



careSM

PROPOSED VILLAGE AGENTS MODEL OPERATIONS

GUIDELINES

JUNE - AUGUST 2017

Foreword

Over the years, CARE has undertaken a transformative approach to sustain and replicate Village Savings And Loan Groups (VSLA) methodology through application of a Village Agents Model (VAM). The model is recognized as an innovative approach that adds value to the realization of VSLA targets, sustainability and scale up. Experience has shown that the functionality and effectiveness of the VAM is greatly determined by the quality of the Village Agent (VA). A competent VA is more attractive and marketable to the groups, hence attracting a better pay than his or her counterparts. Throughout VAM implementation, CARE has often realized divergent application of the model across and within country offices. These discrepancies in practice are likely to hinder efforts for future replication of the model within CARE as well as adoption by other agencies.

This document is intended to serve as a guide and help VAM users make appropriate choices in utilizing the VAM. CARE realizes that this document is only a beginning and would therefore appreciate receiving users feedback.

This publication is a collaborative effort between Access Africa and CARE Canada who took the initiative and provided financial resources for this publication. CARE would like to acknowledge Katherine Elizabeth Ann Oginsky, Nelly Atieno Otieno, Bernard Niyomugabo and Ruth Orbach-CARE Canada, Grace Majara Kabagabe-CARE UK-ACCESS Africa, Zegeye Bante Kebede-CARE Ethiopia, Fati Karine Abdou, Coulibali Dofanga-CARE Cote d'Ivoire, Pascal Niyitegeka, Glycerie Niyibizi-CARE Rwanda, Nicedore Nkurunziza, Theophile Nibigira, Tite Nyabenda-CARE Burundi, Melch Natukunda Muhame, Henry Katahanguha Mutabazi-CARE Uganda, Auster Gondwe-CARE Malawi, Mamane Mahamadou-CARE Niger, Sidibe Kadidia Cisse-CARE Mali, Ellen Dzidedi Awotor Sedziafa-CARE Ghana, Mwimbe Saleh Fikirini-CARE Tanzania, Mercy Wawira Njagi-CARE Kenya and Rabbecca Nyonyozi CARE-POWER Africa & Access Africa Consultant.

Access Africa

Table of contents

1.	Introduction	4
1.1	Background	4
1.2	About the Guide	5
1.2.1	Targeted Audience	5
1.2.2	How to use the Guide	6
2.	Implementation Guidelines of the VAM	7
2.1	Overview of the VAM	7
2.2	VA Roles and Responsibilities	8
2.3	Village Agent Profiling	9
2.4	VA Identification and Selection	9
2.5	Village Agent Capacity Building	10
2.5.1	Definition and Importance of VA Capacity Building	10
2.5.2	Key attributes of a VA Capacity Building Facilitator	10
2.5.3	Scope of Training Content for the Trainer	11
2.5.4	Approaches and Methods for VA Capacity Building	12
2.6	Village Agent Remuneration	14
3.	VAM Sustainability	16
3.1	Roles and Responsibilities of VAN	16
3.2	Formation of the VAN	17
3.3	VAN Strengthening	18
4.	Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	19
	Appendix 1 Sample Referral Tool	20
	Appendix 2 VSLA-VA MoU Example	21

1. Introduction

This document presents the proposed guidelines to be followed by CARE and implementing partner organizations (IPOs) while engaging and employing the Village Agent model to implement Village Saving and Loan Association (VSLA).

The model has six key attributes which are critical for its functionality. These are:



1.1 Background

In 1997, CARE Norway and CARE Niger started the usage of the VAM which was popularized in 2009, by Access Africa. The model was used to realize CARE International set goal of reaching 30 million of Africa's poorest people with financial services by 2018. This was majorly to be realized through promotion of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) methodology which CARE has used since 1991 to deepen access to financial services for the unbanked women and youths. In order to quicken the establishment of VSLAs, CARE developed, piloted and adopted a Village Agent (VA) model as a low-cost model designed to ensure self-replication and sustainability of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) in rural and urban settings across the continent. It was innovated as an engine that uses experienced VSLA members, called Village Agents (VAs), who are trained by CARE's local partners to establish and train new VSLAs at a fee paid by beneficiary VSLAs. Therefore, it originated from CARE's experience working with VSLA members and trainers whom they found to be quite resourceful with high potential to champion capacity building initiatives at community level- beyond project timeframes.

