



Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development
State Department for Crop Development
P.O. Box 30028, Nairobi



Emergency Locust Response Program
P.O. Box 30028,
Nairobi



Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organisation
P.O. Box 57811-00200,
Nairobi



The World Bank
P.O. Box 30577-00100
Nairobi

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4.2.1 SUB-MODULE 1: GROUP DYNAMICS

Introduction

Group dynamics deals with the attitudes and behavioural patterns of a group. Group dynamics concern how groups are formed, what is their structure and which processes are followed in their functioning. It is thus, concerned with the interactions and forces operating among group members. Group dynamics is relevant to groups of all kinds that are both formal and informal. In an organisational setting, the term groups is very common and the study of groups and group dynamics is an important area of study.

A group is a collection of individuals who have regular contact and frequent interaction, and who work together to achieve a common goal(s). In the context of farming, a farmer group is a collection of farmers with a common objective or problem to solve, which is often associated with the production and marketing of agricultural produce/ products. A group may consist of as few as two people or as many as 300-400. There are two types of groups, namely: **formal** and **informal**. The formal groups are structured to pursue a specific task while the informal groups are those that emerge naturally in response to organisational or members' interests.

Formal groups

There are three main formal groups namely:

Command groups:

Command groups are specified by the organisational chart and often consist of a supervisor and the subordinates.

Task groups:

Task groups consist of people who work together to achieve a common task. Members are brought together to accomplish a narrow range of goals within a specified time period. Task groups are also commonly referred to as task forces.

Functional groups:

A functional group is created by the organization to accomplish specific goals within an unspecified time frame. Functional groups remain in existence after achievement of current goals and objectives.

Informal groups Interest group:

- Interest groups usually continue over time and may last longer than general informal groups.
- Members of interest groups may not be part of the same organisational department, but they are bound together by some other common interest e.g. Common interest groups (CIGs).

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Friendship groups:

- Friendship groups are formed by members who enjoy similar social activities, political beliefs, religious values, or other common bonds.
- Members enjoy each other's company and often meet after work to participate in these activities.

Reference groups:

- A reference group is a type of group that people use to evaluate themselves. The main objectives of reference groups are to seek social validation and social comparison.
- Social validation allows individuals to justify their attitudes and values while social comparison helps individuals evaluate their own actions by comparing themselves to others.
- Reference groups have a strong influence on members' behaviour.

Importance of farmer groups

A group has a number of benefits that include:

- Groups of farmers can access services.
- Collective production, marketing and purchase of inputs.
- Farmer groups provide a forum to share experiences and learn from one another.
- Group pressure enhances or stimulates adoption of knowledge and change to improved practices
- Increases farmers' opportunities for participation in development programs.
- Gives farmers a 'voice' which they may be used to influence policy
- Attracts external support and easy access to loans (group guarantors).

Group formation

A group formation passes through five main stages namely: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning stages as summarised below:

GROUP FORMATION STAGES				
Formation stage	Storming stage	Norming stage	Performing stage	Adjourning
Individuals come together and get to know each other	Individual confidence may lead to conflict	Behavioural standards and norms among group members established	Successful completion of the other stages leads to significant progress	Individuals leave the group or the group dissolves on completion of objective
Dependent on direction	Personal agenda setting	Getting used to each other and developing	Members work towards a common goal on a highly	Time for reflection and re-orientation



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		trust	efficient and cooperative basis	
Members are polite	Success at this stage leads to a more focused group relationship			
Introduction and sharing of information	Can inhibit progression and even lead to failure			
Stereotyping individuals based on first impressions				
Conversations are about safe acceptable topics				

Characteristics of a group

The characteristics of a group comprises of the following:

- Two or more persons (if it is one person, it is not a group)
- Formal social structure (the rules of the game are defined)
- Common fate (they will swim together).
- Common goals (the destiny is the same and emotionally connected)
- Face-to-face interaction (they will talk with each other).
- Interdependence (each one is complementary to the other).
- Self-definition as group members (what one is who belongs to the group)
- Recognition by others (yes, you belong to the group).

Factors affecting group behaviours:

The success or failure of a group depends upon so many factors namely:

- Group member resources.
- Structure (group size, group roles, group norms, and group cohesiveness).
- Group processes (the communication, group decision making processes, power dynamics, conflicting interactions, etc.).
- Group tasks (complexity and interdependence).



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Further reading

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