

# Report of training workshop on facilitation of community conversations

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International Livestock Research Institute



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CGIAR is a global partnership that unites organizations engaged in research for a food-secure future. The CGIAR Research Program on Livestock provides research-based solutions to help smallholder farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists transition to sustainable, resilient livelihoods and to productive enterprises that will help feed future generations. It aims to increase the productivity and profitability of livestock agri-food systems in sustainable ways, making meat, milk and eggs more available and affordable across the developing world. The Program brings together five core partners: the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) with a mandate on livestock; the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT), which works on forages; the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), which works on small ruminants and dryland systems; the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) with expertise particularly in animal health and genetics and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) which connects research into development and innovation and scaling processes.


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# Contents

Figures	iv
Introduction	1
Opening address	2
Introductions, expectations and learning responsibilities	3
Training objectives, approach and process	4
Pre-training assessment	5
Learning stages in community conversations	7
Differences and complementarities in group learning approaches	8
Practising community conversations	9
Evaluation and feedback	14
Annexes	16
Annexe 1. Training agenda	16
Annexe 2. List of participants	17

# Figures

Figure 1:	Pre-training assessment results	5
Figure 2:	Brainstorming exercise guide	6
Figure 3:	Small group session guide	7
Figure 4:	A participant sharing group work results	8
Figure 5:	Discussion guide on differences and complementarities in group learning approaches	8
Figure 6:	Small group work in action	9
Figure 7:	Sample participant-drawn pictures from the community conversations practice session	13
Figure 8:	Small groups practising group event facilitation using role plays	13
Figure 9:	Post-training knowledge and skills self-assessment results	14
Figure 10:	Training satisfaction survey results	14

# Introduction

As part of the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock (Livestock CRP) work in Ethiopia, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) research teams, in collaboration with research and development partners, tested a gender transformative community-based learning approach known as 'community conversation' to engage community members and local partners in dialogue and joint actions about gender and livestock health management issues.

Based on the experience of the two organizations in applying community conversations to facilitating change in knowledge, attitude, and practice (KAP) of households on gender and zoonotic diseases, additional modules, including animal welfare and antimicrobial use and resistance, have now been developed and tested in some Livestock CRP intervention sites in the country. These are being scaled up to other livestock program sites in the country through the interventions of research and development partners.

The uptake and scaling of the community conversation approach requires capacity development support in terms of targeted training and coaching of local partners in the approach and following up the rollout by partners through mentoring and lessons-learned documentation support.

For this purpose, a practical training event was organized for research and development partners in the Livestock CRP intervention sites. A total of 15 (1 female) participants drawn from research and development partner organizations participated in the training workshop in Addis Ababa's Beshale Hotel from 11–13 December 2019.

The training was facilitated by Mamusha Lemma and Mesfin Mekonnen. Both training facilitators have experience in the application of community conversations as practice and research method.

# Opening address

Barbara Wieland, who leads the herd health team at ILRI, gave participants a background of the training and explained the need for the training. In her address, Wieland called for training and engaging farmers in new ways to better understand the factors that influence the behaviour of community groups in relation to livestock health management. She encouraged participants to use the community conversation approach as a gender responsive, participatory and collaborative learning and practice method.

She said that community members are part of a solution; and that they should own any proposed intervention. ‘We need to allow men and women community members to discuss the problems they have in details, own them and be part of the solution. As a community, they can begin to take action to solve their problems’, she said.

‘You will facilitate the change to happen. It is important to understand community members’ opinions to facilitate the learning process but make sure that the content is right without being a ‘teacher’.

‘The community conversation approach facilitates good interaction with community groups and, by using it, it is possible to influence how extension is done – towards participatory engagement and training of community groups’.

‘You can help us develop the community conversation modules further – by letting us know what works and what does not – and what other modules to add’.

‘Also let us know how you benefit from this training workshop; the things you like and what needs to be improved. In the coming years, many more people will get training on participatory training processes.’

She finally encouraged the participants to have a productive learning and sharing experience in the training workshop.