¹ Village Agents Network (VAN) is a community based structure of VAs created in the area of operation. VAN may be initiated and formed by a VAM user or by VAs themselves. Its major responsibility is to facilitate regular follow up on the performance of VAs and assure the quality of the training delivered to VSLAs. Specifically, VAN monitors VAs and VSLAs activities ensure compliancy with VSLA methodology, consolidate reports from VAN periodic meetings. It convenes and coordinates both monthly and quarterly meetings. VAN also in form of representation of VAs and when the idea of legal formation will be sought and done in different Country Offices.

To date, the model is recognized for its cost effectiveness whenever it is used to implement and replicate the VSLA methodology. It has been credited for its ability and efficacy in establishing community based technical structures that could be tapped into by any development organization or government to easily reach and serve vulnerable persons. It is also seen as inclusive in as far as creating friendlier jobs for youth and women. Therefore, it's wide use both within and outside CARE portrays its appropriateness to increase outreach, scope and sustainability of VSLA in respective communities.

Currently, different CARE country offices have gone ahead to use the VAs to train extra VSLA add-ons that include enterprise skills training, financial literacy, linkage to formal financial institutions and gender equity. It is against this background that CARE decided to validate the different practices used by different country offices, its effectiveness in VSLA delivery and come up with a harmonized VA model that gives CARE an identity in the industry.

1.2 About the Guide

This document is designed to provide guidelines on processes of VA identification, capacity building, remuneration, quality assurance, and sustainability of the Village Agent Model. The guide is intended to explain the models' value addition towards strengthening and sustaining VSLA service delivery. It includes information on the main steps and stages in sequencing the usability of the model.

The purpose of this guide is to provide factual information about the model to a range of stakeholders. Specifically it provides CARE staff and other interested parties with harmonized guidance on practical application and replication of the model as a means toward scaling-up and sustaining the benefits of VSLA methodology. Its focus on inclusion and participation of stakeholders promotes commitment and cooperation towards effective and sustainable implementation of the model. It is also intended to promote adoption of a sustainable and market led system that enables VAs to form and mentor VSLAs.

NOTE



Although VSLAs are often used as conduits for wider development programming—e.g. in health, education, or agricultural extension, these guidelines are exclusively focused on the promotion of VSLA.



This guide should not be substituted for VSLA or VA training manuals. It is recommended that the user utilizes it alongside the standard VA/VSLA training guide and life skills training manual.

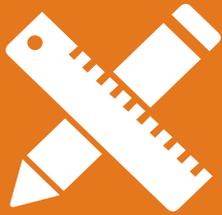
These guidelines have been informed by rich experiences from staff, VAs, VAN and VSLAs from different countries where CARE has successfully implemented the VA model.

The guidelines should be reviewed at least every three to five years to validate their relevance and applicability in different contexts. For any gaps identified, modifications should be made and a new version shared among the CARE fraternity and any other users. Involving the VAs, VANs and VSLA members in such reviews avail critical information and feedback on the model which would enable CARE to most suitably modify the existing version.

1.2.1 Targeted audience

The primary audience of this guide is VSLA program designers, promoters, implementers and funders. These include development agencies, local Government Officials, formal financial service providers (FSPs) and project host community members.

Use and benefit of the guide



Program designers, promoters and implementers

BENEFIT/HOW

Inform them on how the model works, standards to adhere to including quality assurance.

Provides systematic guidance on six attributes of the VAM (profile, identification and selection, roles and responsibilities, remuneration, capacity building, and sustainability through setting up VANs).



