

Workshop evaluation

Reported by P Starkey, E Mwenya and M Starkey

Introduction

On the final day, participants were given evaluation forms, which they filled in and submitted anonymously. A total of 100 completed forms were returned. There were 45 questions about specific aspects of the workshop programme and organisation. Participants were asked to grade each programme element on the scale A to E, with A equivalent to “very good”, C “acceptable” and E “very poor”. There then followed 12 open-ended questions and a space for any additional comments.

All the answers to the 45 fixed-response questions are shown in Bar charts 1–45 on the following pages. The charts include a bar for the numbers of participants who left the question blank (probably because they were not present or the question did not concern them). Some participants wrote additional comments concerning the programme elements, and these have been included in the analysis of the open-ended questions.

To compare the overall popularity of the different programme elements, the responses were assigned scores and the average scores were calculated. By giving 10 for A, 7 for B, 5 for C, 3 for D and 0 for E, equal importance was assigned to the positive and negative categories, but the strongly positive and negative responses were given slightly more weight than the milder reactions. The average scores are shown in ranked order in Bar chart 46. The aim of the bar charts is simply to provide a rapid visual impression of participant reaction to the different workshop elements: there has been no analysis for statistical significance.

Evaluation of programme elements

Bar charts 1–31 show participant responses to the various elements of workshop programme, and the average responses are ranked in Bar chart 46. The visits to farmers received the highest acclaim, followed by two keynote presentations (Guntz et al and Starkey) and the opening ceremony. Also very popular were the field visits to organisations and the small group discussions relating to the visits and to the themes. Three other plenary presentations were very popular (Dibbitts/Starkey, Wanders and Pearson), as were three of the workshop evening meetings (commercial farmers, Nolle videos and manufacturers). Next in overall popularity were the

final discussions, self-introductions and two other thematic presentations (Mwenya et al and Anderson).

The less popular programme items (but still rated quite highly—nearer “good” than “acceptable”) were the network planning meetings, some other thematic presentations and the reports of the field group discussions.

Evaluation of workshop organisation

Bar charts 32–44 show the responses to many aspects of workshop organisation. Participants were very positive, and all elements save one received an average score better than “good”. The organisation of general and social activities had relatively low approval ratings, probably because there were few entirely social arrangements: the day programme was full and there were optional activities and meetings each evening. The highest score (and highest for the whole evaluation) went to the organisation of the field trips. The hotel accommodation and facilities were considered good, although several people (12) wrote on their forms that the ventilation in the main workshop room was poor. Participants were happy with the exhibitions the provision of editorial advice during the workshop (Stares).

Open-ended questions

The open-ended questions gave participants a chance to comment on workshop strengths and weaknesses and to make comments relating to future workshops. Many questions elicited responses that showed several areas of widespread agreement. There were clear “clusters” of responses, in which participants expressed similar ideas, with slight differences in wording. These are all reported here together with the number of citations (given in brackets). As there were 100 returned evaluation forms, the number of citations approximates to a percentage figure. There were also some points made by a few people, or by just one individual, which tended to reflect their specific interests, needs, perceptions or (occasionally) personal grievances. These are also reported.

There was inevitably overlap between the areas covered by the questions, and respondents used different questions to express their views on aspects of the workshop. While some people made pertinent comments at the first relevant question, and did not

repeat them, others repeated the same strongly-held point several times. In some questions the total number of citations reported is greater than the number of respondents, for when people referred to two separate issues or topics, both were included in this analysis.

Most useful aspect

In response to this question, the majority of participants did not cite specific programme elements, but rather gave responses that suggested that the entire combination of the multifaceted workshop, the varied participants and the stimulating atmosphere was "most useful". The workshop provided a favourable environment for making contacts and information exchange between professionals from different African countries and resource organisations (46), resulting in new contacts and exchanges (18) and greater knowledge of other experiences in the region and available literature and resources (10). People considered it useful that the workshop involved a balanced, multidisciplinary group of people from many countries (15). The stimulating atmosphere of teamwork provided inspiration and wider horizons (5), with integrated analysis of constraints and solutions (4) allowing people to see things from other people's perspectives (3). A few people simply said all was useful (3).

