Agroecology at a landscape level

Toolkit for facilitators. September 2021
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Preamble - what drives our landscape agroecology work

While we recognize the uniqueness of one another, the communities that we work with and the contexts in which they are embedded, we also recognize the similarities that drive our work. This includes our deep love of Mother Earth and all the living species which belong to her.

We are driven by our concern about the increasing human impacts on ecosystems which are resulting in a dramatic decline in biodiversity. This is undermining the well-being of nature, our life support system, and putting human survival itself at risk. We recognize the interrelationship between:

- soil systems
- land, forest and grassland systems
- climate systems
- air systems
- diversity of animals, insects, birds, plants & human cultures

and the damage our current ways of living and producing are having on these systems.

Our work is driven by these concerns and motivates us to cooperate with others to find ways to sustainably regenerate landscapes to ensure the well-being of nature and the communities that depend on nature.

We recognise the complexity of ecosystems and the need to work collectively to regenerate landscapes, using an adaptive management and adaptive governance approach which is based on co-learning and reflective practice. Such adaptation is driven by: experimentation and reviewing the actions tried out to learn what works and what needs to improve so that natural systems upon which we depend can flourish.

With this in mind, the main phases in the design of participatory action research (PAR) are (also see SKI Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities p.27-31):

**Phase one:** Building relationships and community agreement to participate in landscape regeneration work and do a baseline (research) to identify the focus of the regenerate work.

**Phase two:** Carrying out the baseline (research) with the community to help identify the focus of the regenerate work, the stakeholders to involve and how best to involve each stakeholder group.

**Phase three:** Developing a landscape vision, action plan and governance process.

**Phase four:** Implementing the plan with regular reviews to adapt actions and governance processes based on learning what works and what doesn’t.

**Phase five:** An annual review to understand and document what was done (providing counts/numbers where possible), achievements to celebrate, and deciding what to change in terms of actions, governance and even the the vision and creating the plan for the following year.

The community in the context of the landscape project will need to be defined by each partner. Initially the community may be a subset of households living in a village who are keen to engage in a landscape regeneration initiative plus the various government officials that agree to support such an effort. Overtime, the numbers of people engaged in the landscape work are likely to increase. Partners are asked to define who makes up the agreed upon community once an agreement is reached with those involved about undertaking a landscape regeneration project.
1. Process assumptions for implementing agroecology at a landscape level

Principles, tools and processes are designed to ensure that this is a participatory action research (PAR) process. The broad focus of the research will be to ‘develop community capacity to implement regenerative natural resource management practices towards climate resilience on a landscape level, reinforcing the connectedness of socio-cultural, natural and economic systems within their communities’.

Each participating community will:

- have the space to build consensus on the landscape issues that they will focus on;
- work together to create a vision and develop their own plan to improve or restore the landscape in ways of most concern to them;
  - the community plan can be co-created to center on community knowledge but also draw on scientific research shared by SKI partners concerning healthy ecosystems where appropriate;
  - the community plan can set out actions at the individual and wider community level.
- decide how the plan will be governed and set out a roadmap for implementation
- draw on tools used during the research phase to help form the baseline and enable the community with the planning process. The baseline and plan can then form the basis of the community M&E system. The baseline and annual monitoring process will enable changes to be tracked over time and the plan to be adjusted and adapted as success is achieved and/or new actions are

The process above provides the cycle of research-action-reflection known as praxis (practice) which is the foundation for what is known as ‘conscientisation’ within the basis of PAR. Conscientisation refers to the process whereby through cycles of discussion, reflection and planning together, participant’s consciousness and knowledge about the issues raised and the power dynamics related to them (social, political, economic, environmental, etc) increases. This is useful particularly for landscape regeneration where the issues are complex and multifaceted. This process takes time and often many cycles of discussion, reflection, planning and action (with some failure and some gains) are needed to bring about change.

In PAR, on-going community participation is key to its success. This will often involve a series of open community meetings to which everyone is invited including women and youth. Facilitators need to be conscious of community power dynamics and decide how best each group can be supported to voice their positions. For example if women and youth do not feel comfortable speaking in open meetings where men’s voices and leadership are dominant, separate discussions at key points throughout the process, organised by gender and age, may be helpful to enable these social groups to think through their own views and prepare themselves to present them back within the larger community forum.

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
Important things to remember:

• Throughout the PAR process there should be shared decision-making between the community and the PAR facilitator. This collaboration is central to building knowledge and co-creating meaning.