# Introductions, expectations and learning responsibilities

Participants were asked to stand and move around the training room, pair with a participant they did not know, introduce themselves, and share their work situation as community organizers.

The participants were then asked to write down their learning expectations (personal learning objectives), and how they would apply the learning individually. Then they shared these in small groups and came up with learning expectations as a group.

Participants identified the following learning expectations and ways of applying the learning from the training:

Learning expectations:

- The purpose of community conversation
- Knowledge on the methodology of community conversations
- Facilitation skills
- Reporting skills
- Documentation process
- How to select community conversation participants

Applying the learning from the training. Participants hoped to use the learning in the following ways/situations:

- To conduct community discussions
- For mobilizing the community to implement interventions
- For community animal health education
- To identify issues which need community conversation.

Then they agreed on training rules, including keeping daily learning logs and reflections. The facilitators encouraged participants to keep a daily reflections of their learning experience, key learning points, and ideas about how they will apply the learning. These would help them develop action plans at the end of the training workshop.

# Training objectives, approach and process

The training workshop aimed to equip research and development partners with a set of guidelines and tools for organizing, facilitating and documenting community conversations. It introduced the concept of community conversations as a participatory, transformative and collaborative learning approach and reviewed some interactive learning methods used in community conversations. It then provided an opportunity for the participants to practice facilitating and documenting community conversations.

The training was participatory with practical collaborative learning sessions to equip participants with knowledge, skills and confidence to apply the knowledge in organizations and facilitate community dialogues at the community level. It involved task-based reflective and collaborative learning sessions where participants reflected upon and shared their experiences in small group activities and plenary sessions. The practice-oriented and reflective learning process involved a discussion of concepts and principles of adult learning and community conversations to frame the perspectives and thinking structures of participants.

Self-management tools such as keeping daily learning logs ensured that the participants worked consistently and actively throughout the training workshop. They were encouraged to reflect from time to time on what they had learned, and how they would apply it in their workplaces.

In addition, daily monitoring and recap sessions were used to get feedback from participants and check on their learnings throughout the three-day workshop. The recap and reflection sessions were particularly helpful for participants to reflect on their key learnings and relate these with their experiences and consider how to apply the new learnings in their work.

A pre- and post-training KAP self-assessment of participants was conducted to establish the baseline and evaluate knowledge gains resulting from the training.

The training materials, including PowerPoint presentations and community conversation modules, were given in hard and soft copies to all the participants.

Finally, the participants developed action plans for applying the learnings and to convene community conversations in other Livestock CRP intervention sites.

The training workshop covered the following topics:

- What are community conversations and why are they useful?
- Process overview
- Learning stages and methods
- Formative process
- Differences and complementarities in group learning approaches
- Adult learning principles
- Participatory methods
- Facilitation and engagement techniques and tips
- Process documentation
- Follow-up actions