For those participants who did cite programme elements, the discussions with farmers and the field visits were most popular (23), followed by the small group discussions (14). Some individuals found the lead presentations (3) most useful, the thematic presentations (2 for transfer and gender, 1 each for the others), the videos (2) and information on donkeys and harnessing (1).

Help provided by workshop

Participants were asked in what way (if any) the workshop had helped them. Most people responded very positively, stressing overall networking benefits. Particular mention was made of information exchange and new contacts gained (55). Some participants specifically cited future collaboration as a result of the contacts (5) and others mentioned the benefits of acquired knowledge of further literature and information sources (7). Many people commented on new and broader perspectives gained from learning of other animal traction situations and problems (28). Specific mention was made of increased inspiration and motivation (7), greater understanding (5) and self-evaluation (2). Some people mentioned they had gained in personal skills relating to animal traction, including strategy formulation and planning (3) and

problem solving (3). Some participants said they had gained from new technical knowledge (6), while others mentioned particular topics including: implements (2), extension (2), research (1), transport (1), weeding (1), animal disease (1), farmer-innovations (1) and blacksmiths (1). Some people acquired greater gender sensitivity (2) or knowledge that gender issues can be threatening (1).

Least useful aspect

On the question of the weakest aspect of the workshop there were no overriding issues. Some participants left this blank (10) or specifically said there were no items of low value (19). Various programme items were mentioned by a few people including the network meeting and elections (7), presentation of field visit discussions (5), group discussions on the field visits (4), the gender theme (4) and evening meetings (2). Some people referred to the tightness of the programme, rushed presentations and lack of time for reflection, rest or social activities (7). Some of the lead thematic papers were felt to be weak, complicated or lacking in scientific detail (4) and some felt the themes did not address their interests (2). Too much prominence was given to donors and expatriates (2). Individuals also mentioned poor ventilation in the hall (1), posters (1), too many papers (1), poor timekeeping (1), commercial farmer panel (1), tillage theme (1), field visits (1) and examples of complicated technologies (1).

Possible improvements

On the subject of how the workshop could be improved, some said there was nothing to improve (6) and some left the question blank (4). However, most people provided specific suggestions. Many related to having more time during the workshop in general (8), for the key presentations and discussions (8), for small-group discussions (8), for planning action programmes (3), for informal networking (1) and for recreation (2). There could also have been more field visits (5), including visits to farmers not using animal traction (3) and blacksmiths (1), and information on how to hold interviews with farmers (1). There were no clear suggestions on where the extra time could come from, although there was some mention of less time for discussions (1) and self-introductions (1). Several people felt the workshop could have benefited from more focused discussions with less generality (6), fewer subthemes (6) and more highly selected, expert participants (5). There could have been better and more animated thematic presentations (3) and these could have been spaced out during the week (2) with more emphasis on

indigenous experts (3). Some people wanted an opportunity to present their papers (4) or discuss them in groups (4). Mentions were made of the desirability of more decision-makers (2), a rural environment for the workshop (1) and the circulation of an address list at the start of the workshop (1).

Among the other comments were observations that personal name tags should be larger (2) but that photo credits should be smaller (2). More people should have been involved in producing poster displays and photo exhibitions (4).

Workshop participation, length and cuts

Nobody thought there were too few participants. Most people thought the numbers were acceptable (69), but some thought there were too many (10), particularly for detailed information exchange. A few people noted there could have been a better balance between countries (1), with fewer host-country participants (1).

Most people thought the length of the workshop was appropriate (64) even though some added it was very full (2). Some thought it was too short (12) and a few too long (5).

When asked what could have been cut from the full programme many people said "nothing!" (32) or left this question blank (9). Some said instead of cutting content, the workshop should have been extended to relieve the time-pressure (4). Some people thought time could have been saved on the presentation of group reports on the field visits (8), the self-introductions (3), the network assembly meetings (2), general discussions (2), the thematic papers (2) and evening videos (1). Some people thought there should have been one free evening (2) and/or an afternoon free for seeing Lusaka and shopping (3).