• The facilitator works to support the collective community to draw out/identify the key issues and questions on which the PAR will be focused. It is very important to work at the community’s pace and sequence the process so that one discussion process leads to the next (see tools).

• It is the community that constantly engages with the information and collectively analyses it, developing a deeper understanding and making sense of what the information is telling them; and

• It is the collective community that determines the action/s needed to respond to the new knowledge they have created; they decide what needs to change based on their experience.

‘Action can produce changes in participants that go beyond intellectual understanding. Through action people learn more about how the world works and what can be done to change it’.

WOMIN, 2018 - FPAR Training materials for use in Zimbabwe

Applying these principles enables communities to organise and take actions towards improving chosen situations collectively. This PAR process is a form of knowledge construction that is rooted in people’s experience and lives and respects what they know. It is intended to shift power hierarchies in research so that the community are deeply involved and not treated as research subjects. It intends to support the community to develop skills and confidence in working towards a common vision.
2. Guiding principles

**AE Landscape approach guiding principles**

The SKI AE landscape group has developed the following guiding principles for implementing the pilot AE landscape project using a PAR approach:

1. Enable and support restoration of ecological literacy and practices across communities so that there are increasing levels of biodiversity across landscapes that contribute to effective ecosystem processes.

2. Recognize that every context is unique, use creative and flexible processes, based on the co-creation of knowledge and learning, and working at the community’s pace.

3. Build on local knowledge and customary governance, enabling the revival of bio-cultural knowledge and practice.

4. Pay special attention to fully involving those who are often excluded from community activities.

5. Emphasize action-oriented collaboration amongst all relevant players towards community ownership, and dynamic and inspiring leadership.

6. Enable documentation and learning at every step of the way by everyone involved towards amplification of the piloting work.

7. Seek out to support ways that will enable self-spread of landscape regeneration between communities with a ripple effect and not dependent on outside intervention.

**SKI’s principles of effectiveness**

Some SKI’s principles to also consider when carrying out this programme:

- Work in ways that restore and enhance the relationship between people, sectors, interests, disciples, genders, generations and the earth.

- Work in ways that affirm people’s knowledge and doesn’t undermine local knowledge (so that communities and individuals can own the work in their own context).

- Be sensitive to equity issues and inclusiveness so that relations between genders and generations, from youth to elders for example, in ways that are respectful and supportive.

- Creatively reach out and involve young people in our work.
• Contribute significantly in a holistic non-sectoral way to health and well-being.

• Strengthen movement building while supporting locally-led initiatives.

• Strive for research to be transformational, and towards this, seek to diversify, decentralise and democratise the creation of knowledge. Ethics and respectful, conscious research are fundamental.

Behaviours to consider when carrying out participatory mapping processes

Much has been written about the importance of facilitators behaving or acting in ways that encourage people to actively engage and share their knowledge and ideas during participatory processes.

To create a respectful, non hierarchical and accessible environment for all involved to feel empowered to participate and guide the research, the facilitators should make sure of:

• Acting respectfully and with humility: smiling, being patient, friendly, and listening with care.

• Respecting local cultural norms: this can include dressing appropriately, using traditional greetings, using the local language and not using jargon.

• Always introducing oneself and taking time to explain why they have come to do this work, also inviting others to introduce themselves.

• Planning before arriving at the community. This includes deciding on the purpose of any process to be undertaken such as by use of maps, diagrams, and being clear about how they will be done and used. Practicing processes beforehand in order to be able to present these clearly and confidently to the community.

• Always describing the purpose of each exercise to people and briefly explaining the process. To then ask people if they want to participate (informed consent). If they say NO, thank them for their time and honesty and discontinue.

• Allowing the community to take responsibility for the exercise/mapping and to adapt it to their own context.

• Once the mapping process is complete, inviting people to summarise their results and then explain how it is proposed to use the maps. Ask permission to use any information they shared.

• Working with local communities to identify how best they can safely store the diagrams/maps they have produced.

• Be appreciative throughout and especially at the end thanking people for sharing their knowledge and wisdom.

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
Dr CAPS Msukwa view on facilitators and community mapping processes

Mapping helps inform communities of what is going on within their space. It can guide them in deciding what interventions to use to bring about change. Principle-based evaluation is a way of conducting evaluation that is transformative.

Transformation happens in communities but also with workers and donors. Within this process, we as a team can experience transformation as we listen and learn from local people. This process being participatory in nature allows communities to have their voices heard and for them to analyze what they are discussing. Such discussion contributes to their transformation.

