

Chapter 12 Monitoring, evaluation and creation of annual plan

12.1 Objectives and procedural outline

The objective of the extension system proposed in this Guidebook is to enable the groups formed by a project to carry out their activities on their own and in a sustainable manner. This chapter presents the methods for monitoring the group activities, evaluating a group's sustainability (maturity), and making an annual plan that incorporates the results of the monitoring and evaluation.

“Monitoring” means a continuous operation of identifying points that need follow-up, collecting afterwards the related information, and comparing the changes that occur in the course of time. Furthermore, in the case of projects, monitoring is done as a means to overcome obstacles in order to achieve the project's purpose. Therefore, the problems that are encountered need to be identified as “monitoring points”, their causes need to be analyzed, and the results need to be incorporated into the activities. The proposed extension system provides a short-term monitoring on a weekly and monthly scale through regular assistance and monthly meetings, respectively, and a medium-term monitoring on a yearly scale through semiannual and annual workshops.

“Evaluation”, on the other hand, means the work of objectively identifying “at what level the groups or beneficiaries are at in achieving the purpose of the project or activity.” This Guideline introduces an evaluation method that uses a sustainability (maturity) indicator matrix with scaled levels, which allows one to analyze the maturing process of the groups, take measures to address their weaknesses, and to make adequate adjustments to the interventions in their activities.

The evaluation results are incorporated into the planning of the next period of activities in the “Workshop for creating the Annual Activity Plan (AAP)”, which is held with the groups to prepare the next activity plan.

12.2 Methodology

12.2.1 Monitoring during the regular assistance

1) Objectives and monitoring points during the regular assistance

The objective of monitoring the group activities during the regular extension assistance to the groups is that by continuously observing their activities one can comprehend what are the problems and issues the groups and their members face in organizational strengthening and in mastering the techniques they learned. It is to also incorporate the results of the observation into these activities in an opportune manner. In contrast to monitoring more formal situations, such as the monthly meetings, this method has the advantage of being able to observe the members and their activities in a more natural environment, which allows one to understand their real situation and problems with more precision. Also, monitoring that is done parallel to activity implementation provides results that can be immediately incorporated into the next activities. Therefore, among all the monitoring methods, monitoring during the regular extension assistance is the most fundamental tool.

The points to be monitored should be the problems that are found in a group's organizational strengthening and in their adoption of the techniques learned. Problems related to mastering the transferred techniques (for example: "failure to do the activities according to the FUP", "poor skills in seedling preparation", "mistakes in making entries in the cashbook", etc.) are easier to identify and find a solution to because a group's level of mastery can be relatively clearly seen according to the issue that was introduced (see Chapters 7, 10 and 11). By comparison, some problems (monitoring points) in organizational strengthening are more difficult to identify because of the ambiguity of the results (or the pending tasks) in relationship to each issue (see Chapter 8). The table below presents various perspectives that can be taken for identifying monitoring points according to the categories for organizational strengthening (see Table 8-1). It is important to also clarify if the problems are prevalent among all the members or only among some, so that the appropriate measures can be taken.

Table 12-1 Perspectives to identify the monitoring points

<p>A-1. Motivation for being a group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Is the group keeping its membership / active members?- Who is participating in the group work and meetings?- Are the group members motivated? <p>A-2. Attitudes for fomenting organization and for managing conflicts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Do members value punctuality and responsibility?- Is the group and its members fulfilling their commitments?- How is the group work being done; who is leading the work?- Are there any problems or concerns in the group's administration?- Is there any internal conflict and is help needed to handle it? <p>A-3. Contribution of women and men in carrying out the group activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Are decisions being made fairly regarding gender?- Do they respect and fulfill the decisions? <p>B-1. Each member's responsibility in managing the group's material and group work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- How are the group's tools being managed?- Who keeps the records, are they being done responsibly and with transparency?- How was what was learned presented to the rest of the group? Did those who went to an event to learn take responsibility to transfer their knowledge when they returned to the group? <p>B-2. Planning, monitoring and evaluating by the participatory method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What are members' attitude toward speaking and listening to opinions? (Who gives their opinion most and who least?)- How is the decision making? (Are decisions being made fairly?)

It is important to remember that the abilities of the extension workers play a crucial role in the quality of the monitoring results because in this method the extension worker needs to be able to clearly identify the problems and pending issues faced by the members he/she monitors. (If the personnel in charge cannot identify the problems, proper measures obviously cannot be taken and the situation could get even worse.) Also, continuous effort is needed to identify new problems that will continue to arise with the advancement of the activities.

2) Monitoring procedure during regular assistance

The procedure for monitoring during the regular assistance to groups is shown below:

STEP 1: Identify the problems

- During the regular extension activities, identify the problems (areas that need improvement) that a group has in achieving the project's purpose.



STEP 2: Continuously observe the problems

- Continue to observe the problems identified during the regular extension activities.
- Detect the causes of the observed problems.



STEP 3: Adjust the activities and observe the changes

- When no improvement is seen, introduce activities to solve the problems or give instructions to improve the situation by considering the cause of the problems.
- Continue to observe (compare) the changes.



STEP 4: Finish the monitoring

- When the monitored members overcome a problem, it can be removed from the monitoring points after a certain period of observation. Continue to observe the other problems.

3) Making a report and using the results

The results of monitoring during the regular assistance should be shared with the project team in the form of a regular assistance report. It is also important to store the results in an orderly manner to be able to follow up on the changes that occur. It would be recommendable for each project to create their own "regular assistance monitoring form" that is modifiable since the points to monitor will differ according to the monitored object.

12.2.2 Monitoring in the monthly meetings

1) Objectives and monitoring points in the monthly meetings

The monthly meeting is a participatory event whose primary objective is to monitor the advancement of a group's activities during the past month, but it is also for monitoring the progress of the organizational strengthening of the group.

Table 12-2 below shows a typical agenda of a monthly meeting with the detailed points to be covered in each section of the agenda. Since the monthly meetings are held periodically and have nearly the same agenda each time, it is recommendable for each project to make a printed form of the agenda, which can be used for taking notes during the meeting. Annex 1 presents the form used for the agenda shown in

Table 12-2, which was developed by the Alhajuela Project. Each project may modify the monthly meeting agenda's content and form according to its purpose.

