

Manual scorecard Community Empowerment & Group capacity

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1 Why this scorecard

The interventions of organisations supported by Red een Kind often include work with groups of people. Groups of youths, farmers, community members, women, parents, or others. While such groups often have specific purposes, they often also have the objective to contribute to empowerment of the community as a whole. Getting insight in this process of empowerment is not easy and often is not done. This need has resulted into a community empowerment scorecard, where the level of empowerment of the community is measured by the groups.

Secondly the functioning and the ability to be effective in specific objectives of the groups is very useful information for the implementing partners, as well as for Red een Kind. This information is captured in the Group capacity scorecard. Both scorecards are conducted at the same time with the same groups, where the empowerment scorecard is conducted first.

The community empowerment scorecard that is described in this brief manual attempts to offer an instrument that can be used to get insight in the status of the community's empowerment. And while groups discuss their empowerment, such discussions may themselves be empowering and lead to further improvements in people's situations. The intention is that using this community empowerment scorecard leads to direct benefits for the group that spends its time on it, while it also provides useful information to Red een Kind and her partner organisations. The usefulness of this approach will be bigger as the exercise is repeated regularly, such as every six months.

If you need any coaching on the use of the community empowerment and/or group capacity scorecard, you can contact Help a Child at Janita.visser@redenkind.nl.

2 What is empowerment

Empowerment is one of the jargon words in international development and it does not always have much meaning in practice. It is not easily defined and the consequences of empowerment are easier to define than empowerment itself. The three definitions of empowerment below show some of the variety within this concept.

'The process through which those who are currently disadvantaged achieve equal rights, resources and power' (Mayoux, 2008).

'The expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives.' (World Bank Sourcebook on Empowerment, 2002)

'A multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives' (Page and Czuba, 1999).¹

Applied to the type of work that Red een Kind and partners often support or implement, we distinguish a number of aspects that could be seen as an operationalization of the concept of empowerment. Other ways of operationalization are also possible. Therefore, this manual proposes that any of these dimensions or categories that is not applicable to a certain situation, can be left out, while other dimensions can be added as and when relevant. Also the specific issues that are related to each of

¹ All as cited in Jupp, D., Ali, S. I., & Barahona, C. (2010). Measuring empowerment? Ask them. Sida Studies in Evaluation.

these dimensions can be changed according to each context. In this way we hope that every group using this scorecard will get insights in aspects of empowerment that are relevant to its own situation.

The eight proposed dimensions are as follows:

Enabling safe environment. Applied to children, this implies that child protection is functional such that abuse of children (sexual, child labour) is almost absent, and dealt with effectively when it happens. Children have opportunities for out-of-school learning, life skill and human development, and they have a right to play.

Resilience. This implies that households are capable to deal with shocks and changes. If market prices turn out to be lower, or some crops fail or weather conditions are unfavourable, households have ways to cope with these adversities. On a personal level, people can cope with sickness and even death of family members.

Self-esteem. This means that people are not being disregarded because of their ethnic group, religion, or because they have certain diseases (e.g. living with HIV) or disabilities. Such (groups of) people themselves also feel they enjoy human dignity and are proud of whom they are.

Participation. This implies that the community has several groups and structures through which people can voice out and have influence over decisions that affect their lives. Such groups are respected and functional. Community leadership stimulates participation of members and there is attention for the voices of all groups of people.

Knowledge, skills & practices. The community has a good level of skills and knowledge available. This also includes sufficient education systems, accessible for young persons, including technical and vocational training. The community also has skills and capacities to lobby and advocate for their rights.

Ownership. The community is actively engaged in its own developmental processes. There is no dependency mood but rather a "we can do" mentality. Developmental groups in the community have broad acceptance and are able to mobilize the community as a whole.

Networks and partnerships. The community has several groups that are linked up with wider networks. These include churches, civil society groups, linkages to NGOs, but also linkages with politics and government departments, and with business or market actors.