People know their situation best and are experts of life within their milieu. We who are entering their space need to remember that we do not know anything about what happens in that space. What was profound and often not highlighted was that community development workers going into community spaces should not assume people do not know aspects about their lives. We are not trainers or teachers, leaders, or bosses. We are facilitators who enter community spaces not knowing, but rather trying to understand what the situation is.

Being respectful of communities is important in doing this work. Dr CAPS Msukwa cautions against community development workers who go into a community as a teacher or leader. He said that this would stop development. As a facilitator, what you know should not matter to the community. What matters is what they know. We go empty without wanting to be part of the solution or knowing what their issues are. Our task is to listen to their stories. If they need help, they will say so.
3. Why use diagrams and maps for understanding agroecology and landscape regeneration

A landscape is an environment made up of multiple factors. A landscape can also be the geographic area that a community says that it is able to take responsibility for.

A map or diagram is a simple model. It presents lots of information in an easily understandable visual form. The creation of a visual diagram and the interrogation of what it represents is a powerful way of transforming people’s understanding of the interrelationship between the different landscape features and how they interact to either restore or damage the local ecosystem and people’s livelihoods.

There are many types of diagrams:
- Think about what diagram or map will be created and ensure that its purpose is clear to everyone involved and there is agreement on how it will be used.
- On the map, include the name of the place mapped, and the date the map is created.
- On a separate flipchart have the key which lists the features on the map and the symbol or icon used on the map to represent it.

The map/diagram does not need to be perfect. Additions can be added after the initial process. It is important to leave time for debriefing and the interrogation of the visual. This helps ensure there is a common understanding about what the diagram actually shows. Use a few open-ended questions to encourage discussion and analysis on what a diagram shows, confirming the various resources or assets displayed and their use and control or the relationship between key actors.

The value of diagrams
- They effectively simplify complex information.
- Constructing a diagram is a useful analytical exercise.
- They facilitate communication between those involved in diagram creation and those who are encouraged to validate or correct them.
- They stimulate open discussion and debate.
- They increase consensus among the people involved in the process.
• They are an excellent way to involve community members and to enable them to express their own views, detail categories of importance to them and identify plans or ways of changing the situation.

• They provide a visual record for reference and can be used for planning and monitoring progress over time.


Image source: Good Practices in participatory mapping, 2009 IFAD. pg 6
4. Decisions to consider when preparing and implementing community landscape processes

Every community and context is unique and each partner organisation’s starting point for their landscape work may be different. Each partner organisation needs to decide what is practical and appropriate to do in each phase of the landscape process including the baseline or the research phase and the visioning and planning phase. Partner organisations will also need to decide, with the community, when and what technical capacity building or training sessions to provide e.g. integrated land use design, erosion control, agroecology, etc.

Existing knowledge, new skills and a ‘learning-by-doing’ process

It is important to use processes that support communities to build on their knowledge, develop new skills, and learn about current scientific thinking on landscape regeneration. This is intended to assist communities to confidently take action and engage with government actors when developing a vision and action plan where government support may be required.

The capacity of government officials may also need to be developed so they see and understand the benefits of participative techniques and of co-management of landscape regeneration plans. Officials may need to be encouraged to listen and learn from the community and their specific experiences so as not to assume they know best.

Facilitators will need to be skilled, not only, in participative processes and technical landscape issues, but also in conflict resolution and consensus building as well. When the facilitation is done well the process should promote cooperation with the community and create an alliance between the community and government actors.

Developing relationships will take time but is vital to the success of the landscape regeneration initiative.

Learning iteratively or ‘learning by doing’ and adapting processes as you learn what works will be important.

This will require using tools with flexibility and innovatively and being mindful of what the community will gain by engaging in a specific process. It will be helpful for partner organisations to critique processes themselves by considering what is being achieved or not. Here is an example of a process that didn’t work: the community produced the diagram but they didn’t really understand what it showed; they were frustrated and all the women left.

There is no blueprint for this work

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
The tools and processes described in the rest of this guide are just a guide, an orientation for a process that is based on principles and ethical prescriptions for respecting people and the environment. Please use the tools that you know have worked well with the communities that you work with. These include those noted by the SKI AE landscape team members during their workshop on 4th June 2021:

- **Timelines** on the landscape starting from an agreed time in the past, to the present and projecting into the near future.

- **Maps** showing the landscape in the past, the landscape now and the landscape in the near future.

- **River of life diagrams** going from the past, to the present and into the near future.

- **Photo narratives** showing healthy landscape areas and degraded areas with brief descriptions underneath to encourage discussion on the differences between areas and how and why to move towards greater health of the landscape.