The advancements made in the month's activities are monitored and noted directly on the agenda (section II a-f) by comparing them to the AAP and the monthly plan made in the previous meeting.

The aspects of organizational strengthening are monitored by observing the participation, opinions and attitudes of the group members in the meeting. The points to be monitored are basically the same as those identified in the regular assistance (Section 12.2.1), but one should observe how these points present themselves during the monthly meeting.

Table 12-2 Agenda and points to be considered in the monthly meeting

Agenda	Points to be considered
I) Introduction	
1. Welcoming address	
2. Religious invocation	
3. Confirmation of attendance 4. Verification of quorum	Pass around the attendance list, if necessary.
II) Main part	
a) Confirmation of activities implemented in the previous month	Identify the activities that were done and compare them to the plan made the month before. Identify any extra work that was done.
b) Perception about short-term or eventual activities in the previous month	Are the activities seen as good or bad? Identify the reasons they are seen as good or bad.
c) Transfer of experience of trainings to the group.	If some members participated in a training session the month before, make sure that their experiences and knowledge are shared with the rest of the group members.
d) Confirmation of activities not implemented in the previous month	Identify the activities that were not done or that are delayed in comparison to last month's plan Identify the reason why they were not done or are delayed.
e) Confirmation of the record books	Check if the group is keeping its records* well. Share the content of the records with members. (Give notice beforehand so that the group could bring 3 records.)
f) Accounting report	Share the information about group income and expenses from the previous month and the current balance.
g) Planning activities to be implemented next month	Make the next month's plan in accordance with the AAP. Coordinate with the project, if needed.
h) Other issues	Discuss the various issues that the group members wish to address.
III) Final part	
1. Date and hour of the next monthly meeting	Set the date and hour for the next monthly meeting.
2. Signing the monthly meeting forms	

* "Attendance List" of the days worked (Group activity participation record); "Farming Record"; and the "Cashbook" in the case of Alhajuela Project.

2) Procedure of monthly meeting

The procedure for the monthly meeting is given below. As mentioned in Chapter 8, the monthly meeting fulfills the dual functions of monitoring and also of organizational strengthening of a group. Therefore, it should be done in a participatory manner by motivating the group members to actively participate and to also lead the meetings themselves.

(At office)

STEP 1: Preparations

- Set the date and hour for the monthly meeting with the group, according to the last activity program, and also remind the group to bring their records to the meeting.
- Prepare a large sheet of Manila paper and two copies of the monthly meeting forms with carbon paper. Review the form filled out during the previous monthly meeting (“previous month’s report”) before leaving the office to confirm the issues that had been discussed.
- Take copies of the previous month’s report, FUP and AAP to the monthly meeting to remind the group members of the activities planned for and to ascertain the advancement or delay in said activities (this function should eventually be transferred to the group members).



(At meeting place)

STEP 2: Prepare the meeting place

- Tape the program (on manila paper) made the month before on a location in front of the members.
- Also tape a large blank sheet (of Manila paper) in front of members for writing the agenda and the discussion results on, so that everyone can see them clearly.
- Chose a person from among the members to take notes on the form.



STEP 3: Carry out the meeting

- Carry out the monthly meeting according to the agenda and forms, with the help of facilitator.
- The facilitator writes the opinions expressed in the meeting on the large sheet of Manila paper.
- En paralelo, la persona seleccionada llena el formato de la reunión mensual. Entre dos copias de la misma página del formato, se puede colocar una hoja de papel carbón, para que se transcriba la misma información del original a la copia. At the same time, one member of the group should fill out the monthly meeting forms. Place a carbon paper between the two forms to make a copy of the information.



STEP 4: Finish the meeting

- Set the date and hour for the next monthly meeting with the group, and also remind the group to bring their records to the meeting.
- When the monthly meeting ends, the original form is given to the group’s secretary for filing and the copy is taken to the project office.
- The large Manila paper that was written upon can be left with the group to serve as a visible reminder of the activities that they planned for the next month.

3) Making a report and using the results

The form to use for the monthly meetings is presented in Annex 1. Once the monthly meeting ends, make sure that no information is missing. Later, the information may be digitalized, if needed. After the meeting, the project staff writes down the results of monitoring the group’s organizational strengthening on the last page of the form. This is shared with the project team and should be stored in an orderly manner as basic data for following up on a group’s process of change.

12.2.3 Monitoring in the semiannual and annual workshops

1) Objectives and monitoring points in the semiannual and annual workshops

The primary objective of the semiannual and annual workshops is to monitor the group activities according to the AAP (Annual Activity Plan) and to identify any pending tasks. Depending on the situation and need of each project other monitoring points can be added as shown in the table below.

Tabla 12-3 Monitoring points in the semiannual and annual workshops

Monitoring points	Preparation / Implementation
Advances in implementing the AAP	This is the main part of the semiannual and annual workshops and is explained in paragraph 2) below.
(Optional) Confirm the record of inputs made by the project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (P) Copy (or print) the record of material acquired for the group by the project. - (I) Confirm the delivery of the material in their respective quantities to the group, compare with the group’s inventory.
(Optional) Perception of the implemented activities in a scale of 3 levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (P) Make a 3-level matrix for interviewing the beneficiaries about their perception of the activities that were done, but which were not momentary (short-term) activities and were not evaluated in the monthly meetings. An example of such a matrix is shown in paragraph 3) below. - (I) Take the matrix to the workshop and interview the members, listen to their opinions and have them vote on each activity on a scale of 3 levels (good, normal, poor), and write down their comments (reasons, suggestions, lessons learned, etc.).
(Optional) Positive and negative characteristics of the group (Only in the semiannual workshop)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (P) Prepare a group analysis matrix, and also a copy of the previous one. An example is shown in paragraph 3) below. - (I) Ask the members what things they liked or did not like about their group. - (I) Have them give their opinions on how to strengthen their group’s positive characteristics (what they liked) and how to improve the negative ones (what they didn’t like). - (I) Compare with a previous group analysis (if the group has one) and see what changes occurred.