Further ATNESA workshops

Almost all participants felt there should be another ATNESA workshop (79), with some noting it should be different (9) and held after 3–4 years (1). One person thought it should only be held if real African experts were brought together. There was no clear consensus of the next host country. Some people said anywhere in the region that was suitable (8), with good transport connections (4), cheap (2) and in a rural setting (1). Mentions were made of East Africa (5), Central Africa (2) and the Horn of Africa (1). The specific countries suggested were Tanzania (17), Zimbabwe (13), Botswana (11), Kenya (8), Uganda (6), Malawi (4), Swaziland (3), Ethiopia (2), Mozambique (2), South Africa (2), Zambia (2) and Lesotho (1).

A wide variety of themes was suggested, with no clear consensus emerging. Several people suggested the same theme of "improving animal traction technology" (6) or a similar general theme (2) perhaps relating to innovations and progress (4). Specific mention was made of sustainable systems (6), farming systems (4) and small-scale farmers (2) and the *impact* of animal traction on households (including women and children), farming systems, the environment and rural development (11).

Several suggestions were made for specific themes (or subthemes) and most of the present workshop subthemes were mentioned. Themes suggested with several advocates included technology transfer and dissemination, project experiences and reasons for non-adoption (10 in total), economics and credit issues (6), the specific problems of areas of introduction with few cattle (4) and problems of implement supply and manufacture (4). Other issues mentioned included participatory methods (3), animal management and welfare (2), policy issues (2), donkeys (2), transport (1) and tillage (1).

Various suggestions were made for future workshop methodology, and these generally reinforced the comments already made about ways this workshop could have been improved. A number of people thought a similar methodology should be used (8), while allowing it to evolve with time (1). Others thought the methodology should be more participatory (2) and farmer-oriented (2), with greater emphasis on the role of African experts (4), although outsiders can be useful for identifying "hidden problems". There should be more time for field visits (3) and lead presentations (3). Some people thought more participants should be given time to present their papers (2), perhaps in parallel sessions (3), allowing for more discussion time (1). There should be guidelines on paper preparation and presentation (2), papers should be circulated in advance (1). There should be more policy makers (4) and greater farmer involvement (3). Analysis should be more rigorous (2), with a more self-critical approach to the benefits (or otherwise) of animal traction (1). One person thought ATNESA should consider making payments to those presenting papers (1).

Any other comments

Several participants (26) used this space to express satisfaction at the workshop, thank the organisers and wish the steering committee well. Most other comments placed in this space in the evaluation forms related to previous questions (such as future workshop themes or ways of improving the

workshop). For clarity and to avoid repetition, these comments have been included in the responses already reported.

It was suggested that ATNESA should establish a permanent secretariat (2) and should develop and disseminate guidelines relating to animal traction policy and extension practices (1). ATNESA should assist the development of national networks (1), but continue to emphasise the value of informal networking (1).

Conclusion

The workshop evaluation was extremely positive. No one gave the workshop a poor overall rating, and 82 out of 100 respondents said it was good or very good. There were very few poor ratings on any aspect of the workshop programme or organisation (fewer than 5%, overall). The very positive results are quite remarkable, given that 100 people of very different educational background, discipline, professional seniority, tradition and nationality all participated in the same programme for five intensive days, and had been given the opportunity to comment freely and anonymously on their likes and dislikes. The general consensus of satisfaction despite obvious diversity is well illustrated by reaction to the farm visits. These were rated as good or very good by 81 respondents, yet one participant considered them “very poor” and the least useful part of the workshop, for him or her.

People clearly felt they had benefited from the workshop. In particular they had gained from many new contacts and fresh insights into other people’s experiences.

Most people felt that the length of the workshop and the number of participants had been about right. The programme was very full, but most people accepted that this was inevitable in the circumstances—there was no consensus on what could have been left out. People would have appreciated a little more free time, but not at the expense of cutting out programme elements or increasing the length of the workshop. A small number of participants commented that they would have liked an opportunity to present their papers in plenary sessions, parallel sessions or groups, as happens at academic conferences. This was certainly not the majority view and given the time constraints and general low popularity of long plenary sessions, this would not have been realistic.