- **Asking questions** within specific processes that help people to think about solutions e.g. gully restoration. ‘Sometimes, just by mentioning something to people, they agree and commit to take action towards solving the issue’.

- **Using stories/dialogues** to gain consensus/understanding of what it was like in the past, what it is like now- are things getting better or worse, do you want to do something about it and what actions do we want to take to improve the situation.

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### Preparation

Before approaching the community to carry out any process including the baseline for the landscape regeneration programme, it is critical to decide the processes and questions that will be used to encourage the community to document and analyse their situation, and use this information as a basis from which they can take action.

When preparing decide:

- **Who and how many people to invite to participate in a process.** Should all community members be invited or a subset? Should government officials from ward and district levels be invited or should officials have their own meeting to consider landscape issues and priorities and be encouraged to then meet with community members so the community can present their research, vision and plan and afterwards officials can share their views. Be mindful of power dynamics and work in ways to level power between the various social and interest groups.
• **What to cover in each community meeting**, and how to sequence the discussion so it is useful to the community. Also decide how much to present before encouraging discussion and debate.

• **How long to hold each meeting/process** for being mindful that people have other work and caring responsibilities every day of the week.

• **What tools to use to map/or create diagrams of the landscape** that can be used as a baseline/ and as a means to gather together basic information to help people make decisions for action. This could be the maps and diagrams described in this set of tools, or an eco-map as Earthlore may use, or GIS or aerial maps that partners obtain and then invite community members to fill in with more specific information about the landscape.

When deciding the tools, please consider what local people will be most comfortable using and owning.

• **What is the starting point for the baseline?** Have community members and the partner already agreed on the landscape issue they will address? If so, you may want the map /diagrams to focus on that issue rather than all landscape features. For instance, one partner expects to focus on restoring trees. Their map may be of the areas where they intend to restore trees.

• **What words to use.** For example in Zimbabwe the word governance does not sit comfortably with government officials. In public meetings an alternative word would likely work better. Also many of the words used in planning by NGOs and government are jargon to communities and the planning frameworks tend to be complex and take lots of time to complete, yet the context around us is rapidly changing. Simplifying and using an adaptive planning approach to update plans has proven more effective when working with communities and contexts that are rapidly changing (see example in the template for the Landscape report Chapter 10 page 32.)

• **What restrictions need to be taken into account** when planning a public event. For example, what COVID 19 regulations must be considered and precautions implemented. If regulations on the number of people able to meet publicly remain low, it may require that each social group within a community selects community members to represent them during a series of landscape meetings.
What is the size of the landscape that a community can take responsibility for? If it is 5-10km in diameter, decide if it makes sense to engage the community in a discussion on whether to subdivide the landscape into micro-landscapes. People living within these sub-divisions could then be supported to do their own research, vision and plan. Representatives from the sub-divisions could then be supported to meet together and share their research, vision and plans and identify how they can ensure the success of the work being done across the wider landscape. It is important to ensure that the community is deciding the size of the geographic area that they can take responsibility for.

What type of data collection is needed so the work can be monitored? This can be easily done by community members using tally sheets on things they do (see report template). However for more complex projects, other tools may be useful e.g. using GPS to understand changes in forest cover. This may require the training of community members on the use of a specific tool and on M and E itself. Be mindful that every piece of data collected takes the community time to collect and analyse. The guide is to only collect information that you can analyse and use to help make decisions.

This list of questions for consideration when doing this work is not exhaustive. If in doubt about how to proceed, speak with the community or the governance structure that the community agrees should oversee this work and let them decide.

Also please consult with each other and ask the SKI landscape initiative members and the facilitation associates SKI works with to provide feedback on what you are thinking of doing and to visit and assist with the facilitation.

notes

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
5. Tools for engaging the community in a participatory landscape approach

*also see SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities, p27 -30.

A participatory process is best used with a community where facilitators and partner staff already have an existing relationship and the partner intends to continue working with the community over a number of years. This allows you to build on the trust already established with the community and link the landscape work with achievements already made.

To succeed, first consult with the local chief or relevant leader to explain the purpose of the process and confirm their agreement to call a community meeting to discuss engaging them in a landscape approach. The team then prepares for the meeting (see preparation tips on the next page).

Open community meeting for everyone to present the community led landscape approach

**Meeting objective:** to develop trust, confirm achievements to date, clarify the starting point, discuss the landscape approach and confirm community consent to engage in landscape improvement and do a baseline for planning.

**Materials:** notes on activities and achievements to date especially those that helped restore the landscape, notes on the landscape approach, and the baseline process.