(Optional) Confirm the level of mastery of the techniques learned	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (P) The technician in charge uses a form to verify a group’s level of mastery of the techniques introduced to them, by summarizing the observations he/she made during the regular assistance to the group. - (I) Have the group do a self-evaluation of their level of mastery, and compare their results with those of the technician.
(Optional) Self-evaluation of the group using the indicators (see section 12.2.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - (P) The extension worker in charge evaluates a group using the sustainability indicators and summarizing the observations he/she made during the regular assistance to the group. - (I) Have the group do a self-evaluation of their sustainability and compare their results with those of the extension worker.

(P): preparation (I): implementation

The monitoring in the semiannual and annual workshops is done every 6 months, the semiannual workshop held in the middle of the period and the annual workshop at the end of the period. Here, “period” does not necessarily have to be one calendar year of January to December.

The first workshop with a group can be held, regardless of whether it is an annual or semiannual workshop, at any opportune moment during the first period depending on the time that has passed since the group started with the project. The first workshop will always require the preparation of the annual activity plan (AAP) for the next period.

2) Procedure of semiannual and annual workshops

The typical semiannual and annual workshops are carried out according to the procedure shown below. Like the monthly meetings, the semiannual and annual workshops fulfill the dual functions of monitoring and of organizational strengthening of the groups. Therefore, they should be done in a participatory manner by motivating the group members to participate in and to also lead the workshops themselves.

When a workshop is to be held, it is advisable to form a multidisciplinary team from the project, for example composed of three people. One person is the facilitator who helps the group members express their opinions, another person helps to prepare the cards with the group’s opinions, comments or suggestion written on them, and the third person observes and helps the discussion by asking questions about any information that may be missing.

(In the office)

STEP 1: Prepare the workshop material for each group

- Collect information on the activities the project did with the groups from the time of the last workshop up until the present date, for example: the activities on the group farmland, training sessions, tours and workshops, based on the recorded data (details of the work done, dates and number of participants, etc.).

- Make a matrix for confirming the advances made in the implementation of the AAP and review the data with the extension workers in charge of the group.
- Prepare any additional information needed for the workshop according to the agenda (see Table 12-3)



(At the workshop location)

STEP 2: Monitor the optional points, as needed, such as “confirm the record of inputs”, “perception of implemented activities”, “group characteristics”, “level of mastery of techniques” and “self-evaluation using sustainability indicators”.

- Select and carry out these exercises as needed. The points to be considered for preparing and executing optional monitorings are presented in Table 12-3.



STEP 3: Monitor the advances made in implementing the AAP

- Take copies of the FUP and the AAP for the current period, and the data on implementation, which is managed by the extension workers in charge of the group.
- Review the AAP (with the FUP) with the group and confirm the activities that they did and those that are pending (by farm plot, and also confirm any other activities that **do not directly use the farmland**).
- Review the records and discuss how to better in accomplishing the AAP in the next period.
- Discuss the causes of any delays and measures to resolve them.



STEP 4: Modify or create the AAP

- Modify the AAP up until the end of the current period (in the case of the semiannual workshop).
- Create the AAP for the following period (see Section 12.2.5), and confirm with the group whether they intend to do any of the activities that were still pending in the current period (in the case of the annual workshop).

3) Making a report and using the results

The results of the workshop held for each group are prepared into a report that is circulated within the project team. One copy is given to the group. The facilitator and the technical extension staff in charge will discuss on the results and prepare jointly the recommendations for the project team. The contents of the report should be reflected in the planning and implementation of the next activities (see section 12.2.5). The report is prepared in the following manner:

Advances made in implementing the AAP

Table 12-4 shows a case (an extract) from the results of a monitoring done during a semiannual workshop. The advances achieved during the first 6-month period as well as the tasks that were pending are indicated together with their respective causes. It also shows the perspective for modification, when needed, for the next 6 months. The modifications for the second semiannual period should conform with the analysis made of the cause for the delay, changes or failure to fulfill the AAP in the first semiannual period.

Table 12-4 Example of monitoring results at semiannual workshop (extract)

AAP (1) Activities on the group farmland plots, (2) Infrastructure, (3) Animal husbandry	
Name of the plot: La Quebrada Plot Size: 200 square meters	
<i>Plan for this year</i>	
Crops, Begin preparation, Months for planting, Months for harvesting, Conservation techniques to be applied, Crop production goal, Sales goal, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project,	Chili peppers / Green beans. Prepare the beds in January. Plant (chili peppers) in February, May, August, November / (Green beans) in February and April. Harvest (chili peppers) in May, August, November / (Green beans) in April and June. Growing crops in beds, Application of organic fertilizer, natural insect repellent. (Chili peppers) 1,000 units in each harvest / (Green beans) 10 pounds in each harvest. (Chili peppers) 100% for sale / (Green beans) 50% for sale Chili pepper seeds, earthworm fertilizer. Green bean seeds, technical assistance in regular activities.
<i>Accomplished between January and June</i>	
(Chili peppers) The land was cleared, 5 beds were prepared, 13 plants were planted in each bed (65 plants total) in May. The work was delayed due to lack of laborers. (Green beans) This activity was not done because the group decided to plant the green beans in another plot.	
<i>Modifications for July to December</i>	
(Chili peppers) After the harvest in August, the remaining beds will be prepared and more chili peppers will be planted for harvest in November. (Green beans) The crop will be changed from green beans to sweet peppers. To be planted in August and harvested in November.	
Location of the structure: Kitchen	
<i>Plan for this year</i>	
Type of infrastructure, Type of work, Dimension of the infrastructure, Month for doing the work, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	Processing area for making hot sauce. Improvement. Placement of 1 sink with 2 basins and furniture for the sink. April. Some wood for the furniture. Sink and other material for the furniture. Technical assistance in regular activities.
<i>Accomplished between January and June</i>	
The sink was installed. The group obtained the wood, but the furniture was not made because there was no cabinetmaker.	
<i>Modifications for July to December</i>	
The group will contract a cabinet maker to make the furniture in September. Some repairs will be made to the water system in July because problems were discovered with the piping to the sink.	
AAP (4) Organization, (5) Business and Fund, (6) Reinvestment, (7) Various	
<i>Plan for this year</i>	
(Organization) Types of activities, Months for doing the activities, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	Monthly meetings facilitated by the group / Gender Workshop / Semiannual and annual workshops. Every month / April / June and December. Refreshments. Nothing
(Reinvestment) Types of inputs, Quantity needed, Months for acquiring supplies, Means of acquisition	Earthworm fertilizer / Vinegar for the hot sauce / Chili pepper seeds. 50 pounds / 6 gallons / 500 grams. Constantly / Between April and September / Every 3 months. From earthworms raised by the group / Purchase with group fund / Reproduce and purchase.
<i>Accomplished between January and June</i>	
(Organization) All the monthly meetings were done under the group's own facilitation. The gender workshop was held in July instead of April because it was planned jointly with other groups. (Reinvestment) Earthworm fertilizer is being produced, but sometimes the amount is not enough. Vinegar was purchased in May. Chili pepper seeds were purchased, but they were not produced on the farm.	
<i>Modifications for July to December</i>	
(Organization) There are no changes. (Reinvestment) Feed will given to the earthworms more frequently. Alcohol will be bought for making natural insect repellent to protect the other crops on the farm.	

