

FRONT SIDE 1

**Common
understanding of
program objectives**

**Realistic
benchmarks for
both quality and
scale**

**National level
coordination**

**Identification and
measurement
of intended
participants**

**Program processes
that reach
the intended
population**

**Messages that
are inclusive
of vulnerable
populations**

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

1

BACK SIDE 1

Avoid signing contracts that do not provide adequate resources for quality and scale; keep in mind industry averages on trainer workload and work with donors to agree on the targets and measures of group quality and outreach.

Develop a strategy with a description of the program objectives, expected outcomes, target population, and exit plans. Ensure that all stakeholders buy into the strategy.

Define the profile of the people that the program would like to reach, determine if and why they are being excluded, and develop a deliberate strategy to include them in the program.

Regularly consult other SG implementers when designing new projects to avoid geographic overlap.

Choose messages that will be welcoming to the populations you want to serve. A message like “Everyone needs to save—SGs are for all, rich or poor, farmer or farm worker” is inclusive.

Develop clear program processes to reach intended populations. Consider assigning trainers to cover remote villages, developing guidelines for reaching the disabled, or working with local health officials to target areas with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS.

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

1B

FRONT SIDE 2

**Group procedures
that reflect the
needs of vulnerable
populations**

**Alignment of trainer
incentives with
the objective of
inclusion**

**Careful selection of
trainers**

**Tested and effective
training methods**

**Streamlined
training structures**

**Appropriate
incentives for
trainer performance**

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

2

BACK SIDE 2

Provide trainers with adequate and appropriate incentives to include the most vulnerable, which may range from recognition and praise to in-kind or monetary bonuses.

Keep program elements appropriate to the intended population, and let members adapt procedures to meet their particular needs. For example, overly complicated record-keeping or high share values can be a barrier for the poorest.

Provide trainers with tools, manuals, and training curricula that have been tested and proven to give good results. Do not alter proven methodologies.

Develop written criteria, and apply these criteria consistently and objectively throughout the trainer selection process. Ensure that the trainer has the profile and skills necessary to deliver on the job and do not underestimate the ability of ethnic groups, age groups, and genders.

Establish a range of payment that is fair for the trainer. Keep in mind that while financial incentives are essential, intrinsic motivations are also important.

Avoid multi-step, cascade training structures. Ideally, SG trainers should be trained by a master trainer, who has near-perfect understanding of principles and procedures.

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

2B

FRONT SIDE 3

**Clear trainer
monitoring criteria
and responsive
feedback**

**Commitment to the
group constitution**

**Caution with
tempting shortcuts**

**Attention to the
security of group
funds**

**Respect for both
borrowers and
savers**

**Transparent
communication of
expectations**

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

3

BACK SIDE 3

Ensure that trainers empower members to develop their group constitutions in a participatory, informed, and democratic way, as this will promote ownership of and commitment to its policies.

Evaluate trainers both on the number of groups they form and on the inclusiveness, performance, and sustainability of these groups. Clearly communicate expectations, and ensure that trainers understand the criteria used to assess their performance.

Stress a practice of strict confidentiality among all members about the box location and amounts saved, and encourage the group to devise solutions that enhance the security of their funds.

Discourage practices that may offer greater efficiency but are likely to compromise group quality in the long run. For example, the practice of bringing several SGs together for training saves time but reduces the trainer's interaction with each group.

Be clear about the intention to introduce add-ons to SGs and any ensuing responsibilities. If SGs are being introduced as part of integrated programming, inform prospective members of the expectations of participating in an SG.

Send the consistent message to groups that it is acceptable for members to save without borrowing.

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

3B

FRONT SIDE 4

**Respect for the
procedures and
structure of the SG**

**Demand-driven
quality products
and services**

**Safety of additional
services and
activities**

**Caution with the
allocation of group
funds**

**Caution with anyone
who views the SG
principally as a market
for products and
services**

**Education of all
parties involved
in the financial
relationship**

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

4

BACK SIDE 4

Other activities need to respond to member demand, be worthy of members' time, and have a clear benefit for the group.

Ensure that existing program structures are not inherited by the SG; stress the need for the SG set up its own leadership structure and openly select its membership.

Help trainers and external agents to understand that the decision to allocate group funds toward a new service or product must remain with the group. Stress this point with members, too.

Introduce other activities once the group is well established and has built the needed confidence, trust, and solidarity to adequately manage that activity. Discourage investment of group funds in activities that yield benefits to only a few members.

Financial service providers need to understand how SGs work in order to design products that fit a group's process. For SGs entering into relationships with formal financial service providers, financial education is widely believed to be a necessary component of their preparation.

Beware of incentive structures that reward group uptake of such opportunities, as they tend to shift the role of the trainer from honest broker to salesperson.

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

4B

FRONT SIDE 5

**Careful assessment
of the financial
service provider**

**Care for the
interests of the
group**

**Understanding of
the implications of
mobile banking**

**Varied methods for
assessment**

**Respect for data
ownership and
security**

**Monitoring of post-
project outcomes**

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

5

BACK SIDE 5

Only offer the opportunity to enter into a relationship with a formal financial provider if it responds to members' articulated needs. Before facilitating a relationship with a bank ensure that the group has the confidence to manage the relationship, and assess the interest of group members.

Supplement quantitative data analysis with qualitative analysis and direct observation of randomly selected SGs. Satisfaction surveys are also a good way to gather valuable member perceptions of the program.

Monitor a sample of groups no longer receiving direct program supervision, such as failed groups, those with members who have dropped out, and graduated groups that are no longer receiving direct program support.

Assess the financial service providers' motives for entering into a relationship with SG members. Look for financial service providers that demonstrate an interest in SG members as clients well into the future, rather than as immediate opportunities for profit.

Consider training the financial service provider, the mobile money provider, and their agents on consumer protection, and make sure they understand and respect the needs and dynamics of the group.

Respect local regulations about informed consent and data use, and be transparent with groups about how their personal financial information will be used and who might benefit from it.

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

5B

FRONT SIDE 6

**Clearly planned and
communicated exit
strategies**

**Culturally
appropriate post-
project contracts**

**Carefully designed
oversight structures**

**Responsive redress
mechanisms**

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

6

BACK SIDE 6

Where fee-for-service structures will replace direct program investment, put in place simple, culturally appropriate contracts between trainers and SGs outlining the specific services, how long these services will be provided, and the expectations for payment.

Develop an exit strategy that describes what services will be provided post-project, who will provide them, and how they will be paid for.

Put in place a system for redress of grievances, such as a hotline that group members may call if they have experienced problems. Carefully monitor the problems reported and devise and execute response plans.

Create pro-consumer codes of conduct for any trainers who continue to operate in a given area, and especially for fee-for-service networks. Ensure that these networks have occasional oversight post-program.

Program Quality Guidelines for Savings Groups

6B