**Time:** 2 hours or more for team members to meet with the community: leaders, men, women and youth.

**Process:** The community takes the lead in opening the meeting per established cultural norms and protocols.

- Introductions by the team and the community.
- Lead facilitator explains the purpose of the meeting, the broad agenda and the time the meeting is expected to take.
- The partner highlights the work done with the community so far, noting the achievements or the differences it has made especially in terms of the landscape’s health.
- The lead facilitator invites input from community members on the presentation, confirming with the wider audience agreement with any additions.
A local team member describes the local landscape noting a major strength, a problem and an opportunity to transform it inviting participants to contribute their views and describe what they think the initial landscape area should be that they want to focus on, and that they feel they can be responsible for.

Lead facilitator presents what the landscape approach/project is all about and what the partner can provide e.g. baseline, planning and training support.

Community is asked whether they are interested in engaging and leading this work.

The lead facilitator explains the baseline purpose and process and asks if there is agreement to do the baseline (informed consent).

More detail on the baseline process is presented: landscape mapping and stakeholder mapping.

The community is left to decide the dates and people who will do the maps.

The community confirms when they will advise the partner of their decision on baseline, participates and closes the meeting in a culturally appropriate ways.

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**Community meeting preparation tips**

- Select the team that will facilitate and note take during the meeting assigning roles and responsibilities for each part of the meeting.

- Review and ensure that the team is clear on the meeting purpose and the agenda.

- Ensure those presenting have prepared their presentations and are given an opportunity to practice their session:
  - Work done with the community and the achievements to date.
  - The local landscape: a strength, a problem or issue, and one opportunity,
  - The Landscape approach and the support the partner can provide.
  - The baseline process proposed community participants to engage in the baseline and how the baseline process can help.

- Ensure the team is clear what parts of the agenda the community leads e.g. the opening and closing sessions and potentially the chairing of other parts of the meeting.

- Try to keep to the time announced/agreed at the beginning of the meeting, shortening or lengthening the time depending on community interest.

- Ensure the meeting is held in a place comfortable for community members.

- Ensure the meeting is conducted in the local language.

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Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
Tips on facilitators and note takers

• Do have a lead facilitator with good facilitation skills that understands the purpose of the landscape work and the baseline process proposed and is confident enough to adapt the baseline process if needed.

• Do have facilitators that speak the local language and are neutral on the subject and know how to draw people into a discussion and ensure that no one dominates, understands the process they are facilitating and can ask questions that guide the discussion and encourage analysis.

• Do have note takers that can clearly write down what is said; knowing that this information is as important as the process itself.

Image source: SKI Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
6. Tools for mapping the local landscape

The process below is for communities that have not identified a specific landscape feature they want to regenerate. Where communities have already identified key features for regeneration, amend the process to focus on the areas identified.

The process, transect walk and the map, should provide the boundaries of the landscape area that the community believes it can take responsibility for. The process will likely need to be done over a few weeks, with teams left to do their transect walk and to gather together at an agreed date a week or two later to do a map.

1. Start with a transect walk

Objective: to develop a first-hand understanding of the local landscape the community feels they can take responsibility for (as discussed in the community meeting).

Materials: notebooks and pencils

Time: 1-2 hours for each team.

Process: The walk can be done by four small teams of 1-2 youth and an older farmer/elder that knows the area. Each team walks a specific section of the landscape perimeter (north, south, east and west).

Teams observe, and have a notebook to take notes. Notes are on the:

> **Soils:** (rocky, gravel, sand, clay, loam)

> **Land use:** (common land, forest, farmland, grazing land, housing/settlement, school, road)

> **Crops and vegetation:** (trees, grass areas, millet/sorghum Fields, vegetable gardens, annuals, perennials, etc.)

> **Water resources:** (ponds, rivers, wells, etc.)

> **Physical areas:** (hills, mountain, ditches)

> **Problems:** (deforestation, erosion, gullies, drought and pests, etc.)

> **Opportunities:** (timber, pasture, rain-fed farming, agroforestry, etc.).

The above are suggestions only and should be adapted to the local context. For instance the community may just want to use ‘biodiversity’ or livestock or wildlife as a focus of their observation and learning.

Teams need to agree on the subjects they will focus on, observe and note these down before they go on their perimeter walk. Having precisely defined subjects to observe/study will enable the teams to compare findings and map them later.

Preferably teams will be a mix of men and women so both can contribute their perspectives.

