COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLANNING

A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS IN SUDAN

SYNTHESIS REPORT

UNEP

ProAct network | environmental partnerships for community resilience

CONTEXT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Cover Photo: ProAct
First published in October 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

CEAP   Community Environmental Action Plan

NGO   Non-governmental organisation

PLA   Participatory Learning and Action

PRA   Participatory Rural Appraisal

REA   Rapid Environmental Assessment

RRA   Rapid Rural Appraisal

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLANNING

Community Environmental Action Planning (CEAP) refers to a capacity-building process through which individuals, communities and organisations analyse their situation, evaluate options for change and then plan, carry out, monitor and evaluate activities in a participatory and sustained basis, either on their own initiative or stimulated and assisted by others.

Participatory approaches are a way to help people to participate together in learning and, by so doing, enable them to then act on that learning. The participatory philosophy is fundamental to the CEAP process and can help you bring a community together to address environmental issues from a new and positive angle.

This Resource Pack has been compiled based on practical experience in Sudan and elsewhere around the world, in rural and urban settings, rich and poor areas and with settled, mobile and displaced populations, and consists of the following:

a) a Synthesis of the CEAP process (in English and Arabic);
b) the CEAP Handbook, which is a detailed, step-by-step guide to Participatory Learning in Action (PLA) on how to conduct a CEAP;
c) an accompanying CEAP Toolkit, which outlines the basic purpose and "how to" of more than 30 tried and tested tools to help guide a CEAP process; and
d) a Facilitator's Guide, intended to help you, your organisation or community prepare for and run a successful CEAP process.

1.2 BUILDING ON LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

People living in a particular community have expert knowledge of how the environment affects – and is affected – by their community and way of life. As their livelihoods often depend on the state of the environment they will also have the most motivation to sustain it. It is this motivation, combined with their local expert knowledge, which organisations should use as the starting point for action to enhance environmental management.

The way affected people experience and measure environmental issues will influence the way they

act towards it. For example, a rich woman from a city is unlikely to experience land degradation in the same way as a poor woman from a rural setting. Because their knowledge and experience of land degradation is different, they will naturally act differently towards it. Policy makers and planners' ideas about environmental issues and how they should be dealt with often do not capture this complexity and diversity of people's experience.

In a CEAP process, using a combination of different methods, tools and approaches – including diagrams and drawings – all members of a community are encouraged to take part in data collation, analysis and the learning process of a CEAP, on an equal basis. Using visual tools often allows people to feel more comfortable when viewing and discussing subjects such as the environment and people's livelihoods. Some participatory approaches also use performing arts such as drama and role play to encourage people to express themselves in a way in which they feel comfortable. What is more important than the tool or approach, however, is the way in which people are encouraged to voice their opinions and are heard through using these means.

FIGURE 1. TYPES OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Level of community control	Type of community participation	Type of community mobilisation	Level of sustainability
High	Self-mobilisation: affected communities achieve an activity without help from an external agency	Collective action: communities lead the process of mobilisation and only request external support if required	High
	Joint decision-making: affected communities and an external agency make decisions together on an equal basis	Co-learning: communities and an external agency share skills, knowledge and resources during the mobilisation process	
	Functional participation: affected communities are invited to participate at a particular stage of action to fulfil a particular purpose	Collaborating: communities are working with an external agency but are not necessarily building their own capacity in the process	
	Participation for material incentives: affected communities participate in an activity only because they need the material benefit of doing so, e.g. money	Consulted: affected communities are asked about the process but their views may or may not have any influence over it	
	Consultation: affected communities are asked about an activity by an external agency but their views may or may not have any influence over it	Co-operating: communities are mobilising but with little idea why	
Low	Information giving: people are simply informed that an activity is taking place and have no say on activity design or management	Co-opted: communities are forced to mobilise	Low

1.3   WHY USE PARTICIPATORY APPROACHES IN CEAP?

Participatory approaches are based on the understanding that people affected by environmental and other issues should not just participate actively, but also influentially. This means that their views and opinions are not just listened to but are heard and acted upon.

Ensuring that community meetings are held at a time and place that is convenient and safe to all is an important part of the CEAP process. (Photo: ProAct)

Every stage of the CEAP process is guided by participatory principles, starting from the analysis of the community's situation and environmental issues, all the way to implementation of activities and management and evaluation. Participatory approaches help to:

- increase ownership and control, which is an important component of sustainability;
- identify the most viable local interventions for environmental change and improvement;
- increase the effectiveness of activities because these can be tailored by a specific community or group to their own specific needs;
- increase the efficiency of activities because more peoples' minds and resources are brought to bear on an issue;
- increase sustainability as people learn new knowledge and skills during a CEAP which allows them to carry on assessing, planning and acting to address environmental concerns;
- build trust between different people and organisations;
- negotiate and mediate in cases of conflicting interests;

- empower people to become "makers and shapers" of their own lives, communities and services by increasing people's knowledge, personal power, resource power and position;
- increase accountability between stakeholders through people being more aware of each other's roles and responsibilities; and
- enable people to claim their human rights – participation is not just a good thing to do, it is a fundamental human right.

COMMUNITY-BASED ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- Rangeland management: balancing use with natural regeneration, actively supporting regeneration with native rangeland species and managing grazing at a level that allows sustainable regeneration of grazed areas.
- Soil protection and regeneration: stopping water and wind erosion, restoring soil fertility and improving infiltration capacities in cultivated areas.
- Water management: safe waste water and sanitation, the management and regulation of drinking water and adaptation to seasonal shortages.
- Forest management: agreement on sustainable use intensity, the regulation and monitoring of extracted quantities of wood and reforestation and the maintenance of reforested areas through appropriate thinning, fire protection or protection from grazing.
- Waste management: waste prevention, recycling, collection and proper disposal.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

In a CEAP, communities engage in a thorough analysis of their environment, looking at assets, patterns and dynamics of natural resource use and the way these are linked to their livelihoods. Through this assessment and consultation process, people learn from each other and have a chance to discuss and negotiate controversial matters.