- Community conversation modules in brief
- Lessons and scaling considerations

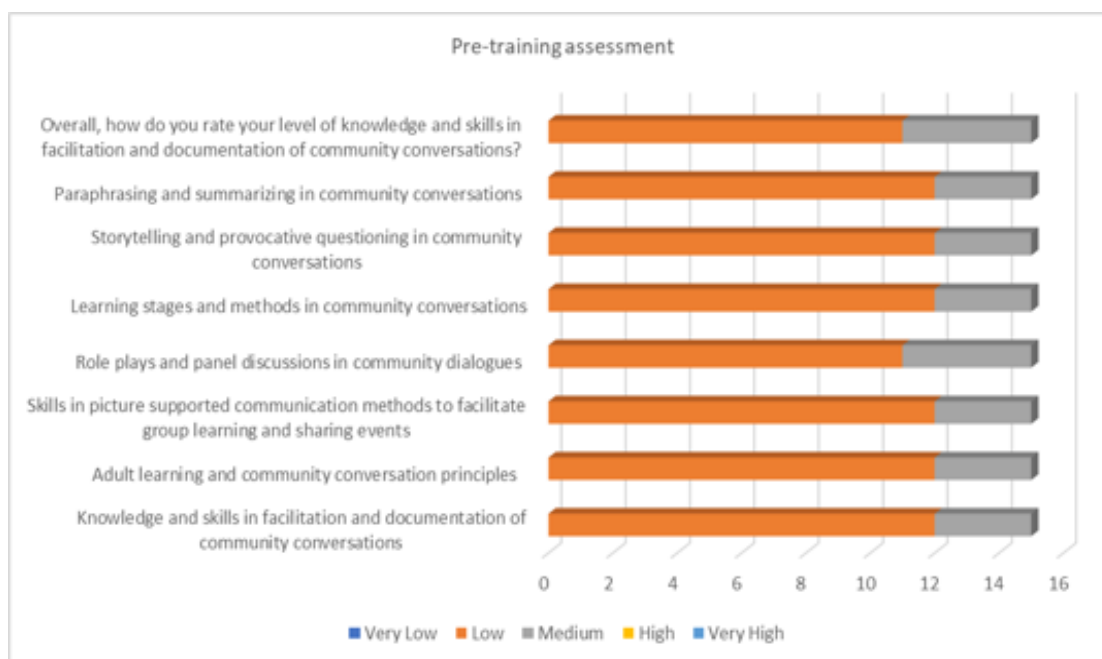
## Pre-training assessment

Before the start of the training workshop, participants were asked to assess their level of knowledge and skills in the training content.

The purpose of the self-assessment was to:

1. Provide participants with an idea of the level of knowledge and skills they already had before the training, and how well they had performed in each training topic at the end of the training.
2. Provide facilitators with an idea of the different levels of knowledge and skills among the participants and help them devise ways to cater for individual learning differences.
3. Establish a baseline to measure the level of learning achievement of training participants at the end of the training course.

Figure 1: Pre-training assessment results



Overall, before the training workshop, 73% of the participants self-assessed their level of knowledge and skills in facilitation of community conversations as low, while 27% assessed it as medium.

## Brainstorming exercise

In small groups, participants were asked to share their experiences and lessons in organizing, facilitating and documenting group learning events.

The purpose of this brainstorming exercise was to:

- Create a common ground and context for the training and bring the experience of participants to the training.
- Stretch the thinking of the participants and make them see the need and motivation for learning.
- Set the context and expectation for the participatory learning process.

Figure 2: Brainstorming exercise guide

## Brainstorming exercise: group work and plenary session

In small groups, share your experience and lessons in organizing, facilitating and documenting group learning events.

- What was the group learning event? Who were the participants in this event?
- What approach/methods have you used to stimulate active participation particularly from women in this group event?
- How have you followed-up on this group learning event?
- What challenges have you faced in organizing, facilitating and documenting this group event?
- If you were to organize a community learning event, what would you do differently?
- What lessons and advice would you give a friend who is planning to organize, facilitate, document and follow-up on a group learning event?



### Results of brainstorming exercise

Group learning events that participants had taken part in:

- Awareness raising training and mobilization
- One Health community training
- Farmer Training Centre-based farmer training on feed production

Methods used by participants prior to training:

- Working with and through community leaders
- Focus group discussions
- Demonstrations
- Role play/drama
- Storytelling

Follow-up

- Working with extension agents/community animal health workers (CAHWs)
- Monitoring and supervision
- Working with and as community volunteers

Challenges participants faced before the training

- Maintaining community groups focus on topic of discussion
- Managing participant selection bias
- Time management

- Providing incentives to participants
- Finding and agreeing on suitable time (day and time of day) and venue

Lessons participants learned from their experience before the training

- Women feel comfortable in women-groups than mixed groups
- The gender of the facilitator may not matter, but it is advisable if females facilitate women’s groups.

## Learning stages in community conversations

After interactive presentations about community conversations from the training facilitators, participants worked in small groups to internalize the learning stages and bring their experience to bear on the discussion.