Access to public services. The main public services (including health, water, sanitation, electricity, agricultural extension, markets) are available to most (if not all) people. Maintenance is also taken care of and costs are reasonable. This is provided by government, or arranged in partnerships with corporate players.

Repetition: we recognize that these dimensions are not applicable to all situations. Therefore, groups can decide to leave out those that are not applicable, change these descriptions or add other dimensions that are relevant.

3 How to use the scorecards

Groups. The scorecard can be used by a group of persons. Ideally this should be an existing group that works together for a common purpose and is interested to have insight in their own process of empowerment. This can include groups of youth, women, men, farmers, teachers, parents or others. Using this scorecard can be done during one of the regular group sessions, or during a separate session that lasts about two and half hours, depending how long the discussions last.

Facilitation. Groups can do this exercise with an external facilitator who guides them through the process and provides some explanations where needed. But groups can also decide to have this discussion without external facilitation. In this case, one member must be familiar with the way the scorecard is designed. During the discussions, it would be best to work as much as possible with negotiated consensus: group members bring forward their arguments until they reach agreement over the score.

Process. The facilitator will first explain the group about the community empowerment scorecard. The group looks outward to the community they live in (village or smaller district level) and rates the level of empowerment according to the dimensions chosen. After this exercise the facilitator explain the group that after looking outward to the community the second exercise looks more inward, to the group functioning and effectiveness. This is the Group capacity scorecard.

Repetition. The scorecards are developed to be repeated over time, since only by doing that progress over time can be measured. After the first time of measurement (baseline) the scorecards will be conducted again after 6 months or one year of time.

When doing the scorecard repeatedly make sure that, as a facilitator, you bring empty scorecards and also the old scorecard with the old rating. You can also encourage the groups to file the scorecards in the record book.

Since the group will have two or more scores when the exercise is repeated (old and new scores) also a reflection on the progress over time of the score for each dimension is encouraged. Therefore a facilitator will start a second or third (or more) time with looking back at the actions points formulated last time. After that new scores can be formulated and after doing that the change from baseline to second time, or second time to third time is discussed. Finally new actions can be formulated.

3.1 Using the Community empowerment scorecard

Perspective

In the community empowerment scorecard groups do not view their own performance, they look at the community as a whole (their near community in their villages) and value their level of community empowerment. So it is an outward looking perspective.

The scales. The scorecard makes use of a rating scale. For each dimension of empowerment there is an "ideal situation" (or "nearly ideal situation"). This is the highest rating and it implies that for this aspect no further improvements in the situation are needed or even possible. The lowest rating is the "far from ideal situation". This is a situation where this aspect of empowerment is not at all present, or very weak. A lot of improvements would be needed to move towards the ideal situation. In between are two other scales: "first steps" when the situation is better than the "far from ideal situation", but there is still a long way to go. And "moving on" when steady progress is made toward the "ideal

situation”, but one or more serious issues are still lacking to consider the situation even “nearly ideal” and clear further action points can still be defined. These two “in-between scales” are not precisely defined, but should be used intuitively: the group can discuss if the situation is still closer to the “far from ideal situation” or already closer to the “(nearly) ideal situation”.

Two versions. There are two versions of the scorecard. An almost empty version which only has the dimensions of empowerment with some suggested issues related to each dimension. In this version, the group has to discuss how the ideal situation looks like: what conditions should be met to call the situation “nearly ideal”? The “far from ideal situation” should also be defined. And subsequently they can rate themselves in respect to the “(nearly) ideal” and the “far from ideal” situations: whether they are on either of these extreme values or somewhere in between (“first steps” or “moving on”). This helps the group to define the dimensions exactly according to their own situation, but it takes more time.

The second version has descriptions for the “(nearly) ideal situation” and for the “far from ideal situation” already on the scorecard. The group can use these descriptions and rate themselves in relation to these descriptions. If these descriptions are not (fully) applicable, they can still be adapted, for example by leaving out some issues or adding other elements. The advantage of using this pre-filled scorecard is that it could take somewhat less time.