After the assessment and analysis, strategies are explored to improve the environmental situation. Such a strategy will likely address a variety of different activities.

At this point in time, it is important to then prioritise which environmental issues will receive initial focus, realising that others can be added in due course if necessary. Once priorities are agreed, a detailed community action plan assigns tasks, responsibilities and a time frame for implementation and management.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL PLAN?

A CEAP is a tool through which a community or communities have agreed to:
- a shared vision of what it is they aim to achieve;
- a common strategy on how they plan to realise this vision;
- activities the community want to prioritise, and those which might be set aside for later action;
- responsibilities: who will take action, who will co-ordinate and organise?
- contributions from the community: how much time and materials can come from the community?
- external support and inputs: will there be external support, e.g. training or material inputs?
- timeline for implementation: what will be done when?
- maintenance: who will look after and maintain the results achieved?
- a budget: what is the anticipated cost of the activities and where can funds be obtained? from?

A CEAP process has certain characteristics which make it different from conventional environmental assessment or planning approaches.

- Communities lead the response – The CEAP process encourages people most affected by environmental issues to play an active and influential role in ensuring future sustainable use of the environmental resource base. Community members thus take responsibility for addressing

environmental sustainability, with the support of others as necessary. Although CEAP may involve external support or resources at some point, this is not always necessary.

- A process leading to action – Ultimately the CEAP process aims to lead to tangible and sustainable improvements in the environment, with communities taking effective action in ways that they had not managed before.

- A flexible approach rather than a rigid model **–** Communities have different characteristics and needs, and the way they mobilise has to suit these. That is why there is no single model for how to do a CEAP. Instead, tools and principles are expected to be adapted to suit a particular communities' needs.

- An organisational process that builds on existing strategies – Communities affected by environmental degradation may already be trying to address this, particularly if it is having a negative impact on their livelihoods. Their response, however, may not always be carried out in a co-ordinated and effective manner. A CEAP helps communities achieve this.

- A capacity building process rather than a single event **–** CEAP is not a single event or project. It is not a campaign, or a series of campaigns. It is a continual process that can – in the hands of a community – be continued over years and even decades.

- A communication and education process **–** For communities to pursue environmentally sustainable livelihoods they need to have frequent exchanges of ideas and issues, both with each other and sometimes external actors. A good CEAP processes will try to ensure regular communication and education opportunities within and amongst communities about environmental issues.

- An empowering process **–** Rather than leaving communities feel powerless in the face of declining natural resources and environmental degradation, CEAP seeks to provide them with the necessary skills, knowledge, attitudes, behaviour and capability to address environmental issues effectively.

2.1   STEPS TO HELP GUIDE YOU

The way in which a CEAP process starts and evolves depends on a number of factors, for example the size of the community, the number and complexity of environmental issues identified, the availability of the community to become engaged in the process, the interests of stakeholders and so forth. Accordingly, a CEAP processes needs to be managed in a flexible way, responding to the situation and needs encountered.

Experience has shown that the following components are essential to consider for any CEAP, though the degree to which each is used is likely to vary.

Stage 1: **Starting together** – Introducing the concept, balancing expectations, getting organised, identifying and involving different stakeholders and rapidly assessing the environmental situation.

Stage 2: **Assessing together** – Learning more about the specific environmental situation and key issues from different people's perspective, exploring and creating understanding of linkages between environmental issues, livelihoods and community well-being and identifying possible solutions.

Stage 3: **Planning together** – Prioritising issues and agreeing how to solve them by considering and combining the most feasible solutions and strategies.

Stage 4: **Acting together** – Taking action and implementing activities to address the situation.

Stage 5: **Monitoring and evaluating together** – Using monitoring information to adjust plans, evaluate the results and impact of the activities and changes/improvements in the environmental situation – from a community and technical perspective. Learn from experience and include it in the next plan.

Although each stage is dealt with separately in the accompanying Handbook, in practice they often overlap.

3. STAGES IN COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLANNING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The CEAP process is flexible, responding to the different circumstances and needs of a community. There is no fixed model for community mobilisation and the timescale will vary from one community to another and according to the issues, scale and situation.

A CEAP may have its origins in several places, for example, it might be initiated following contact by a community with an external NGO or government agency or it may happen that an organisation already working with a community sees an opportunity to introduce a CEAP process to address issues of concern or conflict.

Following initial preparations – in which communities are identified, support secured from key government bodies, basic logistics arranged and initial training undertaken for facilitation – five stages are generally followed, as outlined below.

At the outset of a CEAP, one of the most important activities is to undertake a rapid environmental assessment as this allows you to become quickly familiar with the site as well as undertake some initial consultations. (Photo: ProAct)

3.2 WHERE, WHEN AND WITH WHOM DO WE START THE CEAP?

In order to conduct a CEAP successfully, we need to carefully consider where, when and with whom we intend to work. Our own priorities about which communities to work with may influence our thoughts about how to mobilise. Governments and donors may also influence our decision. But the community is key in deciding when, where and with whom to start. There are a number of practical issues to consider.

What information exists? Start by gathering as much information as possible about the local geography and environmental issues using sources such as research reports, government departments and people with knowledge of the area. Available information is likely to be incomplete at this stage and we may need to use our judgment about gaps and people's opinions. Exploratory visits to potential sites and a rapid environmental assessment may be helpful.

People have different priorities. Be aware that government and donor priorities about where and when we mobilise may be influenced by political or other concerns, rather than the community's. Their ideas may also be based on incomplete information.

Start where the community is at. It is not always essential to go through each stage of the CEAP. Communities may have already mobilised successfully without following these stages in a planned way. It is important for external organisations supporting CEAP processes to recognise past and current community actions and to then build on a community's strengths and achievements rather than undermine them.