The purpose of this exercise was to raise the awareness of participants on the importance of clarifying in detail the purpose and planning of the learning delivery process.


Summary of feedback on group work presentations:

- Articulating the facilitation process in terms of learning stages (activities), methods and expected learning outcomes helps maintain the flow of the conversation and ensure important aspects of the topics under discussion. It also helps clarify the purpose and expected outcome/change from the community conversations.
- Clarifying the purpose of the learning delivery process helps participants appreciate the logical progression of the learning process
- It also contributes to knowledge integration by ensuring effective communication of key messages and action points.

Figure 3: Small group session guide

# Small group work

In small groups, discuss and identify learning objectives, methods/tools and outcomes for each learning stage of the community conversation process.



Learning stage	Objective/purpose	Methods/tools	Learning outcomes
Exploration of existing knowledge, attitudes and practices			
Introducing new knowledge			
Knowledge integration and action planning			
Knowledge application/action plan implementation			
Review, reflection and re-planning			






Figure 4: A participant sharing group work results



## Differences and complementarities in group learning approaches

Following an overview presentation of various group learning approaches, which can be labelled as participatory approaches, participants engaged in small group work to further discuss the learning approaches.

This exercise aimed to make participants appreciate that there are different approaches and methods of facilitating learning and sharing among community groups. The choice of approach or method depends on factors such as context and purpose (expected outcome) of the group learning event.

Figure 5: Discussion guide on differences and complementarities in group learning approaches

### Small group work and plenary feedback

In small groups, discuss **differences and complementarities** among community conversation, focus group discussion, community meeting, multi-stakeholder platform, conventional training, and field day considering context, purpose/objective, depth of learning and analysis, learning methods and outcomes.

Figure 6: Small group work in action



Summary of reflections and feedback on group work presentations:

- No single approach is efficient, and a combination of approaches and methods should be used sequentially.
- The choice of approach and method depends on the size of group; purpose of the group event (e.g. influencing, informing, analysis, action), way of communication, and level of analysis.
- Focus group discussions can be used to identify issues and understand the community's views of an issue before or during a community conversation at the exploration and action planning stage.
- Findings from community conversations can be feedback to multi-stakeholder platforms to act or address some of the concerns of community groups by the concerned actors.
- Community meetings can be used to scale up community conversations and influence larger community groups by having a few participants share their experiences and stories to motivate and influence other community members/ groups.
- A field day can be organized with selected community conversation participants to demonstrate changes resulting from the conversations and influence other community groups.
- So, the choice of learning approach or method depends on the purpose and expected outcome of the conversation and the decision is what combination of group learning approaches can achieve success. The facilitator(s) should judge!

## Practising community conversations

The practical sessions were designed to engage participants in reflective discussions drawing on their experiences and linking what they had learned to local conditions. Small group work activities helped them integrate and internalize key concepts and facilitate cross-learning and 'sense making' that would encourage them to apply the training in their work.

The practical sessions aimed to encourage participants to work together and practice facilitation and documentation of community conversations. They aimed to help participants develop skills to facilitate community conversations using small group facilitation techniques.

Participants were divided into three groups and assigned tasks to prepare and practice as a group and then facilitate conversations with other participants acting as future community groups.

## Role play

### Context/scenario

Gender division of labour in livestock health management exposes women and men to different levels of zoonotic disease risks. Women are more exposed to zoonotic disease risks due to their gender roles and limited access to information about zoonotic diseases. When they are sick, women do not receive the same level of care as male household members. Addressing this issue requires engagement with community members to transform gender relations and reduce zoonotic disease risks.

You are asked to facilitate community conversations on this issue involving men and women community members. The method you are going to use to prompt/introduce the conversation is a role play followed by provocative/reflective questioning, interactive discussion and storytelling.

### Objective

- In a small group, participants act out a situation for the purpose of further discussion and analysis.
- They discuss and identify factors that may expose men and women livestock owners to zoonotic diseases.
- They develop role play scripts and practice role play acting to introduce the issue and further facilitate discussion, reflection and analysis through storytelling or provocative questioning.
- They develop reflective and probing questions around gender roles, cultural beliefs and practises, and risks of zoonotic diseases.
- They practise facilitating group events using role play and reflective discussions.
- Other participants act as future community members.

