

B. The needs and priorities assessment tool

The assessment tool below is a condensed version of the methodology used by researchers in Kenya on behalf of the ETI Smallholder Project Group. It aims to establish the characteristics, needs and priorities of smallholders and their workers. Chapter 3, section 3.4 gives background information on why the method is recommended.

This tool is intended for use by independent and appropriately qualified assessors acting on behalf of any organisation, but particularly on behalf of companies purchasing from smallholders. The tool is not designed for use by those without experience or qualifications in social research techniques (see section B.2 below for further details).

B.1 Introduction and terms of reference

This tool is designed to establish the characteristics, needs and priorities of smallholders and their workers. It comprises:

- a questionnaire designed for use with smallholders;
- two sets of guidelines for conducting focus group discussions (FGDs), the first for use with smallholders, the second for use with their workers.

A facilitator should conduct the FGDs and a scribe should keep a record of the discussions. FGDs are informal and conversational interviews, and they should be based around the provisions contained in the guidelines below. Ideally, FGDs should include six to eight participants and should be relatively homogenous (for example, single-sex groups). FGDs should also include group exercises, during which the group is asked to visually depict key issues raised in the discussion. Exercises include mapping and pictorial ranking of key issues. They provide a complement to a questionnaire survey since the information derived from questionnaires can be used as a springboard to more extensive discussions in groups.

Ensure that a large enough sample of smallholders and their workers is selected so that realistic inferences can be drawn from the results of the questionnaires and FGDs. Such a sample should have a minimum of 30 participants. The selection of the sample should also relate to the diversity of the population.

The facilitator must ensure that participants understand the terms of the assessment. It must be clear that this is an information-gathering exercise, so that participants' expectations are not raised as a result of the assessment.

The results of the assessment should be compiled into a report, highlighting the situation, needs and priorities of smallholders and workers. The report should also indicate the solutions proposed by smallholders and workers to their own problems. The confidentiality of all smallholders and workers who participate in the assessment must be respected. Therefore, personal information (for example, names or place of origin) should be removed and must not be shared in the final report. A brief summary of the outcome of the assess-



ment (for example, good practice or areas where improvements need to be made) should be fed back to the smallholders. An appropriate forum would be the communication channels (such as meetings, notice boards) used by the purchaser to provide information to smallholders.

B.2 Who is qualified to carry out such assessments

The facilitator will need to be able to conduct interviews and focus group discussions with smallholders, analyse the data collected and write a report highlighting the needs and priorities of smallholders, including recommendations. The skills required include the ability to work sensitively with smallholders, social research skills, and oral and written fluency in the relevant local language.

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

1. Knowledge of the agriculture sector and in particular of local smallholder farming systems.
2. Knowledge of codes of conduct and labour standards covering smallholders.
3. Experience, knowledge and understanding of international labour rights and ethical trade.
4. Understanding of the local socio-economic and political context, including relevant local culture and customs.
5. Knowledge and experience of conducting questionnaire surveys and focus group discussions.
6. Data analysis experience.
7. Report writing experience.

WHERE TO FIND APPROPRIATELY QUALIFIED FACILITATORS

Suitable facilitators can be found in several organisations in most countries, though some organisations are more likely to have a pool of such expertise, facilitating a much wider choice. The following organisations can be considered when shopping around for such expertise:

- academic research institutions such as universities (specifically in the humanities and social science faculties, including departments of development studies, geography and sociology);
- national research bodies (for example, in Kenya, this would include the Kenya Institute of Public Policy (KIPRA) and Tegemeo Institute for Agricultural Development and Policy);
- NGOs and trade unions that have substantial experience of working with smallholders in a business context and in undertaking research and social auditing.

B.3 Introduction by the facilitator

The facilitator(s) should introduce themselves, explain who they are and use the introduction below each time the questionnaire is administered and before each FGD session.

B.3.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT

- This assessment seeks to establish the characteristics, needs and priorities of smallholders and their workers who are supplying products to company X.
- The information gathered will provide guidance to the company on improving labour conditions with smallholders and their workers.
- This assessment is being carried out on behalf of company X, a supplier to company Y, which sells your goods to customers in the UK. Company Y is a member of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) in the UK (where applicable).