The most popular elements of the programme (considered by more than 75 people to have been good or very good) were (in chronological order) the opening ceremony, the keynote address, field visit briefings, visits to farmers, small group discussions on field visits, plenary discussions on workshop themes and the keynote synthesis. Also rated highly (over 75% good or very good) were the posters and photos, the workshop content and methodology, workshop publicity, briefing notes, pre-workshop liaison, registration, paper reproduction, field visit information and field visit organisation. One innovation at the workshop proved popular—the provision of an editor to advise participants on the style and content of their papers.

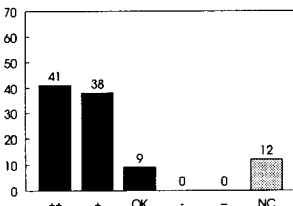
There were just five items which were considered by at least 10% of the respondents to have been poor. These included two lead papers (profitability and technology transfer), reports of field visits, the second network general assembly meeting and arrangements for social activities. To put the *relatively* poor ratings of some lead papers in perspective, it should be noted that many more people rated these papers positively than negatively (eg, 64 good vs 14 poor for profitability). The probable reason why the field visit reports were rated poorly is that all groups were given a chance to present their results: participants were frustrated by the inevitable repetition (and some weak presentations). In future it might be better to combine similar reports, or present them simultaneously as poster displays. The network meeting involved discussion of network statutes and election procedures, which some people found tedious.

The overall evaluation results are very much in line with those of the workshops of the West Africa Animal Traction Network, although there were fewer negative comments and complaints than have been expressed in West Africa. Participants at these workshop also tended to like a few good key presentations, visits to farmers and some intense discussions in small groups. They also did not favour a large number of paper presentations or long plenary sessions.

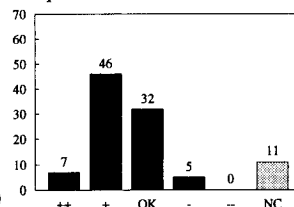
The workshop evaluation has given ATNESA much useful information concerning participant ideas, reactions and preferences that will be of assistance in planning future workshops.

Bar charts 1–12: Numbers of responses to the workshop evaluation questions

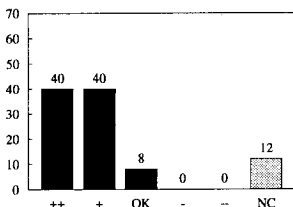
1
Opening ceremony with Minister of Agriculture



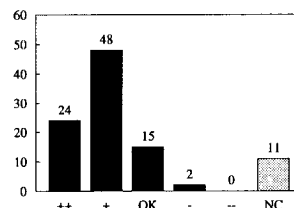
7
Lead presentation on women and animal traction (Lotta Sylwander)



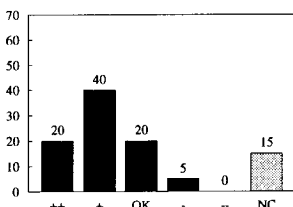
2
Keynote presentation: world perspective and theme overview (Paul Starkey)



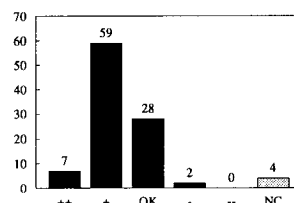
8
Lead presentation on management of draft animals (Anne Pearson)



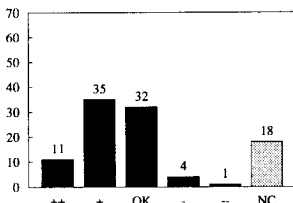
3
Self-introductions by participants



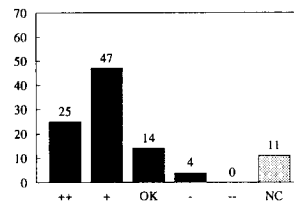
9
Lead presentation on tillage and weed control (Piet Stevens)