### Instructions/small group tasks

- In your small group, analyse the context/scenario and identify discussion issues/questions to practise facilitating and documenting conversations.
- Develop a process agenda for facilitating and documenting conversations with other participants acting as future community members.
- Share and rotate roles as moderator/facilitator, actors, audience and note takers.
- Based on the discussion issues/questions you have identified, develop role play scripts.
- In your group, practise the role play and facilitate reflective discussions.
- Upon completion of the practice session, reflect as a group on your experience.
- There should be active participation from all the members of the group.

## Panel discussion

### Context

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) considers animals to be in good welfare if they are healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour and if they are not suffering. Many factors constrain the ability of community groups to improve the welfare of their animals. Socio-economic, cultural and environmental conditions; such as attitudes towards animals, knowledge and skills about giving care for animals, and environmental resources; determine the welfare status of farm animals. Addressing these issues requires engaging community groups in active dialogue to explore their views about animal welfare, discuss their animal welfare needs and find solutions together to improve the welfare of their animals.

You are asked to facilitate community conversations on this issue involving men and women community members. The method you will use to prompt/introduce the conversation is a panel discussion followed by feedback and questions from other participants who act as future community members.

### Objective

- To show different points of view and get participants thinking in a new direction about animal welfare.
- To facilitate interactive discussion and exploration of issues prompted by a panel discussion and further engagement and reflection from participants through questions, reflections and sharing of experiences.

### Instructions

- In your small group, practise a panel discussion around animal welfare issues.
- Prepare a few discussion questions.
- Share and rotate roles as moderator/facilitator, panellists, audience and note takers.
- The moderator introduces the discussion issue with a short story to set and maintain the tone for the panel discussion.
- The moderator introduces the conversation with a panel discussion and facilitates further discussion by inviting the audience to ask questions and share experiences.
- Upon completion of the practice session, reflect as a group on your experience.
- There should be active participation from all the members of the group.

## Picture-supported communication

### Context

Antimicrobial drugs play a critical role in the treatment of diseases; their use is essential to protect animal health. In Ethiopia, the use of veterinary drugs in food-producing animals has increased with improved access to veterinary drugs. The use of drugs in livestock is not commonly supervised by trained veterinarians. In addition, knowledge on how these drugs work and how they should be used to achieve the intended impact is often not passed on to men and women livestock keepers. Incorrect use of antimicrobials and other veterinary drugs, access to falsified or counterfeit veterinary drugs and non-compliance with withdrawal periods contribute to antimicrobial resistance and may also result in residues in animal-food items, of which the real risks for public health are poorly understood.

You are asked to facilitate community conversations on this issue involving men and women community members. The method you will use to prompt/introduce the conversation is visuals (pictures or posters) followed by interactive discussion, sharing of experiences and storytelling from other participants who act as future community members.

## Objective

- To smoothly open up the conversation and get participants talking and engaging in conversations.
- To create a context for the conversation and engage participants in reflections and sharing of experiences through storytelling and provocative questioning.

## Instruction

- In your small group, practice how to prompt/introduce a conversation topic and get participants easily engaged in conversations about antimicrobial use and resistance issues.
- Identify a discussion topic and plan how you will use visuals/illustrations such as pictures or posters to get participants talking easily and stimulate interactive discussion through sharing experiences and telling stories.
- Share and rotate roles as facilitator/moderator, community members and note takers.
- Upon completion of the practice session, reflect as a group on your experience.
- There should be active participation from all the members of the group.