Work at the pace of the community. There is a tendency for international relief and development organisations to work and expect results at a pace they are used to seeing in northern contexts, which may not suit the local situation. Often there is also time pressure from donors which is unrealistic to sustainable environmental action. Relief settings are especially prone to short-term interventions, even though most relief operations end up turning into long-term operations. In this context, CEAP may at first be perceived as unsuited to the need but experience has shown that as the CEAP process progresses, the community's capacity will be built to organise activities faster and more efficiently so that ultimately the outcomes are more sustainable.

Do each of the stages together with the community. Everyone affected by environmental issues in a community should be prepared to work with others, using resources they can mobilise together. It means including the most vulnerable, marginalised and discriminated against. It also means taking collective responsibility for addressing environmental issues effectively and learning how to cope with them, together.

What activities are already taking place? We need to consider ongoing or planned environmental activities by other communities and organisations in the same area. The CEAP process might be able to complement or scale-up existing initiatives. However, we also want to minimise overlap and duplication of effort. Two similar environmental processes in the same community can lead to confusion and even conflict.

Consider the logistics of mobilising in different areas. Are there particular concerns such as security and, if so, how will this affect the CEAP process? Are we able to access an area and easily

co-ordinate activities? Community mobilisers should ideally be from, or as close as possible to, the communities you intend to work with as this helps them develop a deeper understanding of life in the community and demonstrates their commitment to people living there. It also makes it easier for mobilisers to be available at times and places convenient to the community, and reduces logistical and transport difficulties.

Where is the greatest need? We need to work with communities in greatest need. Key questions that will help identify which communities have the greatest need are:

- who is most affected by which environmental issues?
- who is less well served by existing environmental services and activities?
- which community members are the most marginalised or discriminated against?

Answering these questions is not always straightforward (see Well-being Mapping). Talking to different people will provide more information, but you will need to distinguish between rumour, opinion and fact. The best way to do this is to go to the community in question and see for yourself (see for example, Transect Walk).

Some communities can be hard to reach. They may be invisible to outsiders and their existence not generally acknowledged. For example, in some places the existence of internally displaced people is not recognised by local authorities.

But these hard-to-reach communities are often the most in need. Starting together, involving many stakeholders and using participatory tools such as mapping tools (see Mapping and Stakeholder Participation Matrix) will help us learn more about the existence and identities of different communities and stakeholders.

Motivation of the community. Where possible, we start CEAP when a community has expressed interest in the process and in improving the current environmental situation. Feasibility Matrix, can help you assess the community's level of motivation. Exploring the following issues with the community (e.g. in a community meeting) can help them to agree that action is required on:

- critical incidents such as conflict over use of a natural resource;
- common problems, e.g. a lack of fuel for cooking;
- expressed needs, e.g. sanitation;
- traditional community events;
- general development activities; and
- emergencies, such as a drought.

Are people able to participate freely? Where barriers to participation are high (e.g. when community members cannot meet freely) we may need to establish relationships with those who control access to people, such as traditional leaders or other stakeholders (see Stakeholder Participation Matrix), before we can decide when to mobilise. People whose basic needs are not met, e.g. for food and shelter, are likely to find meaningful participation in CEAP activities difficult and their time may need to be compensated for.

People involved in illegal activities such as illegal firewood collection or migrant workers without permits may feel unwilling to participate in meetings or discussions for fear of harassment or arrest.

It is, however, important to create safe spaces for people like these to participate freely and openly in discussions.

Be aware that in some situations there may be significant risks to community members who start to mobilise. It is therefore important to carry out a Do No Harm analysis at the beginning of the CEAP.

3.3 STAGE 1 – STARTING TOGETHER

Starting together means deciding – with the community – where and with whom to start the CEAP process, as well as when is the best time to do so. It introduces the supporting organisation and the community to each other, if this has not already taken place. It is perhaps the most critical stage of the CEAP process, as how we start often sets the tone for how we will continue.

Starting together helps to:

- engage community members in explaining and understanding environmental issues from the outset;
- agree on the broad objectives of the CEAP process, i.e. that the focus is on environmental issues;
- balance expectations: clarify what people might, and might not, expect from a CEAP process;
- introduce people to the practicalities of CEAP work: how long it may take, what the process might involve, how much participation is expected from the community;
- build trust between the community and the supporting organisation;
- develop a way to ensure meaningful participation throughout the process;
- get an overview of the community, including stakeholders, interest groups and social groups, which will help to focus participatory assessment activities;
- agree on mechanisms for co-ordination and practicalities of working with community members and stakeholders;
- know previous actors and projects in the community to avoid repetition and overlaps with existing activities and services;
- avoid conflict, for example, due to people feeling left out of the process; and
- encourage community ownership of future initiatives right from the start.

In order to conduct a CEAP successfully, we need to carefully consider where, when and with whom we work. There are a number of practical issues to consider.

3.3.1 CHECK OUR CAPACITY TO START

Community mobilisation should only start when we are confident that we have the commitment and resources to work with the community for long enough to achieve sustainable results.

An integral part of a CEAP seeks to find alternative means of livelihood support and income generation which does not degrade the natural resource base. (Photo: UNEP)

3.3.2 INTRODUCE OURSELVES

As we start working in a community or area, we need to introduce ourselves to the local leaders, community members and authorities. It is important to let people know who we are and what we want to do. This is in order to:

- get permission to work in the community, or area, from the relevant authorities;
- respect local leadership and customs;
- begin to develop relationships;
- begin to ensure realistic expectations of what your organisation may be able to contribute; and
- begin to establish honest communication and avoid causing suspicion and mistrust.

Be open with the community. It is important to be prepared to listen and learn about the concerns and experiences of people and organisations who may be working with the community. People are likely to have questions and expectations about what the organisation is going to do. These should be discussed as openly and honestly as possible.