- ETI is an alliance of companies (including major retailers and suppliers to UK markets), trade union organisations, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It aims to assist workers throughout global supply chains to secure their fundamental rights by ensuring that they are treated in accordance with international labour standards.
- ETI has a code of labour standards, based on internationally recognised labour standards, which its members are committed to. This is known as the ETI Base Code. All ETI members are committed to taking action to implement those standards across their supply chains.
- ETI company members and their suppliers are committed to addressing labour standards issues with all the producers they buy from, including smallholders. As a result, ETI has developed guidelines on how to improve the working conditions of smallholders and their workers.
- As part of this commitment, company X is seeking to understand how to improve labour standards for the smallholders and workers they buy from. Company X is gathering information from their smallholders and workers so that they can find out how to improve their and your practices together.

B.4 Model questionnaire for use with smallholders

The questionnaire survey should precede the FGDs that will be conducted with the smallholders and their workers in separate groups. The smallholders should be reassured that their information will remain confidential. Identities of all participants must be kept confidential from all except those undertaking the assessment.

Name of smallholder:	Location of farm:
Date of assessment:	Name and contact details of assessor:
<hr/>	

1 Characteristics of smallholder

Gender:	Age:
Marital status:	Level of education:
Number of children on the farm below [X] years of age (age must correlate with ILO standards on minimum working age as they apply in each country. Developing country exceptions may apply).	
Number of children on the farm above [X] years of age	

2 Farm characteristics

Size of farm	
Product(s) supplied	
Other cash crops grown	
Distance from the farm to the buying/collection centre	



3 Workers and their status

Please indicate in the table below the number of people who work on the farm by gender, age, worker status and the average number of hours each person works on a daily basis.

	Gender M/F	Age	Working hours per day		Worker status (see key below)
			Peak season	Low season	
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

Key: working owner = WO; permanent labourer = PL; casual labourer = CL; unpaid family = UF; paid family = PF

4 Labour conditions and the working environment

Do workers have a contract?	
Type of contract (written or verbal)	
Does the smallholder keep a record of payments made to workers?	
How is payment made to workers (cash and/or kind?)	
Does the smallholder belong to a trade union or small-scale farmers' association? If so, give name of union/association	
Do the workers belong to a trade union or workers' committee?	
What health hazards and risks are associated with the cultivation of this export crop?	
Where do those working on the farm get drinking water from?	
Where do those working on the farm wash after work?	
Do those who spray pesticides or handle chemicals on the farm have personal protective equipment (PPE)?	
Is there a pesticide/chemical store?	
Has the company ever arranged a health check for the smallholder and their workers?	
Description of the type of health check and persons whose health was checked	
Frequency of health check (eg, annually, every two years etc)	
Do the smallholder and workers receive training on the crop/s grown?	
Description of type, frequency and source (eg, from company, government agricultural officers) of training received	
Who are more likely to be trained – men or women?	
What are the criteria for selection for training?	

5 Production characteristics

Does the smallholder have a written contract for the supply of produce?	
Does the smallholder understand the terms and conditions of the contract?	
Description of the contents of the contract	
Has the income from the relevant export crop improved the smallholder's household income? (eg, construction of better houses, improved household nutrition, able to take children to school)	
What kind of problems does the smallholder experience in producing the relevant export crop? (eg, high labour costs, regularity of sale to the contractor, delay in payments or fluctuation of prices)	
Does the smallholder know how and where their produce is eventually sold? (Describe the smallholder's knowledge of the supply chain, eg, does s/he know that the product reaches UK supermarkets?)	

B.5 Guidelines for focus group discussions with smallholders

The focus group discussions (FGDs) should be conducted with smallholders in separate single-sex groups. The following is merely a guideline; it does not always list specific questions but gives areas to be probed and should be used as flexibly as possible. Ideally the FGDs should follow the questionnaire survey. In that way, issues that have not been included in the following guideline, but which have come up from the survey, can then also be included in the FGDs.

1 Introductions (15 minutes)

Facilitator and scribe introduce themselves and explain:

- who they are and why they are conducting the focus group discussion (FGD)
- the purpose of the assessment and the aims of ETI (see B.3)
- that participants' input is confidential
- that involvement is voluntary and participants are free to leave at any time if they need to.

Participants then introduce themselves.

2 Discussion of issues

2.1 Demographic characteristics and the agricultural calendar

The aim here is to establish who does what on the farm and how much time farming activities take. Following a discussion of the questions below, the facilitator demonstrates to the participants how to map out their activities.

- What is the age and other demographic characteristics (gender, marital status, level of education, number of children of smallholders)?
- What acreage do smallholders farm, what portion of land is under the contract crop/s and how many years has the contracted crop been produced?
- What are the farming activities of members of the household? How long do they take, and who does them?
- Who is responsible for hiring labour? Who grows different crops on the farm? Who sells them? Where and how are they sold? Who gets paid?



