

Doc 2.9. Selection of Communities

The identification and selection of villages or communities is critical, and considerable detailed work needs to be undertaken for such selection. Selection needs to be based on transparent and objective criteria.

Step 1. Define criteria

Criteria for the selection of villages or communities should be defined in close consultation with the regional or district authorities after having carefully explained the objectives and approach of the TREE programme.

Suggested criteria for selection of programme districts and villages:4

- economic situation in the area manifests a high incidence of poverty, under/unemployment;
- existence of an operational local development plan;
- demonstrated interest by the community in TREE activities, and a demand for skill training and employment related activities;
- existence of a minimum of physical infrastructure, road system, communications, electricity;
- accessibility to a functioning market for goods and services;
- an identifiable need for skills training, meaning that the site should not have been covered recently (e.g., during the past year) by similar training programmes;
- the presence of (at least one) lending institution (rural bank, NGO with credit scheme, government agency, etc.) which can provide credit facilities within or near the programme site, to which the beneficiaries will have access after the training;
- the presence of organizations active in rural employment promotion and community organization/development;
- the presence of existing or potential training providers in the district – these may be staff of local training centres, NGOs or support agencies; (Local crafts people or entrepreneurs could also be trained as trainers. However, since they cannot reasonably be expected to train competitors in their own communities, such trainers would need to come from outside the market area for the programme community.)
- availability of raw materials which can be turned into marketable products and access to these raw materials by the targeted beneficiaries.

Most communities are unlikely to meet all the criteria. Therefore, priorities will have to be established as to which criteria are considered the most relevant in a particular country or region. In many countries, TREE programmes have been implemented in remote rural areas, with little or no infrastructure (e.g., in Madagascar, Niger or Timor Leste); with scant access to credit (e.g., Niger, Timor Leste); with uneasy access to markets or, worse, regions prone to natural disasters, insecurity and social unrest.

Step 2. Field site visits

It is important to undertake field visits to potential project sites prior to selection so as to develop a realistic TREE programme.

- Visits are made on the basis of suggestions and consultations with stakeholders and potential partners who work in these areas and are knowledgeable about them.
- Prior to the visit the host agency sends a formal letter to the local authorities stating the purpose of the visit and arranging the dates and timing.
- In keeping with protocol, the visit begins with a meeting with the local authorities to inform them of the possibility of implementing a TREE programme in the area.
- It is useful to visit ongoing development activities, meet with various institutions, NGOs and the potential participants, and assess the physical environment, facilities and socio-economic situation.

Step 3. Short-list the preferred villages or communities for selection and make recommendations

After the field visits and based on an analysis and discussion of findings, the TREE local team prepares a report on shortlisted districts matching the criteria. The recommendations are then discussed.

Step 4. Final selection

In practical terms and depending on the country context, selection of villages or communities may not be such a smooth and technical process. It may become a politicized issue, but objectivity and technical considerations in line with the objectives of the TREE programme should be given priority.