

Introduction

There are several core principles underlying the ABCD approach. The first principle is that 'everyone has gifts', which means that every member in the community has unique skills and talents to contribute to its thriving.

A second principle is that 'relationships build a community', which is why facilitating community exchange and engagement are fundamental to community development, alongside the conscious building of relationships with actors that are external to the community.

A third principle is to 'start with what you have', which is why a holistic and thorough assessment of existing assets and strengths can contribute to communities realising their own development objectives without any external assistance in view of them mobilising and better using their own resources. Altogether, these three principles centre on appreciating communities for their inherent strengths and capacities. As external actors, the ABCD team of World Agroforestry (ICRAF) works to support communities to use these assets. strengths, and capacity to improve the sustainability of their livelihoods and to live a life of dignity.

ABCD is a participatory process that can be facilitated in many ways. ICRAF's ABCD team currently uses 16 tools, which are inspired by and partly co-developed with the Coady Institute. These tools are used in a process that has five steps: (1) an introduction to ABCD, (2) setting the tone through appreciative interviewing, (3) assessing existing assets and strengths, (4) integrated community action planning, (5) regular participatory monitoring and evaluation.

For more details, consult the full manual: Fuchs, L.E., Kipkorir, L., Apondi, V., Orero, L. (2020), Facilitating an Asset-Based Community-Driven (ABCD) Approach for Holistic Community Development: A Manual for Community Organising, World Agroforestry (ICRAF), Nairobi: Kenya, 36 pp.

ABCD recognises and builds on the strengths, gifts, talents and resources of individuals and communities, in response to challenges of creating strong social communities and enhancing economic development. Rather than encouraging communities to turn to the outside for help to address their supposed needs, ABCD helps community members to create strong, inclusive and sustainable communities by themselves.

In ABCD, we use the analogy of the 'glass half full or half empty' to conceptualise what it means to focus on existing assets and strengths, rather than on deficits. This analogy shows that one's perspective matters – and that our perspective is crucial for what we believe, including about ourselves, others and our capacity to achieve good things for our lives.

In using an ABCD approach, we are interested in what we have and what we know. This focus creates a foundation from which inspiration and positive energy can be drawn for thinking and practicing holistic community (1) Introduction development.

The ABCD approach has an in-built monitoring and evaluation component, which is based on the most significant change technique. With the **Participatory** help of this tool, we analyse what has monitoring and happened and what the significance of these changes is. It allows for evaluation: Tracing the most significant change uncertainty and assumes that changes are a result of the interaction of many to assess and readjust different factors that cannot always be community action anticipated and planned. The tool requires plans that all stakeholders think about why a certain change is significant, which is where real evaluation begins. Consequently. decisions on how to move forward are informed by a sense of purpose, and not because of

bureaucratic

with development objectives This is the most critical part of the ABCD process which helps to

requirements. translate local assets into action. It completes the process of the mapping of assets in the first stages of the ABCD process by matching identified strengths and assets with community development objectives.

to ABCD: ABCD

means focusing

(4) Integrated

Matching strengths and assets

community action planning:

on assets and

strengths

During community action planning, communities revisit their various asset maps and the stories of success they shared during appreciative interviewing. Based on these, they discuss the future changes they envision for their community, and draw realistic and feasible action plans to pursue them. These action plans typically include an outline of activities, where they can be done, when they can be done, and by whom, and potentially who else might benefit from these activities.

The process fosters holistic community development by encouraging first diversification of objectives and then specialisation of pathways to achieve these objectives. The most important objective of this exercise is that communities realise that they can achieve their objectives WITHOUT any external support by using what they have better, and by working with each other based on their interests, skills, and passions. Another core objective is that communities realise that they can achieve other objectives by building strategic partnerships with specific external actors around specific activities and goals. If communities seek collaboration and support in domains in which their interests match with the interests of specific external actors, these external actors will be more likely to support them, and their collaboration is more likely to be effective, efficient, and sustainable

ABCD AT A GLANCE

The approach, process and tools

Guided story-telling through appreciative interviewing fosters 'listening conversations'. These allow both the story-tellers and the listeners to be vulnerable, to recognise each other's humanity, and to feel valued and heard. The process allows people to tell their truth without being challenged, questioned or defensive. It helps to uncover the gifts, skills, talents, and assets within the community. The stories help to discover what people care about and bring out their motivations to act.

The process also provides the ABCD facilitators 'entry points' for how to build meaningful relationships with the community based on their lived (2) Appreciative experiences, the tales of their struggles and successes, and their hopes and visions for

interviewing: Setting the tone of self-belief by sharing stories of personal achievements, hope and courage

> (3) Assessing existing assets, strengths and opportunities: Understanding what you have and where

> > to start





comprehensive asset assessments. It is important for the mapping to be done by communities themselves and that they have genuine ownership of the process. The developed maps can be used as a baseline against which both future plans and actual changes can

- i. Human asset assessment: Mapping individual skills
 - a. Heads, Hands, and Hearts
 - b. Capacity inventories _____
- ii. Social assets: Mapping connections between people and organisations
 - a. Associations mapping

be recorded.

b. Institutions mapping

iii. Physical and natural assets: Mapping infrastructure and natural resources

- a. Infrastructure and natural resource mapping
- b. Transect walk and mapping ______
- iv. Economic opportunity assessment: Financial flows at various scales
 - a. The Community Leaky Bucket
 - b. The Commodity Leaky Bucket
 - c. The On-Farm Household Leaky Bucket ...and the Off-Farm Household Leaky Bucket, which are combined in the Integrated Household Leaky Bucket