VSLA funders

BENEFIT/HOW

Provides information on the level of investment required whenever the VAM is used to implement VSLA methodology. This will enable funders to make informed decisions on any financial commitments towards utilization of the VAM.

1.2.2 How to use the guide

The various sections provide explanations regarding the VA model and how it works. It contains specific guidelines and several action statements to guide the users on what to do at every stage (planning, implementation, monitoring and support). Each action statement highlights steps and issues that might be considered while engaging the VAs' services.

While the action statements are specific, they are not prescriptive. Different users may have several ways to implement each feature and associated actions. VA operations are highly influenced by the prevailing situations in a given community hence susceptible to evolution. Therefore, the user is expected to apply innovation, evaluation, and modifications as they operationalize this model.

Users of these guidelines should adapt the recommended actions to the particular needs and resources of their respective contexts. Guideline adaptation therefore may differ from one area to another due to the unique circumstances under which they work.

2. Implementation Guidelines of the VAM

This section presents key aspects to consider when applying the VAM. It describes the model and its principles and articulates qualities of a VA, VA selection process, capacity building and remuneration.

2.1 Overview of the VAM

The operation of the VAM is premised on the assumption that VAs play a vital role in establishment of VSLAs and provision of financial skills to financially excluded communities. A VA is a person who is identified and trained to establish and strengthen VSLAs in their respective communities on a fee for service basis. They encourage savings behavior and credit utilization thus making community members prepared to utilize and benefit from access to informal and formal financial services. This has proved to be an effective pathway to financial inclusion.

Below is the illustration that shows the interlink ages of different variables that come into play to bring about the intended results from the model.

The CARE VA Model



Principles of the Model:

The model should propel a sustainable market-led system that:

- Uses local technical capacity to deliver services
- Operates on a fee for-service basis
- Ensure high-quality service provision
- Thrives on transparency and accountability to all stakeholders
- Remain true to the original purpose of financial inclusion

2.2 VA Roles and Responsibilities

The roles include the following:

- 1.** Mobilize, form and train VSLAs using the standard CARE VA training manual. VA workloads should be kept small and realistic. It is recommended that a VA who is engaged full time works with 15 VSLAs per annum. For VAs operating independently should work with 4-5 VSLAs. This enables them to continue doing their personal businesses and obligations.

- 2.** Monitor and mentor groups on the VSLA methodological best practices. VAs should attend weekly group meeting as indicated in VSLA training manual phases as illustrated in the matrix below:

Phase	Recommended VA visits frequency
Intensive	During every savings and lending meeting
Development	Every fortnight
Maturity	Once a month
After graduation	On call for special support/guidance

NOTE

- * The roles and responsibilities should be agreed upon and articulated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between a VA and VSLA or any engaging party. This MOU should be shared with community, opinion and local government leaders for a common understanding. The remuneration terms should be clearly stipulated in the MOU, so as to clarify to the VA, and the VSLA the source and mode of payment.

- * VA engagement terms should be flexed to attract females into the VAs role. Adjustments such as engaging part time VAs, would get more women involved since such terms fit into their schedules especially domestic chores.

- 3.** Resolve VSLA conflicts.
- 4.** Link the VSLA to the tool kit supplier.
- 5.** Refer VSLAs and their members to access other critical services as needed.
- 6.** Data collection may be an additional roles as required by any stakeholders and should be paid.

2.3 Village Agent Profiling

The attributes that one should consider while identifying and selecting a VA include the following:

1. Should have ever practiced or promoted any community based or membership savings methodologies. These may include cash rounds, ASCAs or a VSLA. This quickens one's understanding of VSLA methodology and group dynamics.

NOTE

* Emerging experiences have shown that VAs are being used to offer additional services to VSLAs such as entrepreneurship skills, financial literacy training and bank linkages. In such circumstances, additional qualities should be included.

