

Key messages

- Communities are dynamic decision makers.
- Community members are actively involved in planning, implementing and assessing activities that aim to improve the quality of their local environment.
- Participatory approaches are used to engage community members and encourage open dialogue and debate.
- Community ownership of environmental management activities increases the sustainability and cost-effectiveness of external interventions.
- Local knowledge is valued and the voices of all community members sought and heard.
- CEAPs can help mitigate natural resource-based conflicts.
- External facilitators or experts should not seek to influence the outcome of discussions or choice of eventual activities planned.

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION PLANS (CEAPs)

INTRODUCTION

Community Environmental Action Planning is an interactive participatory technique and approach to natural resource and environmental management. Through structured facilitation, different stakeholder groups are encouraged to work together to assess their environmental situation, develop an environmental action plan that reflects their needs, and implement, monitor and evaluate resulting activities. This process is internal and engages the community with participatory and technical assessment tools.

The goal of a CEAP process is to create an open, non-threatening platform for dialogue and consensus building. CEAP processes recognise that communities have valuable knowledge and that community-based and community-owned environmental management is more sustainable and effective.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Advantages of CEAPs:

- facilitates group learning and identifies multiple perspectives and local realities;
- appreciates local knowledge and experiences as the basis for understanding and managing the environment;
- encourages debate about change which can in turn alter the perceptions of participants;
- can help mitigate intra-community natural resource-based conflicts; and
- can be more cost-effective than many other approaches.

CEAPs aim to:

- facilitate discussions between different stakeholder groups who use natural resources differently and sometimes in competing ways;
- identify some of the main – past, present and future – threats to sustainable natural resource use and peoples' livelihoods;
- develop a community-based natural resource management mechanism, ideally at a landscape level; and,
- improve the sustainability of natural resource use and develop a greater diversity of income-generating opportunities.

The main objectives of a CEAP are to:

- provide a forum for all stakeholder groups to provide their input into the process;
- help stakeholders see the “bigger picture” and identify their roles and space within this;
- help reach consensus on natural resource-based issues
- establish ownership of the CEAP process;
- help to mitigate intra-community natural resource-based conflicts; and,
- build capacity for the development and management of a CEAP.

CHECKLIST

The CEAP Process

- ✓ **Community mobilisation:** introduction to the CEAP process, conduct an initial baseline study and begin to identify expectations of the community. The aim is to develop a common understanding of the environment, identify key issues and prioritise them.
- ✓ **CEAP activity planning:** problem analysis and solution identification by facilitating community visioning activities that consider various scenarios.
- ✓ **Establishing a CEAP governance structure:** building local capacity in social organisations and government systems. This can include establishing a CEAP committee and training on its roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ **Implementation:** in co-operation with local and external partners, usually including capacity building activities where necessary.
- ✓ **Monitoring and evaluation:** indicators are developed in consultation with all key stakeholders, including CEAP committees and implementing partners. The local community should be engaged in the management of the environmental projects to promote sustainability.

Important points:

- ✓ Focus group discussions should be encouraged to help bring out diverse interests from both men and women, young and old.
- ✓ Monitoring information should be analysed and feedback provided to the general community at regular intervals to sustain interest in the project and to help identify new challenges early.
- ✓ Pay attention to age and gender sensitivity, including respect for local traditions and cultural ways of life. Where possible, ensure that female facilitators are included to facilitate the participation of women.
- ✓ Whenever possible try and use local language(s) when facilitating a CEAP process. This may require the need for active translation(s).

Further reading and resources

FRAME Toolkit: Module IV – Community Environmental Action Planning (UNHCR, CARE, 2005). <http://www.unhcr.org/4a97aaa49.html>

Participatory Learning and Action – A Trainer's Guide (IIED, 1995).

Changing Views on Change: Participatory Approaches to Monitoring the Environment (IIED, 1998)

Results-Based Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (Coupal, 2001). <http://www.mosaic-net-intl.ca/documents/article-PME.pdf>

Participatory Learning and Action: Community-Based Adaptation to Climate Change (IIED, 2009). <http://www.iied.org/pubs/pdfs/14573IIED.pdf>

Community Participation in a Refugee Emergency – Focusing on Community Mobilisation, Women and Youth – A Report from the Rwandan Camps in the Kagera Region of Tanzania (Blomqvist, 1995).

Participatory Approaches for Environmental Management in Displacement Settings: A Compendium of Fact Sheets (UNHCR, CARE, 2008).

Participatory Environmental Management for Refugee Hosting Areas: A Sourcebook for Decision Makers and Fieldworkers Concepts, Experiences and Guidelines for Participatory Environmental Mitigation in Refugee Hosting Areas of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Congo DR (GTZ, 1999). <http://sleekfreak.ath.cx:81/3wdev/HDLHTML/GTZGATE/REFUGENV.PDF>

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