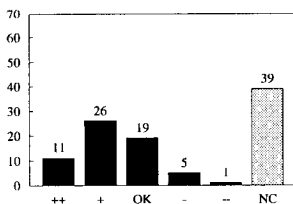
4
First network general assembly meeting



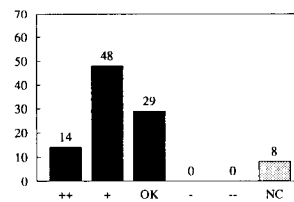
10
Lead presentation on supply of implements (Aalbert Wanders)



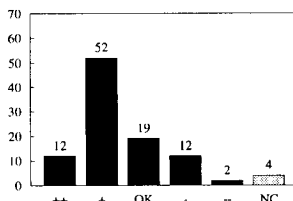
5
Optional evening session: videos from Uganda



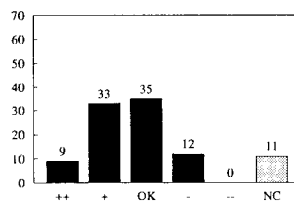
11
Lead presentation on transport (Mary Anderson)



6
Lead presentation on profitability (Anthony Panin and Jim Ellis-Jones)



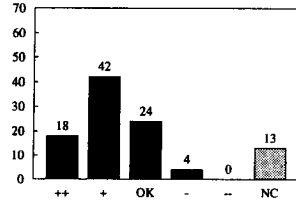
12
Lead presentation on technology transfer (Rene Fischer)



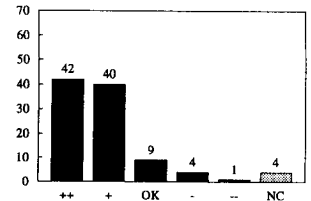
++ Very good (A); + Good (B); OK Acceptable (C); - Poor (D); -- Very poor (E); NC No response (No comment/absent/not applicable)

Bar charts 13–24: Numbers of responses to the workshop evaluation questions

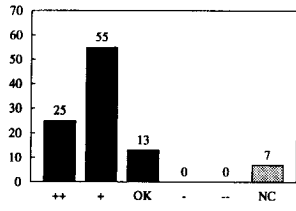
13
Lead presentation on animal traction in Zambia
(Wilson Mwenya)



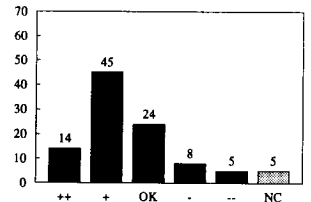
19
Small group discussions on field visits



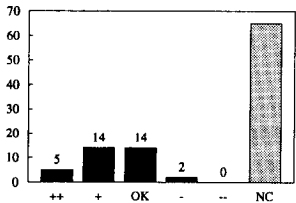
14
Briefing on field visits (Henk Dibbits and Paul Starkey)



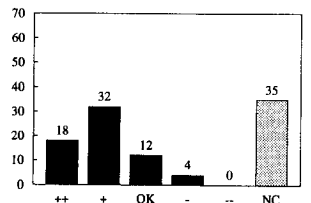
20
Presentations and plenary discussions relating to field visits



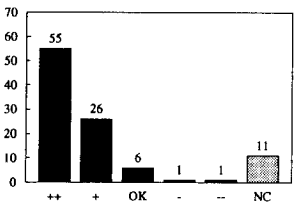
15
Optional evening session (Farming systems meeting)



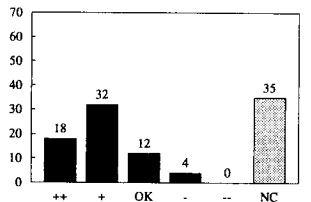
21
Optional evening session: videos (Jean Nolle etc)



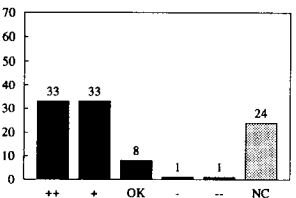
16
Morning field visits to farmers



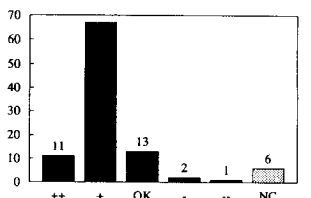
22
Small group discussions relating to workshop themes