* Practical measures should be taken to ensure equal engagement of men, women and youth as VAs. This will ensure gender equity.

2. Should demonstrate social skills such as communication skills and socially acceptable behaviors. These enable him/her to easily mobilize community members into VSLAs and collaborate with other social and productive service providers for any addition support.

3. Should demonstrate an entrepreneurship mind set in order to promote a market led system. The person should perceive the VA task as business opportunity to generate income.

4. Should demonstrate ability to train/impart skills to other people. This person may have ever attended a training of trainers or may demonstrate communication

and listening skills. He/she should be able to understand and speak the local language, demonstrate ability to read and write including numerical skills.

5. Should be a permanent resident in the community preferably for a minimum of two years.

2.4 VA Identification and Selection

The persons or institutions who seek to utilize the VA's services should consider the following in selection process:

1. Make reference to the VA's scope of work and qualities as articulated section 2.2 & 2.3 in this guide to determine the most appropriate VA they require.

2. Organize a community meeting at the lowest level of administration. Ensure representation of groupings such as; PWDs, women, youth, opinion leaders and other vulnerable persons. The attendees should not be more than fifty (50) community residents.²

3. During the meeting, explain the following:

1. The genesis, functionality and value addition of the VAM
2. VA quality and scope of work.
3. Community's role in the selection process, functionality and sustainability of the model
4. Encourage women and youth to enroll as VAs.

²For villages/communities with larger populations organize several meetings so as to reach a reasonable number of residents.

4. Allow community members present to nominate individuals they consider suitable and appropriate to become VAs
5. Give the nominated members at least two days to consider the offer and give their consent as appropriate.
6. For female nominees, engage and educate their spouses or critical adults in their lives to get their support.
7. Interview those who will have consented using the interview guide (annex iii).
8. Where necessary seek for a final opinion of specific key leaders to reaffirm the social acceptance of selected individual.
9. Once a VA is confirmed, organize a community meeting and introduce the selected individuals.

2.5 Village Agent Capacity Building

This section defines capacity building in the VA model context, presents the main objective of capacity building, and the procedures on how it should be done. The section explains the type of training or skills that the VA requires, the duration of the training and mentoring period, and the suitable personnel to build VAs' capacity.

2.5.1 Definition and importance of VA capacity building

Capacity building in this context refers to the series of steps that are undertaken to equip a VA with the required skills, and knowledge to establish quality VSLAs. VAs need comprehensive and well guided capacity building plan if they are to play their role effectively and sustain the VA model. This ensures the following:

1. Promotes adherence to the recommended technical VSLA methodological best practices and principles thus mitigating methodological drifts and distortions.
 2. Delivery of quality services as that leads to the creation of strong and sustainable VSLAs that can easily attract formal financial services providers.
 3. Attractiveness of VA services and willingness of users to pay reasonable payment.
- Overall the above attributes, contribute to stronger motivation for VAs to undertake their roles, ultimately actualization of the VAM's intent.

2.5.2 Key attributes of a VA capacity building facilitator

1. A facilitator may be a Civil Society Organization or government staff, a community member i.e from a VAN or an external consultant.
2. Should be conversant with the VSLA methodology.

3. Should be an experienced trainer of trainers (ToT), a coach and mentor in VSLA methodology. The facilitator/trainer should have a good understanding and command of both spoken and written of the local language. This enables him/her to articulate and deliver technical concepts in a clearer manner to VAs.

4. Should be knowledgeable and with skills in conflict resolution, gender equity and diversity, leadership, adult learning, communication, listening, negotiation and relationship building. These are enablers for a VA to effectively perform their role.

5. Should demonstrate knowledge and skills in business promotion. This is an important prerequisite for equipping VAs with employability skills.

6. Should demonstrate a good understand of the recommended capacity building processes. These include; conducting training needs assessment, developing or adapting training materials, planning, delivery of actual training, mentoring and support supervision and follow-up.

