

# Tips for trainers

As part of this special issue on community-based planning, *Tips for Trainers* brings you two extracts from Khanya-Managing Rural Change's *Action Research for Community-Based Planning* project manual.

The development of the manual was funded under the project for action-research on community-based planning on which several of the papers in this special issue are based and represents the collective work and experience from this broad group.

The two examples selected demonstrate two aspects of the community-based planning process: ensuring the effective representation of people within the community concerned in the planning activities, and how to prepare and run a pre-planning community meeting in advance of the main planning events, in order to mobilise leaders from diverse sections of the community.

## Extracts from the *Action Research for Community-Based Planning* project manual

### Ensuring effective representation

It is important to ensure the effective participation of people, including sub-planning unit structures, in the planning process. The various groupings within the community may have organised structures, which can be used for representation purposes e.g.

- Economic groups such as market women, bakers' associations, and palm oil producers' associations.
- Social groupings such as youth associations, student unions, and boy scouts.
- Religious organisations such as Catholic associations, Muslim associations, and Pentecostals groups.
- Traditional associations such as

cultural groups.

- Environmental groupings: these include both groups of natural resource (NR) users as well as environmental interest groups. Groups of NR users include farmers' associations (livestock and crop), gatherers of water, beekeepers, and traditional healers groups (who often gather herbs and other plant and animal products from wild areas and thus have valuable knowledge of the state of natural resources). Environmental interest groups include waste management groups (e.g. clean-up campaigns, recycling organisations, waste pickers), environmental clubs at schools, and other CBOs concerned with environmental issues.

There may well be groups who are not organised, and these will typically be marginalized groups like the disabled, widows, and orphans. These groups also need to be represented.

The principles of effective representation are based on the assumption that every community is made up of a diversity of groups whose interests might either coincide or be at variance, and as CBP is a democratic process, there needs to be effective representation of these different groups, and some consensus-building about priorities. In a small unit such as a village in Uganda, all adults are members of the Village Council. However as units get larger, such as a ward in South Africa with 10–20,000 people, some representative structure is needed to ensure that the voices of important groups are heard. Some of the issues include the following:

- resources are generally limited and there is the likelihood that those who are not effectively represented would have their interests overtaken by the more aggressive;

- if a representative structure is needed, each social, economic, or livelihood grouping should be represented by a leader who is expected to articulate the aspirations of the people s/he is representing;
- leaders that are chosen must be truly representative and not personally motivated;
- there must be scheduled feedback meetings for the represented and the representatives in between the planning events to ensure accountability of those leaders; and,
- the number of feedback meetings should depend on time, availability of resources etc.

A way to improve participation, ownership, and representation is to carry out sufficient **community feedback processes and mechanisms**. The importance of feedback during the CBP process cannot be stressed enough. Feedback helps to increase accountability and transparency, thus ensuring improved representation.

The amount of time available for feedback obviously depends on the time the CBP process takes in the community. It stands to reason that the more the basic five-day CBP process is spread out, the greater the need for feedback to keep the community on board.

There are several main areas where feedback is necessary during the CBP process:

- at the pre-planning phase – to increase community awareness and elicit questions and suggested improvements, and ensure interest and participation;
- at the community launch meeting – further awareness raising, but also sharing the information gathered in the pre-planning phase;
- at the community meeting undertaking the strengths;

weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis for the planning unit, after the livelihoods analysis with groupings;

- at the meeting of the community to develop visions and objectives;
- at the community meeting to confirm and verify the plan;
- once the plan has been reviewed by the local authority; and,
- during regular meetings to monitor the implementation.

### Pre-planning community meeting

#### Background

This meeting is held a week or two prior to the main planning week, initially just with unit committee members. This could also include a broader session with opinion leaders (such as teachers, clinic staff, religious leaders, youth leaders, leaders of unemployed groups, trade union, women's groups etc.). The aim is to mobilise the leaders of many different sections of the community. It is also to ensure broad ownership of the plan so that people realise that this is about their process, that one of the outputs needs to be local action and not just demands for resources from others. It is important to ensure that from this early stage, participants with environmental knowledge or competence are involved in the process. This could include representatives from CBOs dealing with environmental matters and other advocates for specific local environmental issues.