## Summary of feedback during the plenary sessions:

### *Panel discussion:*

Feedback given to the group practicing facilitation using panel discussion:

- Who are the panellists? Questions based on the type of panel participants. The questions of why do we use panel discussion, who should be the panelists, and what to ask the panelists based on the purpose of the learning event has to be clarified.
- Need to be provocative, not leading. During the practice session, it was noted that groups were asking leading questions that did not invite exploration of multiple perspectives.
- What is the purpose of the conversation? A key question to ask oneself in an application of any group event method is to clarify the purpose, context and expected results.
- What is the learning process? Plan each learning step and outcome. During the practice session, it was observed that group's facilitation activities lacked structure and flow. They were advised to develop clear learning process and plan each learning step and expected results in detail.

### Use of pictures:

- Sequence the use of pictures if many are used
- The purpose of pictures is to introduce, guide and stimulate the discussion
- Get people to talk and interact
- Probe and facilitate the discussion



Figure 7: Sample participant-drawn pictures from the community conversations practice session

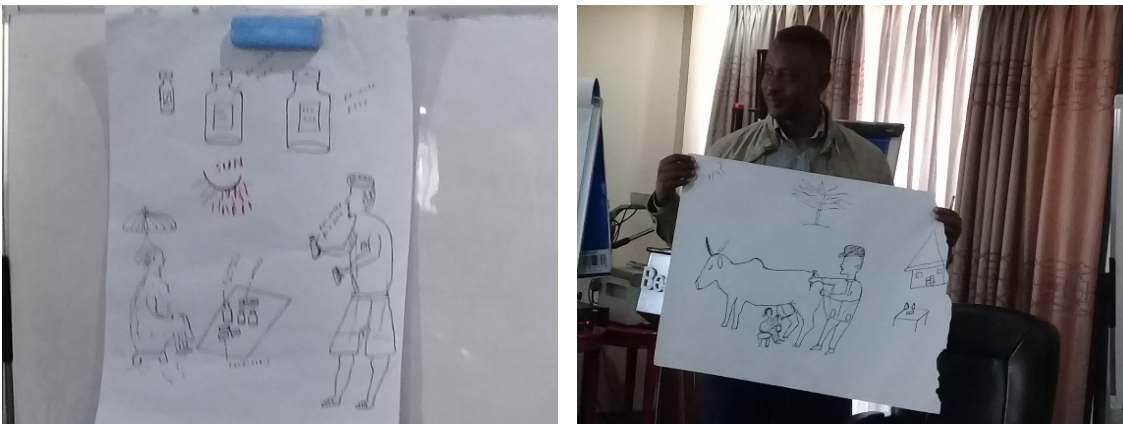


Figure 8: Small groups practising group event facilitation using role play



### Key lessons from the community conversations practice sessions

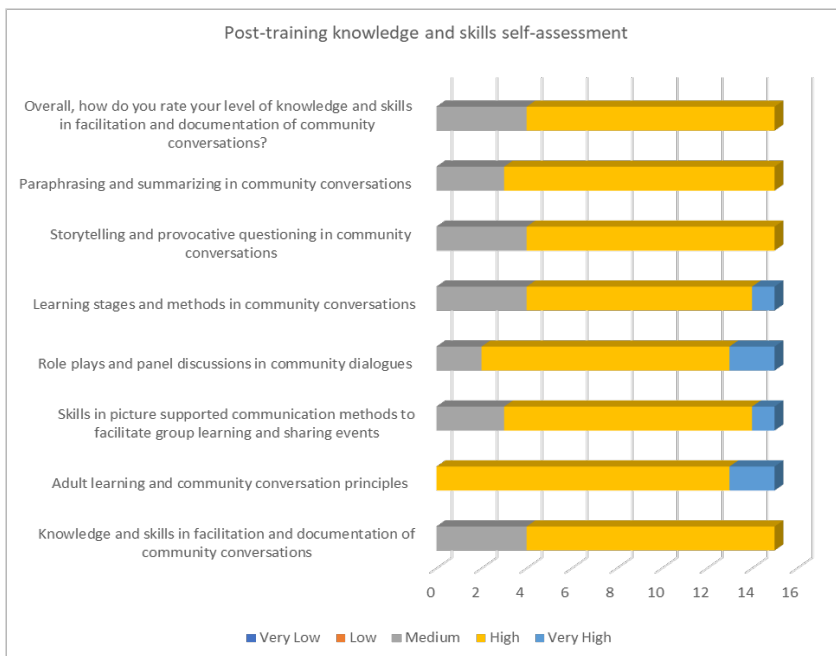
- Prepare well – articulate learning stages and activities, methods and content for each conversation session.
- Balance exploration of existing knowledge and introduction of new knowledge. Small groups tended to introduce new knowledge than encourage discussion among participants.
- Keep summarizing and paraphrasing important lessons.
- Communicate key messages and action points
- Introduce discussion issues in provocative ways.
- Start easy, contextualize topics in a simple way to get started and get community members/groups engaged and talking.
- When participants get stuck, encourage discussion by sharing stories and get them to reflect and share their own experiences and stories.