Perception on the activities implemented

The Table 12-5 is an example of a summary of members’ perception of the activities they did. When preparing the report, try to include in the same report all the activities the group did, both the continuous activities and the short-term, momentary activities. Also, include the results from the monthly reports. Even though the entire group may have responded “good” about an activity, one needs to analyze the “comments” part of the form to understand why the group thinks this way. Each activity that the group has done with the project should fulfill the objectives or results that the project hopes for. The group’s comments may be compared with said objectives or hoped for results to better understand their perception.

Table 12-5 Perception on activities implemented: the case of one group (extract)

Implemented Activities		Perception: Numbers chosen their percentage				Comments
		Good	Normal	Poor	No answer	
Long-term (Semiannual) Activities	Monthly meetings facilitated by members	6 (86%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- We learned, we overcame our fear and we developed. - Work was planned, but not carried out.
	Earthworm culture	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- You don't have to buy fertilizer from outside, it sells and is good, we have earthworm feed in the area.
	Assistance to the school garden with seeds and planting vegetables.	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- Not all the parents participate, so we have to go and do the work and other persons who don't do anything get the harvest.
	Contour planting applied to cassava cultivation (preparation, planting, harvest and sales)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- We sold it, ate it, and it was successful, it produced \$40.40 in sales. - The technique used gave the cassava more nutrients. .
	Organic farming	0 (0%)	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- There was a lot of loss with some of the vegetables, we hope to have a good yield and results from the crops that we are still waiting to harvest, because we used organic fertilizer which helped some of them to survive.
Short-term (Monthly) activities	Exchange at "Quebrada Ancha" community	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- We learned to know other group members.
	Exchange on the group farm	7 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	- Because we learned the material, we shared good ideas, the work was completed.

Analysis of group characteristics

An “Analysis of Group Characteristics” is done to identify the measures that could be taken to strengthen a group and to improve their organization. The group may directly mention such measures, or they may be inferred from their opinions. These measures can be introduced as activities to be done with the group, such as holding a training session or workshop or giving assistance to strengthen production and sales. The following chart shows an example of a summary of an analysis of group characteristics.

<p>😊 What things we like on our group? (Positive characteristics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The orientation toward creating a business in the future. - The vision of improving the quality of life. - Taking initiative to do things. - Learning to work as a group. - Benefits and accomplishments that come from training. 	<p>😊 What things we do NOT like on our group? (Negative characteristics)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Keeping unity - Organized, negotiating to reach an agreement. - Recognize the mistakes of the group. - Participation of women in the group.
<p>How can we strengthen these?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Raise more crops to sell. - Promote the farm produce. - Increase the variety of produce. - Obtain profit to strengthen the organization. - Include more women. 	<p>How can we improve these?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of participation in the work. - Difficulty in resolving internal conflicts. - Lack of responsibility. - Failure to transfer what one learned in a training session. - Sincerity in communication. - Greater commitment. - Practice and share what one learned

Figure 12-1 Analysis of group characteristics: the case of one group

12.2.4 Evaluating the groups using sustainability (maturity) indicators

1) Objective of the evaluation

Every project should have indicators for evaluating the state of the groups in regards to the accomplishment of the project’s purpose. This section explains the way to use the sustainability (maturity) indicator matrix with gradations in the evaluation. This method allows one to analyze a group’s maturation process, take measures to address its weaknesses and make the participation in their activities more adequate.

It should be mentioned that evaluating a group’s sustainability by using indicators is a different procedure from monitoring a group’s advancement in their activities. “Evaluation” is to analyze the different aspects (social, teaching, technical, and economic) of a group, whereas “monitoring” is to verify their activities, as explained in Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11.

2) Establishing the indicator matrix with a scale

To carry out the evaluation, a matrix of sustainability (maturity) indicators with a scale of various levels needs to be made. The process for creating a matrix is explained below.

Establishing the indicators

First, the aspects of a group’s sustainability that are to be evaluated are decided upon based on the project’s purpose. In general, three aspects of a group are evaluated: its social, environmental and economic situation. However, each project should decide on the aspects it will evaluate in accordance to its alignment. The aspects are divided into sub-aspects which represent the different particulars of each aspect, and the sub-aspects are further divided into the indicators which are even more specific in content. In order to avoid complications in the evaluation, it would be better to limit the number of indicators for each aspect to a maximum of 10. The total number of indicators should be decided in each project according to its purpose.