VA's training session in western Uganda



Specific qualities of a good trainer

 <p>A deep knowledge and command of the subject matter</p>	 <p>Able to measure and assess learners training needs</p>	 <p>Prepares and practice before conducting a training session</p>
 <p>Allows participation of learners</p>	 <p>Love for what he/she does thus passionate for continuous learning</p>	 <p>Strong communication and interpersonal skills</p>

2.5.3 Scope of training content for the trainer

In reference to capacity building guidelines above, a VA facilitator should ensure that all training content outlined in the CARE VSLA training manual is covered. In addition to the VSLA training manual, the training should also cover life skills/soft skills required for VA success i.e conflict resolution, gender equity and diversity, leadership, adult learning, communication, listening, negotiation, relationship building and decision making.³

VAs should also be equipped with business skills to enable them perform their roles in a more profitable way. The training content should include; self-promotion or skills marketing, pricing and quality assurance. This should be done through an in house training for a minimum of ten days. This training should cover the following topics as stipulated in the VSLA and VA training manuals.

³These training curricula may be accessed on the CARE Minarva.

VA training

Topic	Number of days	Day of training
VSLA methodological principles	1/2	1
VSLA concepts (savings, loan, interest and social fund)	1/2	1
VSLA leadership and formulation of internal rules and regulations	1	2
VSLA meeting procedures	1	3
Processes of Action Audit Principles of adult learning	1	4
Soft skills such as conflict resolution, communication and negotiation	3	5-7
Business skills sessions	3	8-10
Business plan	2	7 th month of working as a VA

2.5.4 Approaches and methods for VA capacity building

The following approaches/methods should be used to ensure comprehensive processes of capacity building.

1. Conduct VA capacity gap assessment before actual capacity building to inform the capacity building process.

NOTE

* Additional field mentoring visits should be aligned with the standard VSLA growth phases; intensive, development and maturity which translates to 28 visits during the first cycle of a VSLA.

* The VA should at least be visited four times during intensive phase, twice and then once during the development and maturity phases respectively during his/her first year of engagement. This helps to assess and identify capacity gaps that inform subsequent capacity building efforts/initiatives.

* These visits should be conducted in different VSLAs given that each group is unique.

2. Conduct capacity building process in three phases: in house training, field mentoring and a refresher training sessions. This will enable continuous and practical application of knowledge and skills gained.

3. Use appropriate participatory adult learning methods such as brain storming, role plays and storytelling to deliver the training.

4. Conduct follow-up field mentoring visits for a minimum of six months. Stagger these visits to a minimum of one visit per month per VA. Each VA should be monitored during VSLA training sessions to assess and strength their training skills and level understanding technical conceptualization.

5. Conduct the first refresher training during the seventh month after VA deployment and annually in case of any new developments such as VSLA methodological adjustments.

6. For additional training packages such as entrepreneurship skills training, Financial Literacy, Bank Linkages should be delivered after the VA has mastered VSLA methodology and assessment done to determine their technical capacity to deliver such trainings.

Checklist for VA Mentoring



Adherence to the VS&LA methodology Best practices Core principles

Whether VSLAs under his/her supervision:

- Have the recommended membership size (15-30)
- Have written and usage group set internal rules and regulations
- The composition of the management committee has 3/4 females
- Performs its roles as expected
- Have all the recommended and accurate records
- Keeps the cash at hand in a lockable cash box. The association should have a cash box.
- Group members actively participate in group activities
- Members attendance rate



Adherence to the VSLA core principles

- Whether the VSLAs observes the recommended operations of a cash box. (opening and closing of the box is done during the meeting and the money in the box is either members' savings, interest paid and fines only)
- Does not tolerate arrears both on loan repayment and savings contribution
- The association demonstrates a level of independence in terms of internalization of key concepts, activeness of the committee, application of internal regulation and decision making of the general assembly
- The association has a definite date set for Action audit.



