

# GROUP GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT

Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance Programme  
Tools for participatory approaches

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This tool can be used to analyse the quality of decision making and management practices within community (or other) groups and organisations by assessing them against good governance principles.

## What is it useful for?

- Identifying and analysing **who** makes decisions and **how** those decisions are made.
- Assessing the extent to which existing decision making and management practices meet good governance principles.
- Assessing organisational/group practices from the perspective of different groups of people, including those who may be marginalised from decision making.
- Identifying and understanding local perceptions of principles of good governance.
- Informing the identification of measures to improve governance practices and providing a basis for dialogue between stakeholders where practices need renegotiating.
- Monitoring changes in decision making and management practices over a period of time.
- In the context of climate adaptation and ecosystem services valuation this tool can support processes to strengthen adaptive capacity and equitable benefit sharing by facilitating community participation, especially of vulnerable groups, in decision making.

## Suggested steps

Allow approximately **2 hours** for this exercise.

The group governance assessment is comprised of two main stages. The first stage 'sets the scene' by sharing experiences and perspectives of good governance, and the second stage is assessing the group or organisation against good governance principles.

### **'Set the scene' by sharing experiences**

- 1) In order to 'set the scene' participants can be encouraged to recount an event or change in their community that was as a result of (or was followed by) decisions made by one or more local groups/organisations. The focus could be the group undergoing the assessment, or another local organisation such as a village council, school or church.
- 2) This exercise can be carried out in groups of two or three and presented back (as a story or role play, if appropriate), or can take the form of a group discussion. Questions to guide the discussion include the following:
  - How, where, when, and by whom were decisions made?
  - How were they communicated to others?
  - What possibilities were there to debate decisions?
  - Was there consensus around the decisions made? How and among whom was the consensus achieved?

- Who had most influence over decision making processes? Why?
- Who had the least influence over decision making processes? Why?
- What was good about the decision making process?
- How could decision making have been improved?

3) Through this discussion it should be possible to elicit from participants their perspectives on what constitutes good governance. The principles of good governance, against which the organisation will be assessed, can then be presented and discussed. Although values are strongly influenced by the local cultural context, there are some universal norms that apply across cultural boundaries (Box 1).

#### **Box 1: Some principles of good governance**

- **Participation** - All stakeholders participate in decision making that affects their lives, *including* representatives from marginalised and disempowered groups.
- **Equity** - Costs and benefits are shared *fairly* and impartial judgement is available in case of conflict.
- **Accountability** - Lines of responsibility are clear and those in positions of responsibility are answerable to *all* stakeholders.
- **Transparency** - All relevant information is available, in an appropriate form, to *all* stakeholders.

#### **Assess the organisation(s) against selected governance principles**

- 4) The exercise can be carried out as one group or in smaller sub-groups (depending on the number and composition of participants).
- 5) A table can be prepared (Figure 1) and the organisation scored against good governance principles using a number of key indicators. The score could, for example, be good (indicated by ☺ or a score of 1), moderate (indicated by 😊 or a score of 0), and poor (indicated by ☹ or a score of -1). The process of discussing good governance practices is more important than reaching a consensus in one session. If there are differences of opinion these should be noted and the discussion moved on.
- 6) If appropriate, individual participants could prepare their own scoring followed by a group analysis and discussion of the patterns that emerge. In this case, it may be appropriate to make the statements in the table below more personal e.g. I feel that respect and attention is given to my views or I am aware of the organisations rules and regulations.
- 7) Discuss and analyse the results, focusing on why and how the score was allocated to each principle. Any differences of opinion should be discussed. Following or during the discussion the table can be revisited and the scores adjusted accordingly, if necessary.
- 8) If time permits and if appropriate, participants can discuss the scores they would like to see in the future, and begin to explore steps needed to improve decision making practices. A column can be added to include steps needed to improve the scoring or key points from the discussions.

**Figure 1: An example of a table to assess good governance**

	😊	😐	😞
<b>Participation</b>			
The governing body (e.g. executive committee, council, board) is representative of all group members and is not dominated by any particular individual/s or sub-group/s			
At least 30% of office bearers (e.g. chair, secretary, treasurer) are women			
There is regular dialogue with, and active involvement of, <b>all</b> members in the organisation's discussions and activities			
<b>Equity (Fairness)</b>			
Respect and attention is given to <b>all</b> stakeholders views			
There is no personal bias in decision making			
Consideration is given to the distribution of costs and benefits (of decisions and actions) between stakeholders			
<b>Transparency</b>			
All stakeholders are aware of the organisation's rules and regulations			
All stakeholders are aware of how and why decisions are made			
There is clear communication with <b>all</b> stakeholders including on all financial transaction			
<b>Accountability</b>			
There is a clear system for the allocation and acceptance of responsibility			
There is a process of monitoring and reporting to ensure that agreed actions are effectively implemented			
In the event of conflict or grievance, a clear mechanism is in place and can be accessed by <b>all</b> stakeholders			

### Questions to guide discussion and analysis

To prompt the discussion, the indicators can be turned into questions and explored further using the '6 helpers' – who, what, why, when, where and how? For example, Who is on the governing body? How are group members represented on the governing body?

#### Points to remember:

- ❖ The focus of this exercise is about who makes decisions and how those decisions are made (i.e. governance) rather than the technical or financial capacity of local groups and organisations.
- ❖ Consideration should be given to whether the exercise is to be carried out with group members or wider 'constituents' who may not be members but do support the organisation in other ways including stakeholders who may affect or be affected by the groups actions.
- ❖ The emphasis here is on the principles of good governance, some of which may threaten existing power imbalances in decision making.
- ❖ Political or social relationships might inhibit group discussion, and stakeholders may be unwilling to share their true thoughts.
- ❖ Local participants should be encouraged to build as much of the diagram as possible without interruption and to suggest anything else that should be recorded.
- ❖ Before using this tool read the accompanying document, *A guide to using tools for participatory approaches*.

## For further information

Lockwood, M et al (2009) *Governance Principles for Natural Resource Management Land & Water Australia*

<http://lwa.gov.au/products/pn30299>

Moore, P et al (2011) *Natural Resource Governance Trainers' Manual* IUCN RECOFTC SNV

<http://www.recoftc.org/site/resources/Natural-Resource-Governance-Trainer-s-Manual.php>

SAGUN Program *Tool 3: Participatory Governance Assessment*

<http://www.careclimatechange.org/tools>



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