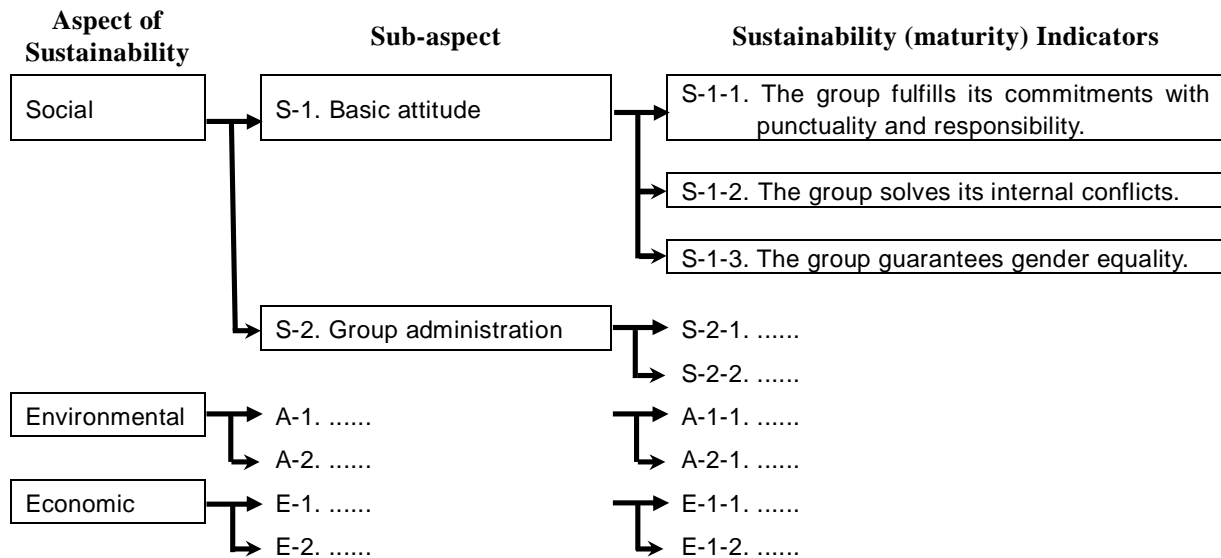


Figure 12-2 Configuration of indicators

It is quite important to select the most representative indicators which illustrate the group’s sustainability toward achievement of the project purpose. This is because an evaluation must provide the basis to benchmark the actual status of each group by their conceivable behaviors, which emerge as results of different activities, being constantly monitored, of the group.

For example, the results of awareness creation and environmental education are expected to appear as

behaviors and practices which are more environment-friendly, as shown in the indicators of environmental aspect. This is why a separate indicator for this field is not established.

It should be mentioned that most of the group sustainability (maturity) indicators are of a qualitative rather than quantitative nature. Each project will have to select appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators. When selecting qualitative indicators, one must carefully examine that each level of the scale is a clearly defined change that leads toward the sustainability of the group (see next paragraph).

Establishment of scale

Each established indicator will be evaluated on a scale of several levels. The scale could have 3 or 6 levels, but for evaluation purposes 5 levels seems to be the most practical. “Level 1” corresponds to the initial stage where no group development has occurred: at the other end is “Level 5”, which is the most advanced level where a group’s sustainability is confirmed.

The following table intends to show an example of both good and bad indicators with a 5-level scale.

Table 12-6 Example of 5-level scale

Scale Indicator	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	
Number of trees planted per year	Less than 50	100	200	300	500	Good (quantitative)
Percentage of women members	0 - 10%	10 - 20%	20 - 30%	30 - 40%	More than 40%	Good (quantitative)
The group obtains outside funds.	The group has no knowledge or experience in applying for outside funds.	The group knows about different outside funds that are available to them.	The group can prepare the application for the outside funds with the project’s help.	The group has the experience of applying for outside funds with the project’s help.	The group can prepare the application for outside funds by themselves.	Good (qualitative)
The group has the ability to manage its funds.	The treasurer manages the funds personally.	Any movement of cash is always recorded in the cashbook.	A bookkeeping report is made regularly in the group meetings	An expenditure plan is made with the help of the project.	An expenditure plan is made and executed in line with the income	Poor (qualitative)

The last indicator seems to have 5 levels that reflect a development in the activities by stages. However, a closer look reveals that you could be fulfilling level 3 without fulfilling level 2 (in fact, there are many groups in such a situation). These levels do not properly express the development of an activity in

successive stages. Furthermore, there is a confusion in the indicator because it combines two different activities: levels 1 to 3 speak of the group's bookkeeping ability, whereas levels 4 and 5 speak of expenditure planning. These are two different activities that should each have their own indicator.

3) Example of the matrix of indicators with scale

The following table shows an example of the matrix of group sustainability (maturity) indicators with 5-level scale established by Alhajuela Project.

Table 12-7 Example of matrix of sustainability indicators with scale established by Alhajuela Project