Following a discussion of the questions above, the assessor demonstrates how to map out participants' activities.

2.2 Cost-benefit analysis of cash crops

This discussion aims to identify the different cash crops grown, the cost of labour, other inputs and prices. Participants use the wheel ranking tool to rank the crops in order of importance.

- Agree on the list of cash crops (facilitators should assist participants with this based on what has been said during the discussion).
- Agree on all the costs of growing the crop/s – prompt for inputs such as seeds, wages, transport, agro-chemicals, providing facilities such as washing facilities.
- Discuss whether prices cover all the inputs and whether the cash crop has improved farm income.
- Agree on ranks of crops, taking time to probe for confirmations and contradictions from all participants. The most important crop should be listed first.
- Draw the outline of a ranking wheel (an example is shown below). Participants present this information visually, by completing the wheel according to the agreed ranking.

2.3 Wealth ranking

Participants should discuss their ideas of indicators of wealth and rank themselves and others in their community to indicate how their position has changed since they started growing crops for export. The following prompts can be used to initiate the discussion.

- What makes one person better off than the other? Wealth indicators might include animal ownership, type of house, size of household, farm size, bicycle or ox-cart ownership, gifts from relatives and so on.
- Participants should categorise groups from richest to poorest. They should be encouraged to have as many categories as they deem fit to their local situation, for example the poorest could be subdivided into poor and most deprived. Alternatively this could be based on men and women and landed and landless.
- Participants should be asked to rank themselves using these groups, both before and after they started selling to the contractor.

2.4 Constraints and problems facing smallholders

- What problems do smallholders (both male and female) most frequently face in the production of the contracted crop/s?
- How is risk (such as fluctuating prices and poor harvests) spread out among the smallholders and the contractors?
- Do smallholders have a written contract? If not, discuss why not and probe whether they have ever had one in the past. What are its contents? Do they have a copy of the contract?

Following a discussion of the questions above, use the wheel to rank problems in order of importance.

- What are some of the possible solutions to the problems facing smallholders?

2.5 Knowledge of the supply chain

This should indicate what participants understand about the supply chain and where they get information from.

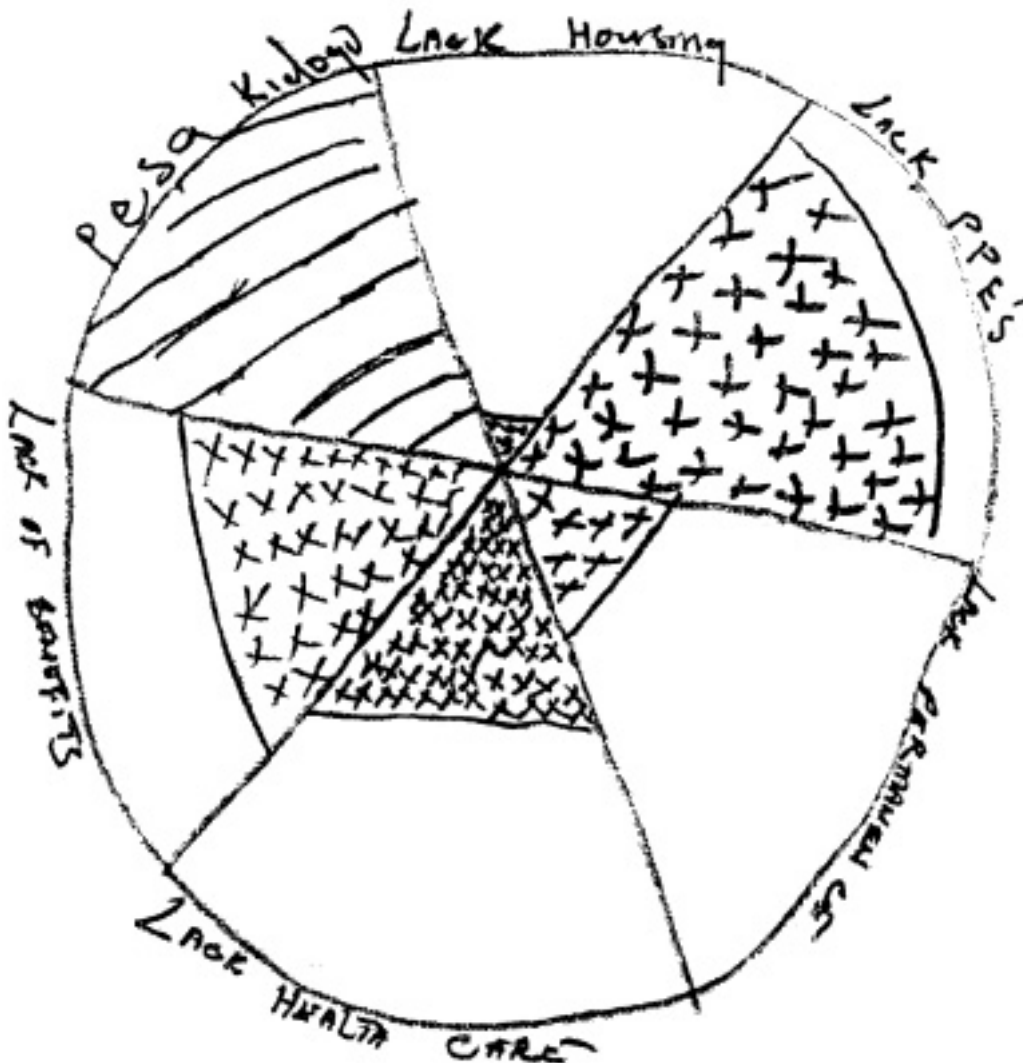
- Participants should explain what they think happens to the crop/s from the time the produce is harvested until it reaches the end consumer.
- Discuss the advantages and/or disadvantages of the supply chain.
- Ask how participants know about the supply chain.
- Discuss whether communication from the contractor is adequate on issues such as prices, contracts and general information.