Teams speak with people they come across during the walk, describe what they are doing and ask if people want to say anything about the local landscape. This can help make the walks interesting, fun and more accurate. In addition it informs other people of the exercise.
2. Map the Landscape

**Objective:** to develop a visual map of the landscape to present to the community and other stakeholders to correct/improve where necessary and use as a baseline for planning.

**Materials:** 5 large sheets of paper, pencils, felt markers, masking tape, bits of sticks, paper or other materials to represent subjects/features on the map.

**Time:** 1-2 hours for all transect team members to come together to draw and analyse the map.

**Process:** Teams come together to draw a map to present what they observed.

- Tape/glue the 4 large sheets of paper together so there is a large surface to draw on.

- Label one separate large sheet to record the meaning of each symbol used on the map (key) and later enumerate them if use.

- Each team draws their perimeter line ensuring the lines connect to one another.

- Team members agree symbols for each of the features they draw on the map as they develop the map so each team uses the same symbols e.g. water could be Ⓜ️

- Teams then populate the map with the features they have observed.

- Teams discuss the areas of the landscape they didn’t visit and observe (the centre areas) and populate the area with the main landscape features.

- Team counts/estimates the size of the features on the map where possible and useful and writes this information on the key.

Once the map is complete, the teams discuss and analyse the map. It is important that a note-taker captures key points from the discussion on:

- What does the landscape map show or tell us?
- What are the strengths or the good things in this landscape?
- How are the positive landscape elements connected together?
- What are the big problems?
- What are the main opportunities for regenerating the landscape? This could include a discussion of existing by-laws or governance processes in place that enforce sustainable use of landscape resources.

The team agrees who will present the map to the larger community for correction/validation Once the map is corrected, the team briefly presents their views on the landscape and opens up the discussion so that the wider community can contribute their views.
This is a tool within a tool to encourage discussion and consensus either within a community or between the community and government officials. It can be done separately by the community and by the government. They can then be invited to meet. They can then be invited to meet together to share their results and make decisions on the proposed areas to prioritise for action.

Be mindful of the number of rows and columns included on the key. Use simple tables so that they are easy to read and analyse and to present to others. More information can be added in later.

Some thoughts on maps

Local people can identify with a hand drawn map they have created themselves. While it may not be to scale and show all features accurately it will still work well to get people involved in a discussion and to identify the issues the community wants to work on. It can then be a basis from which the community can create their initial vision and action plan.

GIS and aerial maps or three dimensional models can be introduced later, especially where more accuracy may be needed. The pros and cons of introducing more complex tools, including their cost are important to consider when introducing new tools.

Building from the simple: developing maps/diagrams organically to make them more complex over time.

Community and government skills in effective use of participatory methods take time to develop. It also takes time for both to develop a shared understanding of a landscape, its features and the actions needed to regenerate it.

As relations are developed and the basics of participative methods are grasped, it is easy to encourage the addition of more complex information on to maps or on to the key or code sheets. For instance, it may be helpful to have the community describe the condition of features on their map and use a symbol on the key chart to record this so that it is possible to track change overtime.

A sample key chart is provided on the next page. This may be particularly useful if decisions for action are proving difficult to reach or it is difficult to reach consensus with government on the type of support most helpful for the community.

This map was completed by a group of 8 people. They used it to help the community prioritize ways to protect, improve and manage their water resources. Source: WoMin Alliance PAR training guide, 2018.
Fig 1: Example of a key chart.

**Codes**

**Counts:** if it is easy to obtain actual numbers than use them. If not use words which indicate the %. My experience is that communities initially have difficulty using percent though this skill can be developed overtime.

- **Few** = less than 25% of what should be there
- **Some (or half)** = 50% of what should be there
- **Many** = 75% is there (75% of landscape is eroded)
- **All** = 100% is there (all households have vegetable gardens)

**Priority level:**

- **High** = critical to address immediately
- **Medium** = important to address but not as urgent
- **Low** = not needing attention at the moment

**Views on condition:**

- **↑** improving
- **↑↑** lots of improvement
- **↔** stable
- **↓** deteriorating or reducing
- **↓↓** lots of deterioration

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<td>Soil erosion</td>
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7. Tools for mapping groups and individuals important to landscape use and management

For any landscape there are groups and individuals that live within the landscape and beyond who affect conditions within the landscape itself.

As power and perceptions are so different between communities and government officials and other organizations, it may be better for the community to be supported to do this social map/diagram by themselves and other stakeholders to do their own separately. The two groups can then be brought together to present their results to one another and discuss the similarities and differences.