Sub-Aspect	Indicator	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
S 1. Basic Attitude	S1.1. The group fulfills its commitments with responsibility and punctuality.	Most of the members do not fulfill their responsibility in the group work.	Half of the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work with the project.	Most of the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work with the project.	All the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work chosen by the project.	All the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work chosen by themselves.
	S1.2. The group resolves its internal conflicts.	The group doesn't even try to resolve its conflicts.	The group initiates an attempt to resolve its conflicts.	The group resolves its conflicts with the help of the project.	The group resolves its conflicts by itself.	The group can minimize and resolve its conflicts through good communication.
	S1.3 The group guarantees gender equality.	Female members do not try to, or cannot, state their opinions.	Female members state their opinions, but they are not taken into account in the group decisions.	Female members state their opinions and sometimes they are taken into account in the group decisions.	Female members state their opinions and they are taken into account in the group decisions.	The group respects all the opinions according to their content without regard to gender.
S 2. Group Administration	S2.1. The board of directors functions continuously and follows the rule.	The group cannot form its board of directors.	The group has a board of directors, but it is not functioning.	The group has a board of directors, but only some of the directors fulfill their role	The group has a board of directors and all the directors fulfill their roles.	The group periodically replaces its directors transferring the responsibilities to new directors.
	S2.2. The group keeps its tools, materials and facilities under good control.	The group does not control its tools, materials and facilities.	Some members begin to control their tools, materials and facilities with the help of the project.	Half of the members control their tools, materials and facilities by their own initiative.	Most of the members control their tools, materials and facilities by their own initiative.	By itself, the group controls its tools, materials and facilities in an organized manner.
	S2.3. The group leads its monthly meetings to decide on its activities with the project.	The group does not hold any meeting for deciding on its activities.	The group holds irregular monthly meetings led by the project.	The group holds regular monthly meetings led by the project.	The group begins to lead its monthly meetings while practicing with the project.	By itself, the group leads its monthly meetings monitoring, evaluating and deciding on its activities.
ENV 1. Management of sustainable planning, conservation and farm production	ENV1.1. The group makes its FUP and/or AAP.	The group does not plan any of its activities.	The group has planning of activities in an initial manner.	The group has its FUP agreed upon and the members begin an AAP based on the FUP.	With the help of the project, the group can review, create and modify its FUP and AAP.	By itself, the group can review, create and modify its FUP and AAP.
	ENV1.2. The group implements actions that conform to the FUP and/or AAP.	The group takes action without any reference to the FUP and AAP.	The group takes some actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, and can adjust its direction and pace in the case of lacking conformity.	With the help of the project, the group implements the actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, but cannot achieve the desired outcome.	With the help of the project, the group implements the actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, and achieves the desired outcome.	By itself, the group implements the actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, and achieves the desired outcome.
	ENV1.3. The group is capable of the techniques learned on the group farmland. (see annex form)	The group practices several techniques, but not master them.	By itself, the group masters 25% to 50% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.	By itself, the group masters 50% to 75% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.	By itself, the group masters 75% to 95% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.	By itself, the group masters over 95% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.
	ENV1.4. The group keeps a farming record.	The group does not keep a farming record.	The group keeps a farming record for some crops with the help of the project.	With the help of the project, the group keeps a farming record on almost all the crops.	The group can keep a farming record on some crops without the help of the project.	By itself, the group keeps a farming record on almost all the crops.
	ENV1.5. The group cares for the planted trees.	The group does not take care of the planted trees.	With the help of the project, the group gives irregular and insufficient care to the planted trees.	By itself, the group gives irregular and insufficient care to the planted trees.	By itself, the group takes constant care of the planted trees, but the trees do not achieve the 80% of survival rate.	By itself, the group takes constant care of the planted trees, which achieve the 80% of survival rate.
ECO 1. Economic Management by the Group	ECO1.1. The group creates income through the sale of products and services.	The group does not sell any products or services.	With the help of the project, the group has income from irregular sales.	By itself, the group has income from irregular sales.	With the help of the project, the group has constant income from planned sales.	By itself, the group has constant income from planned sales.
	ECO1.2. The group keeps a bookkeeping record.	The group does not keep a bookkeeping record.	By following the project's instructions, the group begins to keep a bookkeeping record.	With the help of the project, the group regularly and correctly keeps its bookkeeping record.	By itself, the group regularly and correctly keeps its bookkeeping record, but lacks periodical confirmation among the members.	By itself, the group regularly and correctly keeps its bookkeeping record and carries out periodical confirmation among the members.
	ECO1.3 The group uses its income to reinvest.	The group depends on the project for almost all of its needed inputs.	By itself, the group can reproduce and/or obtain some of the inputs needed for crops.	The group reinvests part of the group profit to buy some necessary inputs.	By itself, the group can obtain 75% of the necessary inputs.	By itself, the group can obtain almost all of the necessary inputs.
	ECO1.4. The group obtains outside funds.	The group has no experience or knowledge about applying for outside funds.	The group has knowledge about different alternatives available for outside funds.	With the help of the project, the group can prepare the application for outside funds.	The group has the experience of applying for outside funds with the help of the project.	By itself, the group can prepare the application for outside funds.

Aspects of sustainability: S=social, ENV=environmental, ECO=economic

4) Evaluation using the indicators

Each project may choose the frequency with which they evaluate the groups using the sustainability indicators, but in general it would be good to do at least twice a year to insure the groups are receiving adequate follow-up. The evaluation may be done by project personnel who have the most knowledge about the groups: or by persons from outside the project if you wish to have greater objectivity. In the case of using outside people, you will have to prepare material for them to inform them about the groups and the project's activities. The matrix is used for evaluation, placing a mark on the level that best represents the group's current state in each indicator (see example below).

On the other hand, the group members by themselves can also carry out the self-evaluation as an activity of organizational strengthening, using the occasions of semiannual and annual workshops.

Table 12-8 Example of the result of evaluation: one group of Alhajuela Project

Sub-Aspect	Indicator	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
S 1. Basic Attitude	S1.1. The group fulfills its commitments with responsibility and punctuality.	Most of the members do not fulfill their responsibility in the group work.	Half of the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work with the project.	Most of the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work with the project.	All the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work chosen by the project.	All the members fulfill their responsibility in the group work chosen by themselves.
	S1.2. The group resolves its internal conflicts.	The group doesn't even try to resolve its conflicts.	The group initiates an attempt to resolve its conflicts.	The group resolves its conflicts with the help of the project.	The group resolves its conflicts by itself.	The group can minimize and resolve its conflicts through good communication.
	S1.3 The group guarantees gender equality.	Female members do not try to, or cannot, state their opinions.	Female members state their opinions, but they are not taken into account in the group decisions.	Female members state their opinions and sometimes they are taken into account in the group decisions.	Female members state their opinions and they are taken into account in the group decisions.	The group guarantees gender equality according to their own interest without regard to gender.
S 2. Group Administration	S2.1. The board of directors functions continuously and follows the rule.	The group cannot form its board of directors.	The group has a board of directors, but it is not functioning.	The group has a board of directors, but only some of the directors fulfill their role.	The group has a board of directors and all the directors fulfill their roles.	The group has a board of directors transferring their responsibilities to new directors.
	S2.2. The group keeps its tools, materials and facilities under good control.	The group does not control its tools, materials and facilities.	Some members begin to control their tools, materials and facilities with the help of the project.	Half of the members control their tools, materials and facilities by their own initiative.	Most of the members control their tools, materials and facilities by their own initiative.	By itself, the group controls its tools, materials and facilities in an organized manner.
	S2.3. The group leads its monthly meetings to decide on its activities with the project.	The group does not hold any meeting for deciding on its activities.	The group holds irregular monthly meetings led by the project.	The group holds regular monthly meetings led by the project.	The group holds regular monthly meetings while preparing the project.	By itself, the group leads its monthly meetings monitoring, evaluating and deciding on its activities.
ENV 1. Management of sustainable planning, conservation and farm production	ENV1.1. The group makes its FUP and/or AAP.	The group does not plan any of its activities.	The group has planning of activities in an initial manner.	The group has a FUP and the members begin to implement it based on the FUP.	With the help of the project, the group can review, create and modify its FUP and AAP.	By itself, the group can review, create and modify its FUP and AAP.
	ENV1.2. The group implements actions that conform to the FUP and/or AAP.	The group takes action without any reference to the FUP and AAP.	The group implements actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, and can adjust its direction of actions in the case of lacking coordination.	With the help of the project, the group implements the actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, but cannot achieve the desired outcome.	With the help of the project, the group implements the actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, and achieves the desired outcome.	By itself, the group implements the actions which conform to the FUP and AAP, and achieves the desired outcome.
	ENV1.3. The group is capable of the techniques learned on the group farmland. (see annex form)	The group practices several techniques, but not master them.	By itself, the group masters 25% to 50% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.	By itself, the group masters 50% to 75% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.	By itself, the group masters 75% to 95% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.	By itself, the group masters over 95% of the techniques that were introduced by the project.
	ENV1.4. The group keeps a farming record.	The group does not keep a farming record.	The group keeps a farming record for some crops with the help of the project.	With the help of the project, the group keeps a farming record on almost all the crops.	The group can keep a farming record on some crops without the help of the project.	By itself, the group keeps a farming record on almost all the crops.
	ENV1.5. The group cares for the planted trees.	The group does not take care of the planted trees.	With the help of the project, the group gives irregular and inefficient care to the planted trees.	By itself, the group gives regular and sufficient care to the planted trees.	By itself, the group takes constant care of the planted trees, but the trees do not achieve the 80% of survival rate.	By itself, the group takes constant care of the planted trees, which achieve the 80% of survival rate.
ECO 1. Economic Management by the Group	ECO1.1. The group creates income through the sale of products and services.	The group does not sell any products or services.	With the help of the project, the group has income from irregular sales.	By itself, the group has income from irregular sales.	With the help of the project, the group has constant income from planned sales.	By itself, the group has constant income from planned sales.
	ECO1.2. The group keeps a bookkeeping record.	The group does not keep a bookkeeping record.	By following the project's instructions, the group begins to keep a bookkeeping record.	With the help of the project, the group regularly and correctly keeps its bookkeeping record.	By itself, the group regularly and correctly keeps its bookkeeping record, but lacks periodical confirmation among the members.	By itself, the group regularly and correctly keeps its bookkeeping record and carries out periodical confirmation among the members.
	ECO1.3 The group uses its income to invest.	The group depends on the project for almost all of its needed inputs.	By itself, the group can obtain some of the needed inputs for crops.	The group reinvests part of the group profit to buy some necessary inputs.	By itself, the group can obtain 75% of the necessary inputs.	By itself, the group can obtain almost all of the necessary inputs.
	ECO1.4. The group obtains outside funds.	The group does not have knowledge about applying for outside funds.	The group has knowledge about different alternatives available for outside funds.	With the help of the project, the group can prepare the application for outside funds.	The group has the experience of applying for outside funds with the help of the project.	By itself, the group can prepare the application for outside funds.