3.3.3 LEARN ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

After introducing ourselves to the community, it is now time for the community to introduce itself to us. A useful way to do this is to involve the community in introductory activities such as

mapping, which involves using participatory tools to map and explore key characteristics of the community (see Mapping). This helps define the different groups within the community or area and can also guide decisions about which people and community structures to work with during the participatory assessment.

3.3.4 DISCUSS AND CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS

Community members and other stakeholders are likely to have many expectations. These can be based on previous experience of organisations and/or on what people know or believe about the specific group that is starting work in the community.

It is important that stakeholders have realistic expectations of your organisation from the start. Unrealistic expectations will lead to disappointment and might cause the community to lose interest in the CEAP process.

3.3.5 EXPLAIN HOW THE CEAP PROGRESS MIGHT WORK

To balance expectation and avoid possible disappointment it is important to be transparent with the community from the beginning and to clarify in general terms:

- what is the aim of CEAP?
- a rough timeline for the CEAP – when might each stage of the CEAP process take place and how long might it take?
- who will the CEAP target/work with?
- what involvement will be expected at which stage?
- what resources will be required at each stage?

3.3.6 CONFIRM THE MOTIVATION OF THE COMMUNITY

Where possible, we start CEAP when a community has also expressed interest in the process and in improving the current management of natural resources. Exploring the following issues with the community (e.g. in a community meeting) can help determine if this is the case:

- have there been environment-related emergencies, e.g. flooding or drought?
- has there been conflict over use of a natural resource?
- do people mention common problems, e.g. a lack of fuel for cooking?

3.3.7 IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS AND WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE

Knowing the stakeholders and different groups in a community is very important. Only when we understand well, who is part of the community and what different groups exist, can we give everybody the opportunity to participate in the CEAP in a meaningful way.

3.3.8 IDENTIFY GOOD MEETING SPACES AND AGREE ON CONVENIENT TIMING

Before moving on to assessing together, we need to ensure that there are safe spaces for community groups to meet. CEAP activities should take place at locations that are convenient and comfortable for community members, where people can build trusting relationships and participate freely in discussions.

When planning, also consider the time people have available. Seasonal work or holidays may mean that some people are busy or away at certain times of the year. The rainy season often disrupts transport and travel, which may be an issue if the community is scattered in different areas.

3.3.9 ESTABLISH COMMUNICATION AND CO-OPERATION FOCAL POINTS

The roles played by community mobilisers or facilitators, for example, can vary depending on the size of the community, the setting, possible internal conflicts and the experience and skills of community members in leading community-managed processes.

Facilitation by community members is very helpful in large communities where there is need for a lot of consultation and assessment in smaller groups. The responsibility of community mobilisers, on the other hand, is to help organise CEAP meetings and to provide feedback from meetings to the larger community.

> **!** Facilitators need to be unbiased, which means they should not have any personal, economic, financial, material or power interest in the environmental issues being discussed, or in the outcomes of the CEAP process.

3.3.10   DO A RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

A rapid environmental assessment (REA) is a structured approach to survey the environmental conditions of a particular area during a specified period of time. It involves the collection of secondary and field-level environmental data to get an overview of the current state of the environment and serve as a baseline, providing a basic understanding of major issues.

REAs are different from participatory environmental assessments in that they do not aim to empower communities to conduct their own assessment of the environmental situation. Rather, it is led by outside organisations. The process of rapid assessment will not in itself encourage communities to mobilise.

A REA should, however, never be seen as a replacement or shortcut to a participatory environmental assessment. The latter, as it is done in CEAP during the Assessing Together stage is important in order to explore some issues in depth, obtain the community's perspectives and give people a forum to discuss, negotiate, learn and agree.

3.4 STAGE 2 – ASSESSING TOGETHER

Assessing together is a means to analyse environmental assets and environmental issues in a participatory way. It is intended to help to:

- build general community awareness, knowledge and understanding of environment-related issues and possible solutions to address some of these;
- provide detailed information about environmental issues in the community for planning together (Stage 3);
- enable specific community groups to share knowledge and ideas which helps develop appropriate and effective interventions;
- build relationships with and between stakeholders;
- build an understanding of the perspectives of different community members and committees, as relevant;
- build community ownership of the process, which increases the effectiveness and sustainability of the CEAP process;
- strengthen skills and the capacity of community members in the assessment team;
- build self-esteem and confidence among community members;
- contribute to the impetus for community action; and
- build trust between all stakeholders.

3.4.1 HOW DO WE ASSESS TOGETHER?

In order to allow people to analyse and fully learn about their situation, a series of participatory environmental assessments, using different tools and techniques, are used. When one or several tools are used together in a sequence, in one sitting, this makes up a "CEAP session".

In such a process, the community and CEAP facilitators can use a range of different tools to assess the environmental situation and establish connections between different factors. The suggested tools in the accompanying Toolkit are based on PLA approaches, and originate from experience with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA).

CEAP sessions should be planned so that participants can get the most out of them. In order to do this, it helps to answer – as an assessment team – the following questions, in advance:

- What are the objectives of the assessment and the session?
- What issues need to be explored in more detail?
- What main leading questions do we have?
- What PLA tools might we use?
- Who needs to be included in the participatory assessment session? Where might we do the assessment? Do we need to move around in the community, or can we meet in one place?
- When to do the assessment? Is this a good season to assess and discuss this issue? If not, do we need to do a deeper analysis in a different season?
- What materials and resources will be required?

Each community has different environmental assets, environmental problems and in its awareness and understanding of environmental management.

For this reason the way the participatory environmental assessment (Assessing Together) stage is carried out can be different in each community. However, there are four main elements that are helpful to include in each CEAP participatory assessment process:

I. Analyse and discuss what is there: take stock of what exists in the community in terms of natural resources, environmental and livelihoods assets, as well as some key issues already identified;

II. Build a positive vision how the community wants their environment to be in the future, meaning where they want to get through community action;

III. Analyse issues deeper to build a good understanding of environmental dynamics, how things are interconnected and what are the root causes of some of the environmental issues.