VSLAs financial performance

- Savings frequency
- Accumulation value of savings
- Number of loans borrowed
- Value of loans outstanding
- Loans past due/portfolio at risk



VA's support the group

- VA's frequency of visits to the VSLA
- VA's mentoring to the group
- VA's time keeping for associations meetings
- VA's response to VSLA member's questions



Number of VSLAs formed in three-four months (not less than one)

Note: Include appropriate gender sensitivity and transformative performance indicators.

2.6 Village Agent Remuneration

This section presents guidelines on why VAs are remunerated, by who, how it should be done and when. Clarity of remuneration terms is a key VA motivator towards effective implementation of their roles. A VA therefore, just like other service providers should be remunerated for the work done. Clear articulation of guidelines on answers to the four questions (why, who, how and when), significantly influence VAs financial reward for their work in promotion and implementation of VSLA.

2.6.1 Key points to note on VA remuneration

- 1.** VAs working on projects should be paid by the respective projects based on the ToRs agreed upon. They should not be engaged as volunteers since this is official business. Projects should phase the VA engagement and remuneration in a phased manner to allow smooth transitional from project staff to independently engaged service provider.
- 2.** Discuss and agree with the VAs on terms of engagement. Terms such as “performance-based pay” or use of short-term contract should be explored by the engaging agency
- 3.** VA payment should be commensurate to land’s labor law. Depending on the tasks the VA is assigned, it should be benchmarked with payment to service providers of the same caliber in the targeted locality. Also it should be matched with the VA’s case load.
- 4.** A well written and articulated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) should to be signed between the engaging party and the VA. It should include a clear indication of tasks, how much, mode of payment and when the VA will be remunerated.
- 5.** Ensure timely payment of all dues due to a VA to keep him/her motivated and committed to deliver up to the expectations.

2.6.2 Remuneration setting process:

- 1.** For independent VAs, remuneration terms should be determined in a participatory manner through community involvement. Where VAN is in existence, it should organize community dialogues to agree on terms. These dialogues should be attended by the respective leaders (opinion, faith based, cultural and local government leaders) and community members including PWDS, women, adolescent girls, and youth. This will ensure their timely understanding and involvement hence their assured support towards VA remuneration.
- 2.** During the same meeting, the engaging agency or VAN clarifies on the specific services a VA will offer for fees. This has to be officially communicated to local authorities. This would keep both the VA and engaging party in check to avoid exploitation of either parties.
 - Allow community members to propose remuneration amount and terms they consider suitable and appropriate for VAs. Solicit three proposals and ask the following questions, Why that proposed amount? In other words what is the basis for the proposed figures/ amount?

- What are the community members' expectations from the VA services?
- Draw consensus on the most suitable remuneration and terms.⁴

3. Agreement should be reached on the mode of payment for the VA so that they can understand the anticipated benefit/reward for their efforts.

4. The agreements between a VA and VSLA/should be signed in the presence of the local leaders as witnesses to ensure adherence to the term by both parties.

2.6.3 Mode of payment

1. Payment should be in monetary form.

2. Payment should adhere to the MoU signed between the VA and the VSLA.

3. Payment should be effected either at the end of every training/support session or on a monthly basis.

VSLA members



Image: Kristina Just

⁴Where the VA is engaged to implement a donor funded project, this step (2) should be done during situation assessment to inform the project design.

3. VAM Sustainability

In order to ensure sustainability of VAs in the community and their ability to function and endure challenges in the long-term, it is proposed that VAs be supported to form networks. Village Agents Network (VAN) is a community based structure of VAs created in an area under VSLAs establishment. A VAN is important because there is need for a body to monitor and hold VAs accountable in terms of performance, behaviors as well as support them to access training materials and additional capacity building.

A VAN may be initiated and formed externally or by VAs themselves. Its major responsibility is to facilitate regular follow up on the performance of VAs, ensure VA availability and quality assurance of the services delivered to VSLAs. Specifically, VAN provides an institutional framework within which VA activities are planned, monitored, and documented. It provides a platform for VA interaction, peer support and shared learning. It offers a structure and leadership that is critical for linking VAs to different VAM promoters and users. VAN (s) therefore, are an effective mechanism within which VA availability and quality services are sustained.