4) Making a report and using the results

The evaluation results are digitalized and shared with the project team and the evaluated group. These products should be stored in an orderly manner as basic data for following up on a group's process of change.

One of the advantages of this method of evaluation using a matrix is that the sustainability level of a group's different aspects can be seen at one glance. Also, a group's process and speed of maturation can be analyzed on the chronological axis so that measures can be taken to address the weaknesses that are identified, and make the interventions in the following activities more adequate.

12.2.5 Creating the Annual activity Plan (AAP)

1) Objectives for making an AAP

The primary objective for making an AAP is to have a common understanding between the group and the project concerning the activities that will be done in a given year. The AAP includes detailed data that serves as a guide for the daily, weekly and monthly activities of both parties.

Also, creation of AAP is part of the general curriculum of group strengthening (see Chapter 8), where it returns to the step of "follow-ups of group activities" so that the cycle would continue.

It should be remembered that the AAP is a detailed action plan for one year, whereas the Farmland Use Plan (FUP) is a master plan to guide the organized use of the farmland for 3 to 5 years (see Chapter 7). In theory, there should not be any conflicts between the FUP and the AAP.

At the end, or beginning, of a period, a workshop for preparing the AAP is held with the group. Often times, this workshop may be held immediately after the annual monitoring workshop. In the case of semiannual workshop, modification of the PAA for the remaining 6 months will be discussed, based on the achievements and failures in the first 6-month period.

2) Procedure of the AAP workshop

(At office)

STEP 1: Prepare materials for workshop by each group

- Prepare the report of annual workshop and review the part of the advance in implementation of AAP, making comparison with other additional data which are managed by extension staffs.
- Draw a matrix on manila paper to make the draft of AAP for next period. Divide the activities in the following categories: (1) Activities on the group farmland plots, (2) Infrastructures, (3) Animal husbandry, (4) Organization, (5) Business and fund, (6) Reinvestment, (7) Various.



(At workshop place)

STEP 2: Reviewing the lessons learned from the implementation of the previous AAP

- Discuss with the group, based on the report of annual workshop, the causes for failure, delay and changes occurred during the implementation of the AAP, for the purpose of contributing to make next AAP more practical.
- In this workshop, from this step on, the FUP should always be referred to as the long-term master plan, so that there might not be conflicts between AAP and FUP.



STEP 3: Preparing an activity matrix as a draft AAP

(1) Activities on the group farmland plots, (2) Infrastructures, (3) Animal husbandry

- Discuss and determine the following points for each plot of the group farmland:
 - (1) Crops; Beginning of preparation; Months for planting and harvesting; Conservation techniques; Goal of crop production and sales; Contribution from the group and from the project
 - (2) Type and dimension of the infrastructure; Months for doing the work; Contribution from the group and from the project
 - (3) Species; Months for beginning and harvesting; Goal of production and sales; Contribution from the group and from the project

(4) Organization, (5) Business and fund, (6) Reinvestment, (7) Various

- Discuss and determine the following points as group activity:
 - (4) Type of activity; Months for doing the activity; Contribution from the group and from the project
 - (5) Type of activity; Months for doing the activity; Contribution from the group and from the project
 - (6) Type of inputs; Quantity needed; Months for acquiring the supplies; Means of acquisition
 - (7) Type of activity; Months for doing the activity; Contribution from the group and from the project

It is important to remember that the planning often becomes ambitious resulting in a workload that is beyond the beneficiary's capacity to carry out. To avoid such situations, the project's technical personnel and the beneficiary should have correct knowledge about the different crops, such as the farming calendar (sowing and harvest seasons), proper crop management techniques, expected yields, laborers needed and their availability, and the type and amount of materials that will be needed. There should also be a database of the unit prices and suppliers of the different materials, which should be updated regularly.