# Evaluation and feedback

## Post-training knowledge and skills self-assessment

Overall, after the training, 83% of the participants who conducted post-training knowledge self-assessment indicated their level of learning as high or very high, while 17% of them assessed their level of learning as medium.

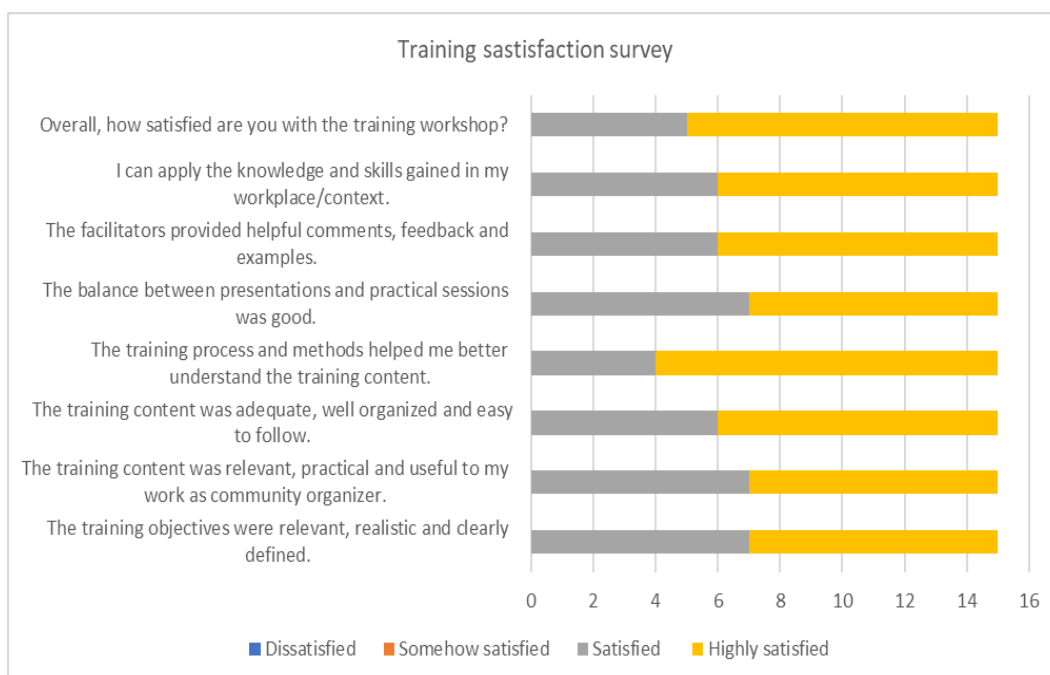
Figure 9: Post-training knowledge and skills self-assessment results



## Training evaluation survey and feedback

A training feedback survey was also administered to collect feedback from participants on the training process and methodology. Overall, 95% of the participants who participated in the survey rated their level of satisfaction in the training as satisfied or highly satisfied while 5% of them indicated their level of satisfaction in the training as medium.