Each group can take its decision which version to use. If the empty version is used and descriptions are made for each dimension of empowerment, the same descriptions could be used the second and subsequent times when the scorecard is used, so that the work of defining the ideal situations is only done once.

Doing the assessment. Each dimension is discussed in the group. The group discusses if the dimension is or is not applicable. If not applicable, the group records reasons why not. If applicable, the issues related to this dimension are discussed and the “(nearly) ideal situation” is discussed (or developed when using the empty scorecard). These specific issues can be included or skipped and other issues can be added as relevant. The group then rates itself for this dimension and discusses what could be done to improve the situation. The focus of such discussion should be on what actions the group can take, so that there are real possibilities to indeed do the action. This can also include actions, where group members stimulate others to take actions.

In the same way, each of the dimensions is discussed and rated or skipped over. After discussing all dimensions, other dimensions can be added as and when the group feels this is relevant in relation to their empowerment. These dimensions are rated in the same manner.

3.2 Using the Group Capacity scorecard

Perspective

In the group capacity scorecard groups view and reflect on their own performance, they look at their own group and see what capacity they themselves have. So it is an inward looking perspective. This is in contrast to the community empowerment scorecard which is often conducted in one flow with the group capacity scorecard. Please always mention to the groups that from outward looking in community empowerment, now for group capacity their look inward.

The scales. The scorecard makes use of a rating scale for two of the total number of questions. The rating goes from 1-4, 1 meaning 'far from ideal', and 4 meaning 'nearly ideal'. Score 2 and 3 are in between the gradual scale.

The section on objectives also makes use of the scale of 1-4.

Other questions. Besides the two questions and the objectives section, the other questions need to have a number entered. This number can vary between 0 and ∞ (endless). If no score can be given please note n.a. (not applicable).

Making use of record keeping. Most groups have some sort of record keeping/ book keeping system. This book probably contains much of the requested information. Therefore stimulate groups to bring and use their own records.

Specific group objectives. Each type of group has its own specific objectives, their own reasons for being. The group capacity scorecard asks for a definition of only the main objectives of each group, the maximum is four. This is done to make sure that groups are focussing on only the very relevant objectives. First the groups needs to define their specific objectives, and secondly they can rate them by first having a good reflective discussion. Some questions are given to stimulate the discussion. Finally action points can be drawn.

Optional economic objectives. Some groups have specific economic objectives, like SHGs who tend to have their members save regularly and were loans are granted to individual members of the groups. Or farmer groups who cultivate their acres of land as a group. For these economically minded groups another section can be filled, this is an optional section on economic effects of the group. Their records can provide for this information regularly.

3.3 Using the reporting form

During the discussions, one group members should have the reporting form. For each dimension the relevant issues can be identified on the form (or an indication that the dimension as a whole was not applicable). The rating can be indicated using a number (1 to 4) with the reasons. In the most right hand column the actions for improvement can be summarized. It can be helpful at the end of the session to repeat the actions that have been agreed upon and make clear who are responsible for such actions.

On top of the form, general information is filled including the name and type of group and some data about the organisation and the project or intervention.

Even if the form is given to the organisation, it will be helpful for the group to keep their own form, so that during other sessions, the previous form can be used to compare what has changed since the previous session. Possibly the organisation can take a picture of the form so that the original is kept by the group.

3.4 Using the analysis master file (only for higher aggregation)

There is also an analysis form available for the partner organisation's PMEL staff. This person can aggregate the results of all individual groups and bring the raw data together in an Excel pivot table. Copy the lines of each group's worksheet 'for analysis' into the raw data table of the analysis master file, and make sure to copy and paste as values (otherwise you copy formulas, which will probably create errors in your file). You can copy-paste all the individual group data into the master. After that you create a pivot table, also make sure you update when you have entered additional data. For any questions on this you can contact the Red een Kind PMEL coordinator.

4 Process of work

4.1 Working with the community empowerment and group capacity scorecard

Before you start conducting the empowerment scorecard you need to think of a few important issues. These are sampling of groups, sampling of areas, process steps and reflection/learning.