See the Annex 7.1 for some restricting factors for planning that should be taken into account.

3) Making a report and using the results

The draft made in the workshop will be written down in a pre-established form of AAP (see Annex 1) as shown in the Table 12-9. It is important to remember the seven basic methods for learning (see Table 8-2) to indicate which would be most adequate for carrying out the planned activities.

The extension staffs in charge of the group will do a technical review of the plan to clarify any questionable points regarding the feasibility of the planned activities. If any modifications are necessary, they should return to the group to discuss them with the group. Finally, produce the final version of the AAP and give a copy to the group.

Table 12-9 Example of the AAP of one group of Alhajuela Project (extract)

AAP (1) Activities on the group farmland plots.		<i>* This section (1) should be done for each plot.</i>
Name of the plot: La Quebrada		Plot Size: 200 square meters
Crops, Begin preparation, Months for planting, Months for harvesting, Conservation techniques, Crop production goal, Sales goal, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project,	Chili peppers / Green beans. Prepare the beds in January. Plant (chili peppers) in February, May, August, November / (Green beans) in February and April. Harvest (chili peppers) in May, August, November / (Green beans) in April and June. Growing crops in beds, Application of organic fertilizer, natural insect repellent. (Chili peppers) 1,000 units in each harvest / (Green beans) 10 pounds in each harvest. (Chili peppers) 100% for sale / (Green beans) 50% for sale Chili pepper seeds, earthworm fertilizer. Green bean seeds, technical assistance in regular activities.	
AAP (2) Infrastructure		
Location of Infrastructure: Addition to the kitchen		
Type of infrastructure, Type of work, Dimension of the infrastructure, Month for doing the work, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	Processing area for making hot sauce. Improvement. Placement of 1 sink with 2 basins and furniture for the sink. April. Some wood for the furniture. Sink and other material for the furniture. Technical assistance in regular activities.	
AAP (3) Animal husbandry		
Location of the area for animal husbandry: To be decided		
Species, Month for beginning, Month for harvesting, Production goal, Sales goal, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	Iguana or paca (<i>Conejo pintado</i>) (only an idea). (Lecture) May, (Tour) June - - - Lecture on how to raise small animals, Tour to a successful animal husbandry site.	
AAP (4) Organization		
Types of activities, Months for doing the activities, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	Monthly meetings facilitated by the group / Gender Workshop / Semiannual and annual workshops. Every month / April / June and December. Refreshments. Nothing	
AAP (5) Business and Fund		
Types of activities, Months for doing the activities, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	Workshop on the business plan / Change of signer for the bank account / Sales in the community fair. Between February and June / August / December. Refreshments / Nothing / Farm products from the group farmland and individual farms. Workshop facilitator / Transportation and accompanying to the bank / Transportation of farm products.	
AAP (6) Reinvestment		
Types of inputs, Quantity needed, Months for acquiring supplies, Means of acquisition	Earthworm fertilizer / Vinegar for the hot sauce / Chili pepper seeds. 50 pounds / 6 gallons / 500 grams. Constantly / Between April and September / Every 3 months. From earthworms raised by the group / Purchase with group fund / Reproduce and purchase.	
AAP (7) Various		
Types of activities, Months for doing the activities, Contribution from the group, Contribution from the project	2 exchanges (1 for planting chili peppers, 1 invitation) / Lecture on environmental education at the school. May and November / Once, between August and October. Food for participants / Some material for the lecture. Transportation of participants / Supporting material for the lecture, Refreshments for students.	

			jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec
Activities on group farmland plots	"La Quebrada" plot	Chili peppers	Pr	PI			H/PI			H/PI			H/PI	
		Green beans	Pr	PI		H/PI	H							
Infrastructure	Area for processing hot sauce.													
Animal husbandry	Lecture, tour													
Organization	Monthly meetings facilitated by the group													
	Semiannual workshop and Annual workshop													
	Gender workshop													
Business and Fund	Workshop for the business plan													
	Change of signer for bank account													
	Sales in community fair													
Reinvestment	Earthworm fertilizer													
	Vinegar for hot sauce													
	Chili pepper seeds													
Various	Exchanges													
	Lecture on environmental education at the school													

It is very important that both the project team and the beneficiary groups understand that the AAP becomes the base for estimating the budget for the next year. Therefore, all the material requests a group makes will be reviewed to see if they are in line with the group’s AAP. (In other words, the project should not accept any requests from a group for an activity that is not planned for in the AAP).

12.3 Inputs needed

With the exception of the “monitoring through regular assistance” and “evaluation of the group using the sustainability indicators”, which is done by project personnel, all the activities in this chapter are carried out in collaboration with the groups (in meetings and workshops). Therefore, someone is needed to serve as a facilitator. Basically, only office supplies are needed for these activities. Depending on the custom of the local people, or on the group’s time restriction, it may be necessary to prepare lunch for the participants. In such case, the project will have to include the cost of lunch in its budget.

Besides these inputs, a certain amount of time is needed to edit the evaluation results (and to digitalize them if needed). The time needed for editing and digitalizing the results varies depending on the amount of information generated, but as an average half-a-day (for monthly meetings) to one or two days (in the case of semiannual / annual workshops) are needed per group.

Activity	Personnel	Time	Material and Costs
Monitoring in the regular assistance	Personnel in charge of the group activities	Variable	Nothing special
Monitoring in the monthly meetings	1 Facilitator, Extension staffs in charge	Approximately 1-2 hours × 12 times / year	Manila paper, markers, adhesive tape, 2 copies of the form, carbon paper, attendance list, copy of the report of previous meeting and AAP
Monitoring in the semiannual and annual workshops	1 Facilitator, Extension staffs in charge of different components	1 day × 2 times / year	Manila paper, markers, adhesive tape, cards or pieces of craft paper; Ingredients for lunch (Approximately \$20 each time)
Group evaluation using the indicators	Extension staffs in charge	1 day × 2 times / year, as minimum	Nothing special
Workshop for making an AAP	1 Facilitator, Extension staffs in charge of different components	1 day × 1 time / year (This may be held on the same day with the annual monitoring workshop)	Manila paper, markers, adhesive tape; Ingredients for lunch (Approximately \$20 each time)