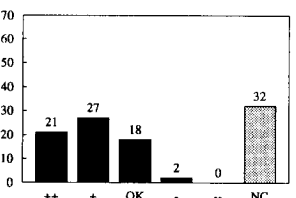
17
Afternoon field visits to organisations and institutions



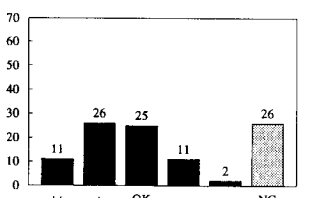
23
Presentations and plenary discussions relating to workshop themes



18
Optional evening session: panel with commercial farmers



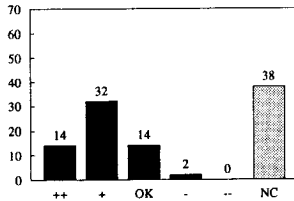
24
Second network general assembly meeting and elections



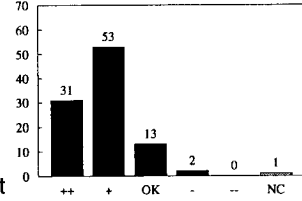
++ Very good (A); + Good (B); OK Acceptable (C); - Poor (D); -- Very poor (E); NC No response (No comment/absent/not applicable)

Bar charts 25–36: Numbers of responses to the workshop evaluation questions

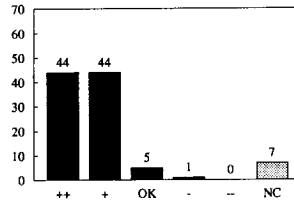
25
Optional evening session: manufacturers of implements



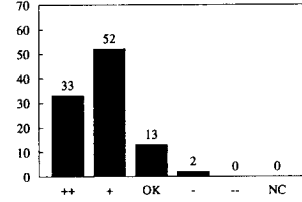
31
Overall workshop content



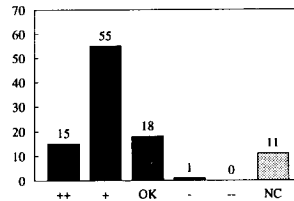
26
Invited workshop synthesis (Manfred Guntz and colleagues)



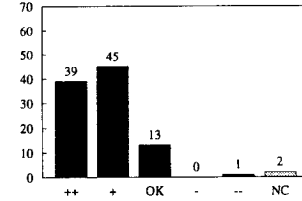
32
Initial workshop announcements and publicity



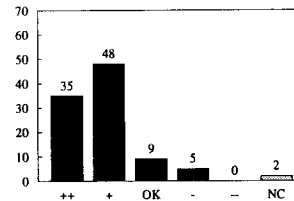
27
Final discussions



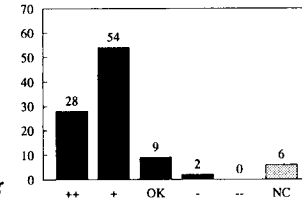
33
Briefing notes (papers, report, arrival details)



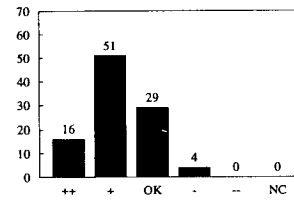
28
Poster and photo displays



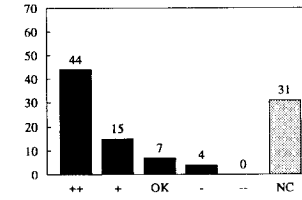
34
Liaison with secretariat and technical adviser



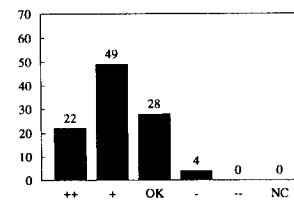
29
Display of implements



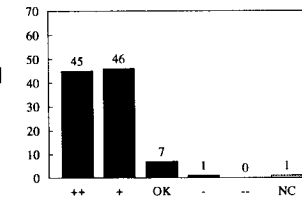
35
Arrangements for being met at airport