What a VAN is not:

1. A funding agency where VAs or other organizations may seek funds or grants.
2. A charity organization whose services are utilized for free.
3. Responsible for individual VA's acts that are committed outside the approved VAN systems and procedures. For example conducting informal financial transactions such banking.
4. An affiliate of any funding agency rather an autonomous organization that may seek to work with other development agencies or government based on mutual understanding.
5. Cannot exonerate themselves from individual members' actions. There has to be regulation guiding members; not to participate in other activities for financial service providers. This would be conflict of interest.

3.1 Roles and Responsibilities of VAN

1. Publicize the existence and roles of VAs in the community. This may be done through community meetings, religious gatherings, and local radio announcements.
2. The VAN maintains up-to-date VA profiles and shares them with relevant stakeholders as need may arise.
3. It educates all institutions or organizations intending to use the VAM on the model operations at the onset of formal engagement.
4. The VAN is responsible for training and orienting VAs on their roles and responsibilities, standard operating procedures and equip them with all necessary and appropriate skills and knowledge required to perform the set tasks. This can be done through entry orientation sessions and periodic performance review meetings.

5. VANs continue to recruit and replace VAs whenever need arises. They communicate to and engage only those individuals that have successfully undergone through the selection process as VAs.

6. VANs vet the selected VA candidates with local leaders before their commissioning. This is necessary since VA operations require legal approval before commencement. The vetting process also informs other key stakeholders' safeguards against selection of wrong and incompetent VAs.

7. VAN develops complaint, recourse and accountability mechanisms for groups to be able to complain and remove a VA's certification if not operating professionally

3.2 Formation of the VAN

VANs should be formed by a VAM user/agency. The agency may facilitate this process using its staff or an external consultant experienced in guiding establishment of Community Based Organizations. Examples of such experiences may be related to establishment of agricultural cooperatives and Savings and credit cooperatives (SACCOs).

The following steps should be followed when establishing a VAN

1. Mobilize a maximum of twenty VAs from the same location to form a VAN and ensure that members reside within a radius of 1-3 KMs from the recommended VAN meeting point. This enables easy movement, interaction and follow-up.

2. Provide education on leadership roles and responsibilities and preside over election of leaders.

3. Ensure female representation on the leadership team in roles of prime influence such as chairman and treasurer.

4. Use a pre designed/standard rules and regulations framework to, train the VAN on the value of a constitution and facilitate them to develop one. Ensure that the constitution include regulations on the following aspects:

- VAN membership clarifying on who qualifies to be a new member in the network, membership fees, rights and responsibilities and cessation of membership.
- Leadership terms and leader replacements
- Organizational structure systems and processes. Structures include General Assembly, steering/operational committee, and linkages with other stakeholders.
- Management of external relationships, collaborations and partnerships e.g use of MoUs. These should articulate well how the VAN works with NGOs or institutions to promote VSLA both as partners or consultants.

NOTE

* VAM users should establish VANs during the third month of VA engagement.

* Guidance on registration should be within the context of the existing policy framework.

* The agency or institution should act facilitator's role and not a director. Thus, the VAN is obliged to incur all the costs involved in its registration process.

- VAN approved income sources-these may include Institutional fees % paid by users, membership fees, returns from group investment etc, guidelines on resource utilization and management. These should include VAN bank account management to ensure transparency.
- Management of benefits and returns.

5. Introduce the VAN to government structure responsible and support them to get formal registration. Guidance from any implementing agency or government institution on the benefits and requirements of registration is necessary to accelerate their recognition and building of mutually rewarding relationships with key stakeholders.

3.3 VAN Strengthening

Purposeful mentoring targeted towards nurturing formed VANs is necessary. The main focus of these efforts should aim at streamlining governance, general network management and linkages to any relevant services both community based and administrative structures that may support and contribute to the VAN's success.

