

An approach is emerging in the eastern African region that builds upon existing institutional and community strengths to foster a more comprehensive, coordinated development paradigm in which conservation and livelihood improvement are seen as complementary goals. The key to this change lies more in the skills of the facilitator than in financial and material resources.

Facilitators' Course on District Institutional Collaboration for Integrated Livelihoods and Conservation

The African Highlands Initiative (AHI) and the World Agroforestry Centre have been jointly involved in catalyzing a community-led process of land and livelihood regeneration with local civil society and community-based organizations. Fostering sustainable livelihoods and environmental conservation has required the development of facilitation skills among extension staff, farmer group leaders and champions of community development. Strengthening skills for fostering and maintaining engagement of stakeholders involved in natural resource governance is also essential.

In the implementation of community action plans, facilitators encountered a number of challenges which called for capacity building. A training program was developed to address challenges faced by facilitators in their ongoing activities to foster district-level engagement among various actors. Through time, this program has consolidated to integrate the various lessons and techniques that have worked best to jump-start district-wide movements in sustainable natural resource management (NRM).

Methodological and Course Overview

The main objectives of the course are to enable facilitators to:

- 1) Recognise the importance of institutional coalitions and teamwork in sustainable development,
- 2) Understand mechanisms for enabling effective teams and partnerships between communities and local government,
- 3) Assist communities and local government to capture lessons, and monitor and evaluate projects they are implementing,



Farmer groups with prior conservation-related activities work with local government and AGILE facilitators to develop an integrated land use plan at county level, Kapchorwa, Uganda.

- 4) Facilitate activities that bridge livelihood objectives with conservation goals of interest to local communities.

The course follows the following modules, which mimic steps in a district mobilization process:

Module 1: Introduction to Landcare and Integrated Participatory Planning

This module explores the Landcare approach, a movement that originated in Australia and builds upon principles of community empowerment and sustainable NRM. Principles of Landcare are presented, as well as how the concept has evolved in the eastern African context. Criteria for program assessment particular to the regional context are formulated together with participants. The integrated participatory planning concept is then introduced in view of the trends toward decentralized governance in the region. In this process, participants familiarize themselves with existing legal and policy frameworks in NRM and the importance of local government support for community planning and implementation. At this time, participants explore how to integrate planning across diverse levels,

sectors and goals (livelihoods vs. conservation), and contrast multi-stakeholder approaches with current practice.

Module 2: Participatory Development

The second module takes an in-depth look at development from historical, cultural and disciplinary viewpoints, illustrating the subjective nature of the concept. The evolution of development approaches is presented, as well as how diverse global trends in development thinking are harmonized at the local level through community participation. How to move from a development process that is participatory in name only to one that is truly empowering is discussed both conceptually and methodologically. The importance of social learning processes in giving voice to diverse views from within the community, identify divergent interests and to harmonize these through transparent negotiation processes is discussed. Tools for participatory planning and development that best foster principles of community and stakeholder empowerment are explored, as well as their respective strengths and limitations. Concrete approaches for integrating planning across diverse levels, sectors and goals (livelihoods, conservation) are presented with a view toward multi-stakeholder approaches.

Module 3: Collective Action and Strengthening Local Organizations

Module 3 explores local organizations and their critical importance community development. Participants take an in-depth look at “community” in terms of the diversity of views, resource endowments, participation levels and empowerment, and challenges of fostering equity given this complexity. Factors influencing group effectiveness, longevity and evolution will be understood through case studies from the region, and role plays used to understand how “success factors” can be fostered within existing, new or inactive organizations. Participants will scrutinize what is gained and lost from working with existing vs. new, informal vs. formal, organizations.

Module 4: Facilitation of Participatory Development

Module 4 equips participants to be effective facilitators of local and district-level change processes. Concepts of facilitation, action learning, adult learning, process planning,

stakeholder and negotiation support, effective listening, designing effective questions and monitoring, evaluation and feedback will be explored. Guiding principles and techniques for effective facilitation and communication will be learned through hands-on methods such as role plays, case narratives and process planning. Ways to handle conflict, understand positioning of different actors, and foster consensus-building or negotiation will be explored.

Module 5: Promoting Rural Innovations

This module explores the concept and importance of innovation. After defining innovation and its forms (technological, process, social), steps in participatory innovation development (PID)—of which participatory technology development (PTD) is but one component—are outlined. Tools for harvesting, evaluating, catalyzing and eventual dissemination of local and district innovations are covered.

Module 6: Monitoring and Evaluation using “Community Wellbeing” Criteria

All innovations are accompanied by successes and failures, requiring that outcomes related to established benchmarks be continuously monitored. Unanticipated spin-offs of innovations will be seen that affect not only livelihoods and environment, but gender, health and social equity. Attention to the changes occurring within communities and districts will enable corrective measures to be taken to adjust activities toward established objectives and minimize negative consequences of change. Tools for establishing baselines, including poverty analysis, community health and environmental diagnosis and gender analysis, will be learnt. Methods for tracking identified indicators and the unanticipated consequences of innovation, and adjusting to enhance desired and minimize undesired impacts, will be introduced and applied.

Course Details

Teaching Methods: Formal instruction (using “good practice” case studies); role plays to foster understanding; group work (to build upon real life cases and negotiate improvements in development practice from diverse perspectives); and field work.

Duration: 5 to 8 days.



The use of role plays aids in integrating the knowledge of outside experts with local understandings by bringing to the fore issues that are otherwise difficult to voice openly—for example, farmer doubts on the relevance of outsiders’ knowledge or cultural taboos that would otherwise undermine project implementation.



African Highlands Initiative
P.O. Box 26416
Kampala, Uganda

tel:
256-41-220607
256-41-220602

fax:
256-41-223242

e-mail:
j.tanui@cgiar.org



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Key partners in this work have been farmer associations (Uganda Farmers’ Association and its affiliates at district level, CBOs, farmer groups); various NGOs (Action Aid, CARE, Africa 2000 Network, ULAMP); local government; research specialists from NARO; the IARCs (ICRAF, CIAT).

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