IV. Explore a large range of options to improve environmental management and restoration of environmental resources.

3.4.2 USING TOOLS

The decision as to which tool to use when, is left to the facilitator who should be familiar with them and confident on using them in different settings. A few commonly used tools are briefly described below.

STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

A stakeholder analysis is particularly useful at the beginning of a CEAP Process in order to get an overview of stakeholders. Such an analysis can be started in the form of a Venn Diagram, collecting and reflecting all stakeholders and discussing their interests and influence.

MAPPING

Community maps are an excellent way to assess and discuss a range of issues. A mapping session involves asking people to create a map of their village and surroundings, noting as many different features as possible – where, when and which people access specific natural resources, seasonal changes, areas prone to potential conflict and so forth. Different maps can look at different details, focussing on particular issues, marking changes or developing a vision for the future. The map itself does not need to be beautiful and representative: what is most important is the discussion that takes place.

Community mapping is often a successful starting point to bring different stakeholders together to discuss their opinions, needs and suggestions with regards natural resource management. This flexible tool can be used in many different ways and may be repeated at different times of the CEAP process. (Photo: UNEP)

VENN DIAGRAMS

Similar to maps, Venn Diagrams can be used to explore and discuss a range of issues. These diagrams can take many different forms and shapes: they can describe relationships, conflicts and power, economic connections, the importance of different elements and more. Venn Diagrams are also particularly useful when they show dynamics, such as the flow of resources, flow of information and decision making. It is always important to do a Venn Diagram with movable cards, so that the diagram can be changed according to the discussion of the relationships of its elements.

TRANSECT WALKS

Transect walks are an excellent way to triangulate and to get a visual impression of the issues that matter to the community. A transect walk is often done by walking a straight, random line from one end of the community to the other end with a group of local people, discussing any issues observed on the way. It can confirm things that were previously discussed and it can also raise new questions and stimulate new discussions.

SEASONAL CALENDAR

A seasonal calendar is usually used to assess seasonal work at the household level and provide insights into livelihoods. Facilitators may also use the tool to particularly explore seasonal issues related to the environment: in which season are specific natural resources uses?; what coping

strategies do people practice when resources are scarce?; when is labour available for community natural resource regeneration work?

Separate calendars might also be established to differentiate the seasonal workloads of women and men, or of different stakeholder groups.

SEASONAL CALENDER

FACTORS	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Clearing field of weeds	███	███										
Livestock moved to new grazing area			███	███	███				███	███	███	
Water shortages			███						███	███	███	
Etc												

• What resources are important at different times of the year
• Times of labour competition and resource scarcity
• Differences in the way men and women might use natural resources

ROOT CAUSES

Problem trees are a powerful tool to explore the root causes of existing problems. By identifying root causes, we can think of activities that might improve the situation. Questions to consider asking are: What causes this? Why are you facing this problem? What else may be contributing to this? An important result of a root cause analysis is that it breaks big problems down into a number of smaller issues which are easier to tackle.

VISIONING

Visioning is a very powerful tool to consider opportunities and build a positive vision for the future. It may be applied earlier or later in the process and facilitators can use it to "brighten up" the process, if stuck repetitively on the same problems. Visioning by sub-groups can provide exciting insights into the preferences and needs of different community groups, e.g. women, men, youth or different livelihood groups.

PRIORITISATION

Prioritisation falls between Assessing and Planning in the CEAP process. It may need to be repeated at different stages, e.g. prioritising between strategies and prioritising between different activities within a strategy.

3.5 STAGE 3 – PLANNING TOGETHER

Planning together means deciding how we and the community will respond to addressing the different problems and issues identified during the participatory assessment. Following this review of the current situation the most urgent problems and needs are then prioritised. Strategies are later laborated to address these issues, depending on their feasibility, impact and sustainability.

Planning together also involves deciding how these strategies will be put into action. The community then needs to agree on the practical details of who will do what, how and when.

PLANNING TOGETHER HELPS TO:

- develop a shared vision and sense of purpose in the community of how they can deal with environmental issues, by giving all stakeholders a chance to influence how things will be done;
- use people's experience and knowledge to select the most appropriate strategies to respond to problems identified during the assessment;
- inform and interest community members and stakeholders in the intervention;
- co-ordinate the involvement of stakeholders;
- make sure that planned activities are appropriate for the community and the groups within it;
- build community ownership and control of the plan;
- clarify and help balance expectations within the community regarding the plan; and
- assist effective and efficient use of assets and resources.

3.5.1 HOW DO WE PLAN TOGETHER?

Due to limited time, assets and capacity, it may not be possible to tackle all of the root causes at once. So it is helpful at this stage to decide with the community which root problems are the most important. Questions to help prioritise problems include:

- How serious is the problem? For example, does the problem impact many people in the community? Does it have a severe impact on affected people?
- The potential seriousness of a problem may be important to consider – whether the problem is likely to grow if it is not addressed.
- How worried is the community? If the community is particularly worried about a problem they are more likely to mobilise towards addressing it. If the community is not so worried, that particular problem may be a low priority.
- Are there gaps in current actions to address the problem? Are other organisations already addressing the problem? Are their activities effective or not?

3.5.2 THE CEAP PLAN

The details documented in a CEAP plan depend a lot on what and how much will be done. The more difficult and complex the CEAP objectives and activities are, the more detail is required for planning. Many activities, if we think them through thoroughly, turn out to be composed by different steps. In order not to forget anything important, it is good to write down the steps clearly

in the plan and record responsibilities, timing and assets and inputs for each step.

It is important to not only consider steps that are needed to do an activity for the first time, but also to discuss and insert the follow-up, maintenance and management of the activity.