An example of a wheel ranking tool is shown opposite. During focus group discussion, participants list issues of concern to them and then fill in the wheel according to the priority that they give those issues. This example is a completed wheel ranking exercise

from research carried out in Kenya as part of this project. The workers identified six issues, so the wheel has six segments. The infill indicates the priority attached to each issue. For more information on using wheel ranking tools, see *Participatory social auditing of labour standards: a handbook for code of practice implementers* by Diana Auret of the Agricultural Ethics Assurance Association of Zimbabwe, 2002.

Ranking of problems by male tea workers

Problems	Rank
• Insufficient wages (Pesa kidogo)	1
• Lack of PPE	2
• Lack of benefits	3
• Lack of healthcare	4
• Low permanence	5
• Lack of housing	6





B.6 Guidelines for focus group discussions with workers

These should be conducted with workers in separate single-sex groups. The following is merely a guideline and should be used as flexibly as possible to include issues which may be location-specific. For example, issues raised by the smallholders in the questionnaire survey or in the FGDs with smallholders could be probed further in these discussions.

1 Introductions (15 minutes)

Facilitator and scribe introduce themselves and explain:

- who they are and why they are conducting the focus group discussion (FGD)
- the purpose of the assessment and the aims of ETI (see B.3)
- that participants' input is confidential
- that involvement is voluntary and participants are free to leave at any time if they need to.

Participants then introduce themselves.

2 Discussion of issues

Demographic characteristics of workers and the working calendar

- Ask the workers about their age and status (whether they are permanently employed and whether or not they are migrant workers). Document their gender.
- Ask them to describe their activities (for example, weeding, picking, pruning and so on) and how much time this takes in a normal farming year.

The facilitator demonstrates how to map out their activities.

Ranking exercise of general issues

The aim of this discussion is to probe for workers' concerns and their order of importance. Probe to find out the real cause/root of each problem, rather than just getting a description of the problem itself.

- Discuss concerns (facilitator should assist them with this based on what they have said during the discussions above, and prompt for likely issues if necessary – see below).
- Agree ranks for these concerns taking time to probe for confirmations and contradictions from all participants.
- Complete the wheel according to the agreed ranking.

PROMPTS MIGHT INCLUDE:

Wages

- Are they sufficient for workers to cover their needs?
- Are they paid promptly?

Safe and hygienic working environment

- Are they provided with PPE when working with chemicals?
- How are safe working procedures for workers identified and explained to them?
- Have they undergone training or health checks?
- Is there a first aid kit on the farm, do workers know its whereabouts and how to use it in case of an accident?
- Does the farm have washing facilities and drinking water?



Contracts

- What type of contract do workers have with the smallholder (verbal or written) and do they understand the nature of the contract?
- Are they hired directly by the smallholder or contracted by somebody else?

Working environment

- Can all workers complete the work allocated in the time allowed?
- Do they work overtime and are they paid for it?
- Do they have rest days?
- Is there discrimination (for example based on gender or ethnicity)?
- Are workers unionised?
- What communication channels exist between the workers and smallholders?

Other issues

- To include any suggested by the workers.