#### Objective

By the end of this meeting local leaders should:

- understand the planning process and outputs;
- be committed to supporting an inclusive planning process (which

prioritises the needs of marginalized groups);

- be ready to mobilise their constituencies ready for the planning phase;
- have defined the main socio-economic and interest groups to take forward the planning process;
- have begun collecting existing background information; and,
- have developed a timetable for the planning week and the first meetings will have been scheduled.

#### What part of the plan does this feed into?

Use in Section 1, 'How did we make this plan?' (See Box 1)

<b>Tools/methods</b>	Group discussion
<b>Timing</b>	Two hours
<b>Facilitators</b>	Core facilitation team
<b>Participants</b>	Elected leaders e.g. planning unit committee, possibly joined by opinion leaders, traditional leaders, interest groups, etc.
<b>Process</b>	Introductions and ensuring elected leaders understand the planning process; roles; social analysis and organising the week; resources needed; and comments/tips.

#### Process

Introductions and ensuring elected leaders understand the planning process

- introduce facilitation team and elected leaders;
- discuss overall planning process within which the community plans fit;
- discuss expectations and concerns;
- discuss content of the plan (use flip

#### Box 1: The main sections of a community-based plan

Documentation of the plan is a key issue. Not all the meetings and discussions need to be documented (although one may decide to keep minutes of all planning meetings).

#### Cover and/or endorsement page (with key signatures)

Section

- 1 How did we make the plan? The process we went through.
- 2 What is the situation in our community? Detailing background, different groups, state of the natural environment, services, and SWOT analysis.
- 3 What do we want to achieve? The vision, goals, and strategies and projects/activities to reach the goals.
- 4 Implementing our plan. Summary of who needs to do what for our projects and activities. Detailed project proposals should be included in the plan Annex.

#### Annex

**Project profiles:** project summaries that must be completed for projects submitted to Council or sectoral departments. The plan should act as the community record book, enabling decisions to be reviewed and information to be updated in due course. It is a tool for monitoring progress in plan implementation and can be updated annually as projects move forward, and new priorities emerge.

chart which is left with the committee);

- discuss overall shape of the week (assume here that there has been some introduction to councillors prior to this meeting); and,
- discuss availability of any existing information that can be used to help with the plan.

#### Roles

Discuss who is in the core facilitation team and who is supplementary, and what their roles are (including that some committee members/councillors will become trainers).

Social analysis and organising the week

- Discuss what are the socio-economic and interest groups in the area, using the question 'what are the different groups that you recognise in the area who have different levels of well-being?' Give one or two examples (e.g. unemployed, youth, elderly women, business people, farmers, salaried people etc.).
- Tell people that you would like to meet representatives from these groups, and that all these groups need to participate in the broad community meetings (ward planning forum).
- Arrange a timetable for the week and in detail for first day.
- Agree how to obtain the participants for first community meeting and who will organise them (e.g. do we have some

meetings in villages/sections at which representatives are elected/selected for the community meeting/ward planning forum?).

**Resources needed**

- A flipchart with contents of the plan.
- A flipchart with a table showing the week.

**Comments/tips**

Discuss what form of representation will be used for the broader community meetings to create a representative planning forum. There are two main possibilities:

- people are selected from different parts of the planning unit to form a representative structure for planning; and,

- those people who participate in other meetings who are invited to join in the broad community meetings.

There could also be a combination. However it must be stressed that the group selecting vision and goals should be seen to be representative of the community, and a ten-person committee is not enough.

The extracts have been reproduced with kind permission from Khanya-Managing Rural Change. For more information, to download the *Action Research for Community-Based Planning Project* manual, or to download other CBP-related material published by Khanya, visit the community-based planning page at [www.khanya-mrc.co.za](http://www.khanya-mrc.co.za)