follow table could be completed during this session.

ក្រុមនេះក៏ត្រូវសម្រេចចិត្តថាតើនឹងចាត់វិធានការបែបណា ប្រសិនបើការបំពានច្បាប់កើតឡើងវិញ/The group also needs to decide what action will be taken if violation of the rules happens.

ប្រភេទច្បាប់/**Type of rule**	គួរតែរាប់បញ្ចូល/**Must include**	ល្អមានប្រសិនបើមាន/**Nice to have**
អាកប្បកិរិយា/Behaviour		
ការប្រតិបត្តិ/Operational		