Figure 10: Training satisfaction survey results



#### What participants liked about the training

- It prepared us to organize and facilitate community conversations
- It was participatory and practical
- There was experience sharing among participants
- There was a mix of participants in every break allowing us to network
- The practical and reflection sessions

#### Relevance of the training

- It allows us to interact with community groups and understand their concerns
- It generates more service demand from community groups
- It creates opportunities for us to do more with community members

# Annexes

## Annexe I. Training agenda

Day 1	Learning activity	Facilitators
9:00–9:30	Arrival and registration	Organizers
9:30–10:00	Welcome and about the project Participant introduction, expectations, ground rules, program overview and pre-training assessment	Barbara Wieland/ Mesfin Mekonen Mamusha Lemma
10:00–10:30	Health break	
10:30–11:30	Brainstorming exercise: group work and plenary session	Mesfin Mekonen
11:30–12:30	Interactive presentation: what and why community conversations, process overview of community conversations	Mamusha Lemma
12:30–1:30	Lunch break	
1:30–2:00	Interactive presentation: learning stages and methods in community conversations	Mamusha Lemma
2:00–3:00	Small group work: learning stages and methods in community conversations	Mesfin Mekonen
3:00–3:30	Health Break	
3:30–5:00	Interactive presentation: formative process of community conversations, adult learning principles Wrap-up: journaling of key learning points and insights Daily monitoring: mood metre with keywords	Mamusha Lemma/ Mesfin Mekonen
Day 2	Learning activity	Facilitators
9:00–9:30	Recap: Reflection and agenda of the day	Mamusha Lemma
9:30–10:00	Small group work and plenary: differences and complementarities in group learning events	Mamusha Lemma/ Mesfin Mekonen
10:00–10:30	Health break	
10:30–11:30	Group work continued	
11:30–12:30	Interactive presentation: participatory methods and facilitation techniques in community conversations	Mamusha Lemma/ Mesfin Mekonen
12:30–1:30	Lunch break	
1:30–3:30	Practicing group event facilitation	Mamusha Lemma/ Mesfin Mekonen
3:30–4:00	Health break	
4:00–5:00	Practicing group event facilitation continued Wrap-up: journaling of key learning points and insights Daily monitoring: mood meter with key words	Mesfin Mekonen/ Mamusha Lemma

Day 3	Learning activity	Facilitators
9:00–9:30	Recap: Reflection and agenda of the day	Mamusha Lemma
9:30–10:30	Plenary feedback of practicing group event facilitation	Mamusha Lemma/ Mesfin Mekonen
10:30–11:00	Health break	
11:00–12:30	Process documentation of community conversations Follow-up actions	Mamusha Lemma/ Mesfin Mekonen
12:30–1:30	Lunch break	
1:30–3:00	Overview of community conversation modules Lessons and scaling considerations	Mesfin Mekonen/ Mamusha Lemma
3:00–3:30	Highlights of key learning points: reflection and insight making	Mamusha Lemma
3:30–4:00	Health break	
4:00–5:00	Action planning, evaluation and feedback	Mamusha Lemma /Mesfin Mekonen

## Annexe 2. List of participants

Name	Gender	Address
Tesfalem Nane	M	Areka Agricultural Research Center
Belay Elias	M	Doyogena District Livestock Development Office
Aster Alemu	F	Doyogena District Livestock Development Office
Adem Kumbe	M	Yabello Dryland Agricultural Research Center
Mebratu Melkagube	M	Yabello Zone Livestock Development Office
Kasim Guy	M	Yabello Zone Livestock Development Office
Firdawok Ayele	M	Debre Berhan Agricultural Research Center
Yifru Demeke	M	Menz Gera District Agriculture Office
Minda Hailemichael	M	Menz Mama District Agriculture Office
Ayalew Assefa	M	Sekota Dryland Agricultural Research Center
Abebe Sahle	M	Ziquala District Agriculture Office
Bekalu Geram	M	Abergelle District Agriculture Office
Asrat Arke	M	Bonga Agricultural Research Center
Midayo Mitiku	M	Adiyo District Office of Agriculture
Meseret Kochito	M	Adiyo District Office of Agriculture