EXAMPLE OF INITIAL CONTENTS TO START THE CEAP PROCESS

Objective: 40 hectares of rangeland and woodland rehabilitated through training, capacity building and improved governance

Strategy: Community representatives will be trained in participatory approaches to encourage and enable land-owners, pastoralists and other key resource users to practise more sustainable approaches to natural resource use and management

What will we do?	When will it be done?	Who will be esponsible?	Who will be involved in the practical work?	What assets and resources will we use?	Has it been done?
STEP 1: COMMUNITY SELECTION AND MOBILISATION					
Team preparation: meeting to define intent and sketch out next steps	April-May	NGO representatives contacted by community leaders;	NGO; facilitator	Meeting spaces; PLA Toolkit; and Handbook	√
Consultation: government and village leaders/elders	June	NGO; community leaders;	NGO; facilitator	Transport logistics	√
Community meeting	July	NGO; community leaders; facilitator	Elders; NGO; facilitator	Village maps; awareness posters (translated)	√
Selection of community mobilisers	July-August	NGO; community leaders; facilitator	NGO; facilitator		Ongoing
STEP 2: TRAINING AND CAPCITY BUILDING					
Identify potential trainers	July-August	NGO; facilitator	NGO; facilitator	PLA Toolkit	√
Prepare training materials	July-August	Facilitator; NGO	NGO; facilitator	PLA Handbook and Toolkit; Facilitator's Guide	Ongoing
Organise training events	July-August	NGO; facilitator			
STEP 3: COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS AND DRAFT PLAN					
Community focus group discussions	September-October	NGO; facilitator			
Community mapping	October				

Identifying problems and threats and finding solutions to these, together, is an essential ingredient of a CEAP. In this case, wadi erosion might be being caused my man-made or natural actions but a common and acceptable solution needs to be found to address this issue. (Photo: UNEP)

MAKE THE CEAP PLAN KNOWN AND SEEN

If there is a suitable and prominent space, we should display the CEAP plan, or a copy of it, for everyone in the community to see. Like this, it can also serve for monitoring and to celebrate achievements!

Displaying the community vision map(s) can also be motivating. Consider using other traditional ways of advertising, for example wall paintings, or songs through which the community CEAP vision can be promoted.

When it is agreed who will do what, and when, and with what resources, it is useful to look at how the community will measure that we are:

- doing what was planned, i.e. things are happening on time; and
- progressing towards our objectives.

By regularly asking these questions we can adjust our plans and activities according to how work is progressing. This is called monitoring.

Monitoring in CEAP is often quite straight forward and can be done by community and committee members. Planning monitoring activities together enables communities to take shared responsibility for it. It increases their willingness to use monitoring information (e.g. to improve activities) and it increases stakeholders' accountability to each other, as each will be aware of the others' responsibilities.

In order to monitor CEAP activities we need to identify signs – indicators – that things are happening as planned.

3.6 STAGE 4 – ACTING TOGETHER

Acting together means to implement what the community has now planned and to co-ordinate CEAP activities with other stakeholders and projects. It also means to try and solve any difficulties arising during implementation. Doing this together helps people to stay motivated and manage expectations.

While good planning is important in CEAP, the plan is never an end by itself. Putting plans into action and achieving tangible environmental improvements remains the main objective.

ACTING TOGETHER HELPS TO:

- build the skills and capacity of community members to address environmental issues so that they can later address them by themselves;
- develop community ownership of CEAP achievements – things that took effort to achieve are often better maintained;
- build relationships between different stakeholders and co-ordinate the efforts of different stakeholders;
- use learning to improve the quality and effectiveness of CEAP strategies and activities, and
- solve day-to-day problems.

3.6.1 DOING WHAT WAS PLANNED

Clear and detailed activities are critical in the CEAP process as they help people remain focused on the purpose of each activity. Carefully made plans will describe who will do what and where and when they will do it.

THOROUGH PREPARATION

Each activity needs to be carefully prepared and should be done with meaningful community participation. Preparation means getting ready to do an activity and then making sure that the resources and people are in place to carry it out. For example, some plans may involve providing basic training for community members. Preparation for this activity will include identifying trainers and participants, preparing training content, inviting participants, planning a budget and arranging logistics.

MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Those most affected by environmental issues should continue to play a leading role in the implementation of activities. If the most affected members of the community are not yet able to lead, they should at least participate meaningfully. It is only through their active and influential participation that the community will be able to develop capacity to sustain positive changes.

Build on the results of each activity. For example, follow-up on training is likely to include providing on-going support to newly trained community members and possibly additional training in the future. It is unusual for a once off activity such as a single training event to be very effective.

3.6.2 ANALYSING PROBLEMS TOGETHER

Plans are only a guiding framework and may need to be adapted as work is carried out. Acting together will identify challenges and problems that need to be solved together. Some activities may be harder to carry out than expected. There may be obstacles that were not foreseen during planning. Conditions may change or the activity may not produce the results that were expected. Identifying and responding to problems quickly will help find solutions and prevent small problems growing into bigger ones.

Sharing experiences can often help solve problems. Community members and other stakeholders carrying out activities are likely to benefit from regular opportunities to discuss issues with people who face similar challenges. Using participatory tools (such as Vision Diagrams) with peer groups can help find solutions to day-to-day challenges.

Participatory work often involves shifts in the balance of power between stakeholders. This can be unpopular with some stakeholders as they may feel they are losing authority or status. They may even try to sabotage the CEAP process. Measuring what "empowers" and "disempowers" people can help avoid this.