30
Overall workshop methodology



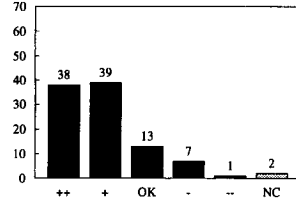
36
Registration and initial documentation (workshop file, etc)



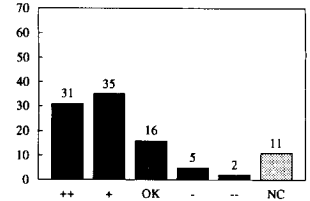
++ Very good (A); + Good (B); OK Acceptable (C); - Poor (D); -- Very poor (E); NC No response (No comment/absent/not applicable)

Bar charts 37-45: Numbers of responses to the workshop evaluation questions

37
Reproduction of workshop papers



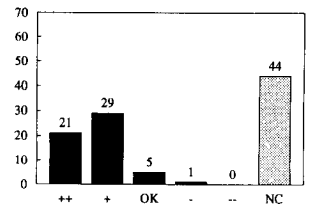
41
Hotel rooms and service (meals etc)



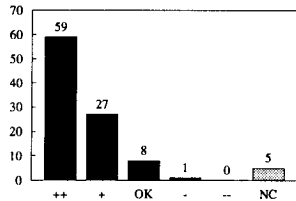
38
Information provided on field trips



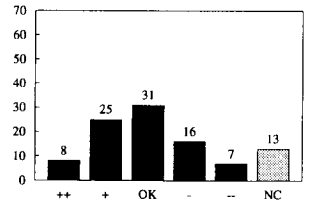
42
Arrangements for payment of per diem and sponsorship



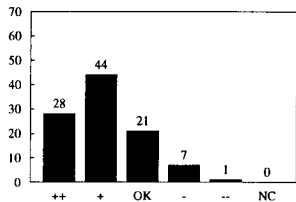
39
Organisation of field trips



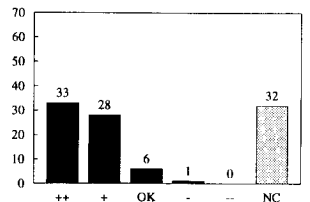
43
Arrangements for general and social activities



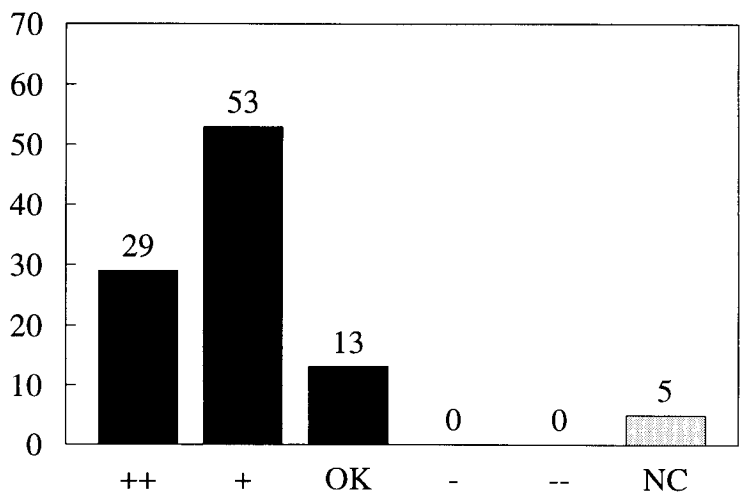
40
Workshop rooms and conference facilities