NOTE

* Where possible, the agency should sustain active engagement with the VAN for a minimum of 5 years to ensure effective functionality of the VAN.

1. Develop clear mentoring plan to guide mentoring processes. This should indicate mentoring objectives, schedules, performance indicators and sources of mentors' i.e external or internal.

2. Develop mentoring and coaching tools in the areas of management practices, fundraising, advocacy, conflict management and partnership development.

3. Follow the agreed upon objectives and schedules to provide the necessary mentoring or coaching interventions.

4. Where external mentors are involved, ensure documentation and execution of formal contracts.

5. Solicit for feedback from VAN members on processes and benefits of the mentoring and coaching interventions.

6. Evaluate and conclude the mentoring process.

A VSLA meeting



Image: Nyonyozi Rebecca Garakumbe

4. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

In order to attain high quality model development and functionality, routine monitoring and evaluation should be done. This is done to ascertain what is working well, challenges encountered and any outstanding opportunities for the model's success which enables timely decision. This informs model users of any improvements required and strategic adjustments needed for effective functionality of the model.

Processes to follow when monitoring VAM application



Appendix 1

Sample Referral Tool

Date of referral
To:
From: VSLA/Household
Referral No.....
Client/Name.....
Age.....
Sex
Address(District/Village/parish)
.....

Please attend to the above person who we are referring to your organization/ financial institution/health unit for further action.

Reason for referral:
.....
.....

Referring person: Name:
Title:
Signature:

TO BE RETURNED

Date of assistance:
This is to confirm that (Name of Client)
has been assisted in the following ways:
.....
.....

Name of Person who gave assistance:
Name: Title:
Signature:.....
Date of return to the Implementing partner/VAN (origin of referral):
Name of person receiving: Title:
Signature:

Appendix 2

VSLA-VA MoU Example

AGREEMENT BETWEEN A VILLAGE AGENT AND VSLA

This Agreement has been undertaken between Mr/Ms.....of.....village,parish,.....s/county indistrict herein referred to as the Village Agent (VA)/ VSL Trainer under.....(IPO)VSLA project.

And

.....herein referred to as the VSLA group/ Trainee, located invillage,parish andsub county inDistrict.

On this day of the two parties have duly agreed to enter into an agreement as follows:

A. That the VA shall:

1. Train the group in VSLA methodology covering all the sessions and support the group during the intensive supervision phase totalling to.....weeks, specified as (...training sessions, 16 intensive supervision visits and 1 action audit training). The training will start on.....
2. Be paid for the work done, the sum of (local currency).....per session, but payable in equal instalment as follows:
 - 1st Instalment of (local currency).....payable upon completion of session three (3) of the training
 - 2nd Instalment of (local currency).....payable upon completion of the last session.
 - During the intensive supervision phase the payments shall be made in equal instalments at the end of every four (4) weeks however note that payments shall be made for only the weeks the VA has supported the group.
 - The payments for action audit shall be made on the last day after the VA has trained and supported the group.
 - During development and maturity phases ie beyondweeks, the VA shall be paid (local currency)..... per visit.
3. Continue to provide mentoring support to the group to ensure members understand and apply the skills learnt as per the VSLA methodology during this period
4. The VA shall supply the full toolkit, with all components upon payment of (local currency)..... by the group.
5. Have access to group records for purposes of performance monitoring and reporting, only during the group meeting.
6. He/she shall not get any other money from the groups other than the ones started above.
7. The trainer shall not claim any money from the group in case he/she fails to attend the group meetings. The group has the right to withhold such payments.

B. The VSLA Group members shall:

1. Attend and keep time in all the training sessions as per the training schedule.
2. Participate in the elections of the group leaders.
3. Ensure that elected leaders serve the group on voluntary basis expecting no payments from the group for purposes of learning



careSM



Follow us:



Layout, cover and back image: Kristina Just