Important when doing this process is to balance power dynamics between social groups both within the community and beyond. This will enable a greater amount of learning and innovative solutions to emerge about landscape use and management. In addition, it will enable the interests and concerns of the various groups and individuals to be articulated. The process should also seek to build the confidence of community members to engage with more powerful stakeholders.

If in doubt about who should participate in this process, let the community decide whether to invite other stakeholders to participate in creating the first diagram representing groups and individuals important to landscape use and management.

Diagram of groups and individuals and their relationships

**Objective:** to identify the groups and individuals involved in the use and management of the resources within the landscape; identify groups that are already working on landscape regeneration, understand the relationships between the various groups and individuals, their power and the constraints they face. The information will be used to inform plans that promote the sustainable use of the resources within the landscape.

**Materials:** Sheets of flip chart paper, pencils, felt markers, scissors, tape or glue

**Time:** 1 to 2 hours

**Process:** Invite the community to select ten people (both men and women) that are knowledgeable about all the groups and individuals within their community and beyond who are responsible for landscape use or management. Set an agreed time to meet with group members.

- Brief the group on the objective of the exercise.
- Provide the group a piece of flipchart paper and a pencil or marker and ask them to list all the groups and individuals living within the landscape affecting or responsible for landscape use and management; and note the reason they are on the list.
- On a separate sheet, invite them to list all the individuals and organizations with power to affect/influence landscape use and management that are living outside of the landscape; note the reason they are on the list.
- Ensure the lists include any individuals and groups that are already
working on regenerating any landscape feature (both those living in the landscape and those outside)

• Once the lists are complete, ensure the name of each group/individual is clear and there is a word, or symbol to reflect the role/reason for a group or individual/individual’s inclusion.

• Ask the group to cut out circles of importance – small ones for those with little importance and large ones for those with big importance in landscape use and management.

• Ask participants to write the name of each group/individual on either a small or a large circle; depending on their perceived importance (large circle for those with the most power to facilitate improvements or stop improvement).

• Have four sheets of flipchart taped together and ask participants to place the circles on the flipchart. Overlap circles of groups/individuals that cooperate; place circles side by side for those that communicate, and place circles far apart from one another for those that have little or no contact.

• Allow participants to continue moving circles around and debating their placement until they are okay with them. Then ask them to stick them on the large sheets of paper with glue or tape.

Once the diagram is complete, participants discuss and analyse what the diagram is showing them. Key points of their discussion are written down by the note-taker.

The questions that follow are examples. Please amend or adapt them to your context and situation.

- What does the diagram show or tell us?
- What linkages and degree of interaction between actors is going on?
- Who controls the various assets/resources in this landscape (refer to landscape map)?
- Who or how are decisions made about use and management of resources within the landscape?
- What are the big problems or gaps in managing the resources in the landscape, and managing conflicts?
- What are the main opportunities?

The team agrees who will present the map and the main points from its analysis to the larger community for correction/validation.
Examples of those in a village could include: group of elders, village heads, women’s groups, rich farmers, landless people, etc. Those beyond could include: agricultural extension officers, other officials from ministries of forestry, water, the environment, NGOs, etc.

A rough example of a diagram is shown below in Fig 2.

Fig 2. Illustration of possible stakeholder groups

**Introduction to stakeholder analysis**

The landscape management approach should place people at the centre of any interventions meant to achieve conservation and sustainable use of resources. **Stakeholder participation and analysis is central to any sustainable landscape management initiative.** Thus it is imperative to consider stakeholder analysis when using the landscape management approach.

Stakeholder analysis involves an understanding of the stakeholder’s interests and level of influence. Stakeholders have different levels of interest and influence. Stakeholders may have overlapping and divergent interests in the landscape and this usually results in degradation of the resource base as stakeholders exercise their influence to advance their interest. To assert their interests, stakeholders use influence. A framework (such as the one presented below) to link stakeholder interests to landscape management is key to reconciling competing interests.

**Process**

Ask the community to list all the stakeholders in the area

1. Explain the concepts of Interest and Influence and explain why these two concepts are important in landscape management

2. Create quadrants as shown in Fig 3. (no need to include names of each quadrant e.g. Crowd, Subjects etc, nor the arrows illustrating the movement of the stakeholders from one quadrant to another)

3. In a plenary or in small groups, the community places the stakeholders in the quadrants (on a flip chart) according to each stakeholder’s perceived level of interest and influence.
4. Meanwhile the note taker captures reasons /justification given for the placement of each stakeholder in the quadrant.