4.2 Sampling

It is first of all advised to conduct this scorecard with all of the groups you work with, so a sample of 100%. If your organisation is really building capacity of groups during the year why not take along this scorecard and integrate it in the regular coaching of the groups. Thereby this exercise is not only a PMEL tool, but a mainstreamed tool. If you really believe in group coaching then take them seriously and conduct the tool at every group, since it will help them to gather their own information and become more critical.

If you are just conducting the tool for the sake of PMEL/ accountability you can take a sample. The minimum sample is 10% of the type of group you select, so if your work with 100 SHGs, 10 is the minimum in your sample. The absolute minimum is two groups. So even if you have only 2 SHGs, the sample is 2.

In your intervention area try to sample all the sub-areas. So if you have a district with 6 sub-countries, makes sure all 6 sub-countries are equally sampled. Even within the sub-area try to sample all sub-sub areas.

4.3 Training of enumerators

When conducting the tool you need someone to facilitate the group discussion and you need someone to make the minutes of the scores, the discussion and the action plans. When you are planning to collect the data and therefore need to visit the groups you will face the issue of training enumerators, which can be your own staff, community facilitators, or externally hired persons. These persons need to be trained since they need to explain and facilitate the tool is exactly the same way to avoid any bias.

Special attention needs to go to the local translation of the empowerment domains, since these terms are quite difficult to explain well. The best way of making sure all enumerators use the same 'language' you can do a role play, just practicing the facilitation of the discussions.

There is a powerpoint presentation available to train the enumerators on the use of the Community Empowerment & Group Capacity Scorecard. Ask Janita.visser@redeekind.nl for more information.

4.4 First time steps (baseline)

1. Start to discuss to content of the community empowerment scorecard, explain that you will look at the level of empowerment of the whole community
2. Explain how to rate and how the rating works from 1-4
3. Open the reporting file and show how and what to fill, pay special attention to the reasons for scores and the action points.
4. Fully fill the community empowerment scorecard with the group, with scores, reasons and actions.
5. Discuss the content of the Group Development scorecard

6. Explain about the rating and the open questions, pay attention to the formulation of the specific group objectives
7. Open the file and show what and how to fill.
8. Make sure that the questions for reflection are used in the group discussion on the score/ rating of each question. Good formulation of action points is crucial.
9. Fully fill the group capacity scorecard with the group, with scores, reasons and actions.

4.5 Repetition steps

1. Start to refresh the knowledge on the content of the community empowerment scorecard, explain that you will look at the level of empowerment of the whole community
2. Explain how to rate and how the rating works from 1-4
3. Open the reporting file and show how and what to fill, pay special attention to the reasons for scores and the action points.
4. Discuss the action points from the last time, ask which of these actions has been completed and what the result of this has been. Also ask why some action have not been completed.
5. Fully fill the community empowerment scorecard with the group, with a new round of scores and reasons.
6. Discuss the change from last time up to know. Is there any progress/ change? How come?
7. Make new actions per question.

8. Refresh the knowledge on the content of the Group Development scorecard
9. Explain about the rating and the open questions, pay attention to the formulation of the specific group objectives
10. Open the file and show what and how to fill.
11. Discuss the action points from the last time, ask which of these actions has been completed and what the result of this has been. Also ask why some action have not been completed.
12. Fully fill the group capacity scorecard with the group, with a new round of scores and reasons. Make sure that the questions for reflection are used in the group discussion on the score/ rating of each question.
13. Discuss the change from last time up to know. Is there any progress/ change? How come?
14. Make new actions per question.

4.6 Reflection & learning

One of your main objectives is to make sure your organisation will use the information collected for further quality improvement of the programme. Therefore reflection and learning is key. Make sure that after data collection and data entry you organise a reflection session with staff (including Management Team) and possibly external stakeholders or enumerators. In that reflection meeting you present your findings in graphs and will challenge the room to have in-depth discussion on the meaning of the findings.

Out of that session you create a short report of the in-depth reflection and you present the main conclusions and recommendations in there. This you will put on the agenda of the MT of Help a Child to discuss and follow-up.