3.6.3 CO-ORDINATING ACTIVITIES WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Building a response to environmental issues brings together many stakeholders. Good co-ordination by the community mobilisation team improves the effectiveness of activities and helps use resources efficiently. Co-ordination between stakeholders also encourages networking, collaboration and the sharing of skills and experiences, all of which can be encouraged by:

- establishing good communication channels between stakeholders, e.g. regular meetings, one-to-one communication, posters and written reports, so that people know who they should communicate with, about what and why;
- planning activities together and combining resources to implement together, where appropriate;
- discussing progress, challenges and achievements in order to learn from our experiences and adapt plans as necessary; and
- establishing effective co-ordination mechanisms. These often involve committees formed by representatives of different stakeholder groups. It is preferable to work with existing committees wherever possible rather than setting up parallel groups.

3.6.4   STAYING MOTIVATED AND MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

After assessing and planning together, communities are likely to make an enthusiastic start and have high expectations. It may, however, take some time before results become visible.

Genuine ownership of the CEAP process is essential for the motivation of community members. As community action starts to show results, this will help motivate people to continue their efforts. However, it can be hard to maintain enthusiasm in the early days when people's efforts are not rewarded quickly. The support of small quick impact projects, e.g. repairing a water pump, is useful in this respect.

Regular opportunities to discuss any frustrations or problems will help maintain interest in the activities and address any unrealistic expectations. They also provide an opportunity to adjust plans if necessary. Regular communication and co-ordination between different stakeholders also enables people to talk about their activities and receive recognition for their efforts.

To keep the momentum going, it is helpful to publicly recognise the community's achievements, for example, through a small celebration. Opportunities to learn new skills and increase the effectiveness of activities may also help motivate sustained action. Building links with organisations outside of the community – such as regional and national networks – provides a wider opportunity to share experiences, receive recognition for community-led actions and participate in larger-scale change.

3.6.5   ENCOURAGING GOOD COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Acting effectively together can be greatly helped by good leadership. There are many different types of leadership, but experience has shown that those communities most able to mobilise have leadership characterised by the ability to:

- include both formal and informal leaders;
- provide direction and structure for participants;
- encourage participation from a diverse network of community participants;
- implement procedures for ensuring active participation during meetings and events;
- facilitate the sharing of information and resources by participants and organisations;
- shape and cultivate the development of new leaders;
- cultivate a responsive and accessible style;
- focus on both task and process details;
- be receptive to innovation and risk-taking; and
- be connected to other leaders.

Where such skills do not exist, CEAP can include a leadership programme to build this capacity. At the same time, if existing leaders feel their power is threatened by participatory approaches the CEAP process can be used to clarify and address such concerns. This will help leaders realise that they do not have to give up their leadership role. Rather, they may benefit from adapting a new leadership style.

3.6.6 CEAP COMMITTEES

Supporting CEAP implementation and leadership can happen through committees. A CEAP Committee is a group of people comprising representatives from community members and other stakeholders who will guide the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the action plan. Sub-committees might also be established to manage specific components of a CEAP, for example water or forest resources.

CEAP Committees should represent different social groups from within the community, so that every interest is represented. General roles associated with such committees might be to:

- co-ordinate the efforts of different stakeholders to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the CEAP;
- solve day-to-day problems;
- provide leadership for the CEAP;
- monitor progress at the activity and management levels;
- keep the community informed of progress; and
- evaluate the results and impacts, together with the broader community.

Good facilitation is important to ensure that all stakeholders – men, women, youth and marginalised members of a community – have an opportunity to express their opinions and be part of the overall planning and implementation of a CEAP. (Photo: UNEP)

3.7 STAGE 5 – MONITORING AND EVALUATING TOGETHER

Monitoring and evaluating together helps us to assess the progress we are making towards our aims and objectives. Monitoring and evaluating often overlap. An activity such as the promotion of fuel-efficient stoves, for example, can be monitored through the number of stoves distributed and, at a later stage, be evaluated by measuring their impact on peoples' health, well-being or the reduced use of firewood.

Monitoring and evaluating in a participatory manner, with direct involvement of community members, helps to assess the progress we are making towards our aims and objectives. It enables us to:

- answer important questions, such as:
  - how well are we doing?
  - how far are we from meeting the aims and objectives we have set?
  - are we doing the right things?
  - what difference are we making?
  - what do we need to change about what we are doing or how we are doing it?
- prove whether or not we have achieved the community's aims and objectives;
- improve our effectiveness by helping to identify strengths and weaknesses in our activities;
- revise and adjust strategies to make them more effective;
- improve our understanding of how to do CEAPs by identifying what does or does not work and why;
- keep all community members and other stakeholders informed about our activities;
- motivate community facilitators and other stakeholders to continue their efforts;
- ensure accountability to different stakeholders; and
- attract more resources by showing that our activities are effective.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Community members are usually busy. Collecting information for monitoring and evaluation may not seem like a priority compared with doing the planned activities. The following ideas can help motivate community members to monitor and evaluate.

- Enable people to identify the benefits of monitoring and evaluation.
- Enable community members to identify their own indicators for monitoring and evaluation. Find out what indicates success to them; what matters to them.
- Make sure that people are fully involved in all aspects of monitoring and evaluation, not just in collecting information.
- Keep monitoring and evaluation simple and easy.
- Use all the information that is collected.
- Do not collect information that will not be used.
- Share the results of monitoring and evaluation regularly so people can see the progress they are making.

Monitoring the progress of the CEAP activities is not only a way of management – it can also serve as a means of motivation if progress is communicated or made visible to the community. If delays occur, it can also be important that the reasons for these are explained to the wider community.

IMPORTANT STEPS FOR MONITORING AND EVALUATING

The basis for good monitoring and evaluation starts at a very early stage of the CEAP process – when communities agree on the objective or expected benefits or impact they want to achieve. If we are unclear concerning what we want to achieve, we cannot measure whether we are reaching our goals.

KNOW THE BASELINE

Monitoring and evaluation is about measuring change in the environment, or in people's lives. To measure a change and a difference, we need to compare two situations: that in the beginning, before activities start, and the situation once activities are underway or have been completed. The starting situation is called the "baseline". In CEAP, typical baseline data include the:

- state of the natural resources in the community, e.g. forest cover, state of the forest, rate of deforestation or state of the rangeland, soil erosion or water source depletion; and
- state of people's livelihoods as this relates to natural resource use.