44
Provision, and comments of, English editor (John Stares)

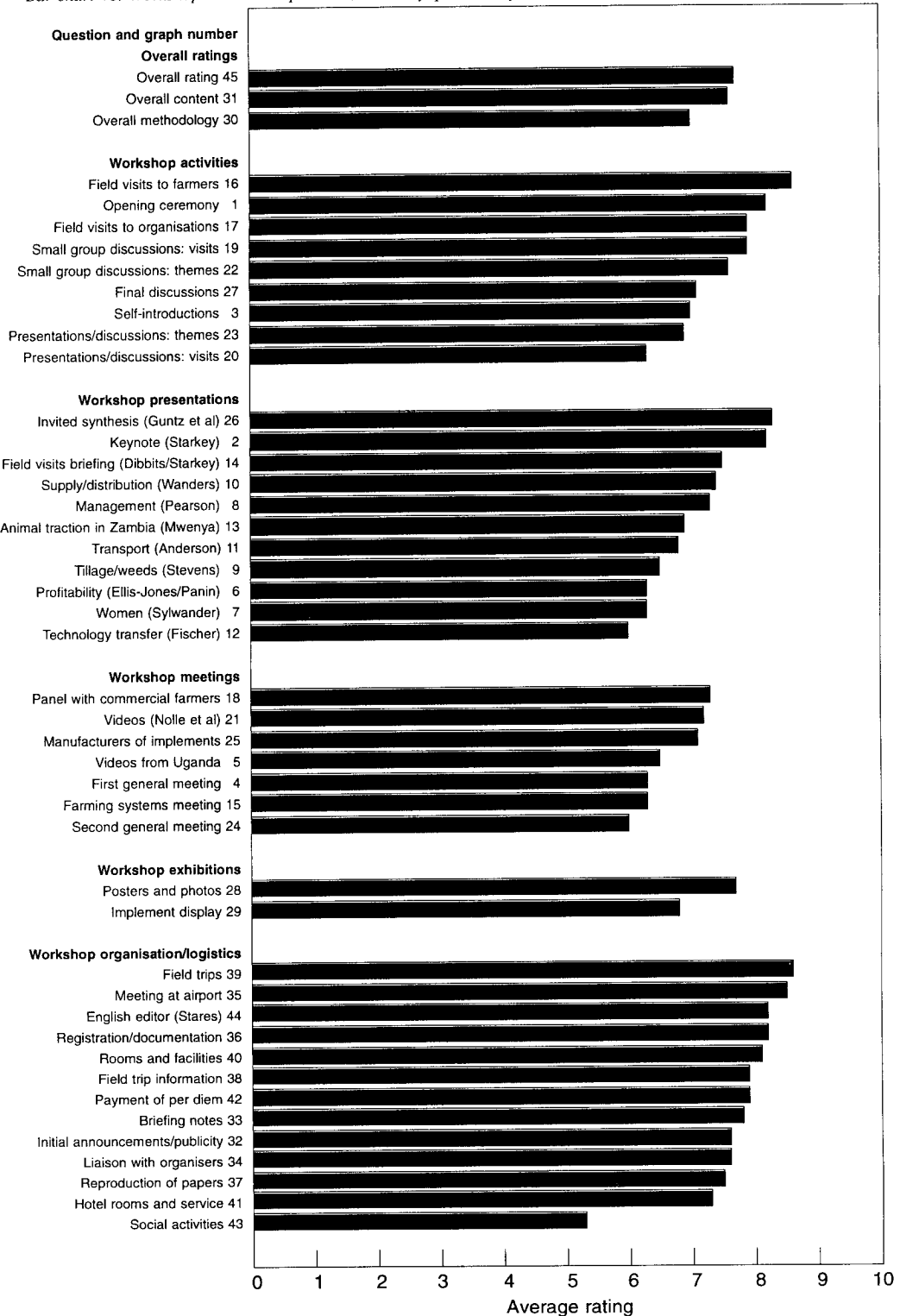


45
Overall, how would you rate the workshop?



++ Very good (A); + Good (B); OK Acceptable (C); - Poor (D); -- Very poor (E); NC No response (No comment/absent/not applicable)

Bar chart 46: Workshop evaluation questions, sorted by question topics and then ranked by average response score



Scores: Very poor (E), 0; Poor (D), 3; Acceptable (C), 5; Good (B), 7; Very good (A), 10. No response excluded—mean is average of responses