A good way to gather initial baseline data is through a Rapid Environmental Assessment (REA). The participatory environmental assessment sessions that follow in the Assessing Together stage then adds more detailed information, particularly on issues of most interest to the community. Before we start with the implementation of each CEAP activity, we should check if we have a baseline of the respective issue.

IDENTIFY INDICATORS TO MEASURE CHANGE

To check if CEAP activities are on track we need to identify signs – indicators – that things are happening as planned. Indicators can measure activities (if we are doing what we planned) and resulting change (if we are making progress towards our objectives). It may be helpful to consider the following questions when deciding what indicators to collect information about:

- How easy is it to collect information about the indicator? It is important to choose indicators that are not too difficult to measure and to only select the most useful indicators. Collecting information takes time. If we select too many indicators we will spend too much time collecting information.
- Will this indicator tell us something useful? Does it tell us something new? Is it relevant to the objectives of the process?
- Is the indicator clear to everyone? For example, if one of the indicators is the "number of people with access to safe drinking water", should we collect information about the number of people served or the number of households served?

COLLECTING INFORMATION ABOUT OUR ACTIVITIES

Monitoring and evaluating relies on collecting useful information. Decisions about what information to collect and how to collect it are critical to the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. It is important to start collecting information as soon as possible.

Once it has been decided what information to collect, we need to agree who will collect it and when and how they will collect it. Information for monitoring is usually collected on a regular and routine basis. Since in CEAP all actors, including facilitators, work closely together, collecting information usually requires little extra work. It is essential to consider issues of confidentiality when collecting certain data.

It is important to agree a simple and clear way of recording routine monitoring information and collecting it together. For example, people doing community visits may use symbols on a wall chart to record how many visits they make.

ANALYSE THE INFORMATION AND EVALUATE PROGRESS

As well as monitoring what we do, we need to analyse how much progress we are making towards our objectives. It is helpful to do this at regular, planned intervals, e.g. every six or twelve months.

Each evaluation requires clear objectives. This helps different stakeholders agree on the purpose of the evaluation and guides us in deciding what issues and information to focus on.

UPDATE THE CEAP PLAN

A CEAP plan is never really finished or cast in stone. Every monitoring and evaluation cycle can point to a need to change the course of a project or to add or replace certain activities. When this is the case, it should be led by the CEAP Committee and key stakeholders, but communicating this to the larger community.

SHARE EVALUATIONS WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

Sharing evaluation results with other stakeholders helps to:

- motivate community members and other stakeholders by demonstrating the progress we are making and how individuals contribute to this;
- encourage continued support from donors by letting them see what difference their resources are making;
- develop active support for community mobilisation and other strategies used among key stakeholders by demonstrating their effectiveness;
- encourage stakeholders to help address problems and concerns identified by monitoring and evaluation; and
- enable accountability to different stakeholders.

4. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS TO KEEP IN MIND

TAKING A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE: WHOSE REALITY COUNTS?

Organisations working with local people should ask this question: "Whose reality or experience of a situation counts"? Is it local people's reality as we – as external facilitators and actors – think it is? Or should it be local people's reality as they freely express it? Most participatory approaches are based on the understanding that instead of searching only for a technical description of issues, a subjective view from the perspective of local people is more helpful to identify locally viable solutions.

GROUP ANALYSIS AND LEARNING

In group analysis, people share their knowledge and experience of their environment and the full complexity of the situation can be understood, related to everyone's livelihoods and perceptions. Group analysis may lead to debate, discussion and negotiation on environmental issues. This is an important process, as it helps people understand each other's perceptions and priorities, which is an important step for prioritising mutual action on improving and sustaining their environment.

SEEKING AND INCLUDING THE UNHEARD VOICE

It is often those who have little influential power who are most affected or vulnerable to environmental issues, e.g. the poor, people who live in remote areas, women or displaced people. Sometimes people simply don't want to have a voice in certain decisions and it is their right to do so. But other times people are either intentionally or unintentionally excluded from participating in decisions which affect their lives. It is important that those who facilitate a CEAP actively find out who wants to participate but is being excluded, and then seek to include them.

Participatory processes do not need to be carried out with all community members at all times, primarily as this may not be a practical undertaking. CEAP processes therefore consciously seek to include representatives of different social groups and should remain open to any groups or individuals who have an interest to participate.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment can be described as the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. In order to address environmental issues successfully, individuals, communities and organisations may need to strengthen their capabilities in different areas, such as their access to, and influence over, natural resources and services, their understanding of how to ensure environmental sustainability and/or their ability to negotiate rights and entitlements, and fulfil responsibilities and obligations to ensure environmental sustainability.

UNBIASED FACILITATION

Participatory approaches are usually guided by a facilitator who helps people to use the tools and ensure that everyone is able to participate equally. Facilitators can be representatives from government ministries, NGOs, civil society organisations, or they can also be volunteers from within the community. However, it is important that a facilitator does not hold a personal interest in the process, that s/he remains impartial and keeps in view the larger picture of the process. For this reason, it can sometimes be easier if a facilitator is an external and neutral person.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS

For everyone to participate actively and influentially in a CEAP, those facilitating the process need attitudes and behaviours that include rather than exclude community stakeholders. It is not enough to just include marginalised and excluded people in a CEAP process. What is more important is how they are included.

> **!** **Good environmental practices are often location specific and may differ, not only between Darfur and other states in Sudan, but also between communities in Darfur.**

ProAct Network
Avenue Alfred-Cortot 7D
1260 Nyon
Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 362 5384
Fax: +41 22 362 5385
E-mail: info@proactnetwork.org
Web: www.proactnetwork.org