5. The completed stakeholder analysis quadrant is kept safe for review of the situation e.g. after one year

NB: It should be noted that stakeholders are not fixed into these classes (see the double headed arrows). Both interest and influence change over time. Therefore, constant review of stakeholders in terms of their influence and interests need to be done by the project, followed by a concomitant adjustment of management strategies for the different stakeholders.

![Fig 3: Diagram illustrating stakeholder analysis quadrant](image)

**Analysis**

**Context setters:** They have low interest on the project but can be a source of considerable risk as they can use their influence to advance their interests which are different from that of the project. Show consideration. Keep informed, e.g. through regular meetings and when showing improved interest in the project, engage them for articulation of the project in higher offices.

**Subjects:** They are crucial to the project because of their high interest but need to be mobilised to actively participate in the project. Because of their low influence, this group will be affected most by the negative impacts of the project—they are vulnerable. Otherwise build their capacity so that they are more assertive.

**Crowd:** This is not a priority group as they neither have interest nor influence to disrupt/influence the project. However, under the Leave-no-one-behind principle, help build their capacity to be more assertive and stimulate their interest in the project. As well, when sufficiently upset, this group may gain influence and resist change (they have agency). They may also enlist powerful allies to resist or derail interventions on the landscape.

**Key players:** These offer potential sources of alliance towards the achievement of the project objective. This group may constitute the project partners who participate in designing the project plan and influencing policy at a higher level.

* The above stakeholder mapping tool was shared by Witness Nga­ya. Please email him for advice on the timing and conditions for its use.
notes

Image source: *SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities* (2020)
8. Tool for community review and confirmation of landscape research

This is an open community meeting for everyone to hear about the landscape research and contribute their views. Please invite as many people and social groups as possible: men, women, leaders, project members, different resource user groups e.g. timber collectors, fruit harvesters, etc.

Once the landscape research is completed and the research team members have agreed who and how they want to present their results, they should ask the community to decide the day, time and place where the landscape research presentation and discussion can take place.

Community research validation meeting

Meeting purpose: For community research members to present their work (map and relations diagram), so that the wider community can correct it, as necessary, and agree on the research results. For the wider community to share their initial views on the landscape issue to focus on.

Materials and venue: Big space where people are comfortable, with somewhere to stick up the map and diagram (side of a vehicle or the wall of a building), tape and felt markers.

Time: 2 to a maximum of 3 hours for the community: leaders, men, women and youth, to hear and comment on the findings.

Team roles: Community members involved in the mapping and relations diagramming decide who will facilitate the meeting; who will explain the map, the relations diagram and present the summary analysis of these diagrams, and who will sum up and close the meeting. The meeting note-taker is appointed. The community research team can invite the external facilitator and note-taker to carry out specific tasks.

Process: The community takes the lead in opening the meeting per established cultural norms and protocols.

- The appointed lead facilitator explains the purpose of the meeting, outlines the agenda and the proposed amount of time for the meeting.
- The mapping team explains the landscape map and how it was developed and what it includes (this map could be on all landscape features or selected ones).
- The mapping team presents a summary of the key points from their analytic discussion on the landscape.
- The community is invited to correct and add to the map and analytic discussion points that were presented.
- The relations diagram team explains the diagram, the list of stakeholders living in the landscape and those outside that influence how the landscape is managed and used, and presents a summary of their key analytic discussion points.
- The community is invited to correct and add to the relations diagram, the lists and the analytic discussion points presented.
- The facilitator sums-up the results of the meeting and invites community members to buzz with their neighbours (around 5 people)
asking them: considering what you have heard, what priority focus should the landscape work initially take in this place?

- The appointed lead facilitator thanks everyone for their time and explains next steps e.g. a community planning meeting will be scheduled to discuss the vision, action plan and governance process (try to schedule this within a month of the event so people don’t forget the meeting results.

Alternatively, the facilitator could propose a separate training on specific landscape issues that could help the community make a more informed decision on areas to prioritise when developing their vision and action plan. This training could focus on current technical thinking on landscape restoration and proposed ways to do it sequentially – i.e. how Interventions build on and reinforce each other (astute layering and sequencing of interventions to reconcile competing interests and also has high chances of success).

The community takes the lead in closing the meeting as per established cultural norms and protocols.

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
9. Tool for community development of a landscape vision and plan and its governance

This planning process is as important as the landscape research that the community has completed. Encourage participation by everyone in the planning meeting while ensuring that each social group is represented: leaders, men, women and youth, particularly those that will either gain or potentially experience loss if a landscape plan is implemented.

So that the plan and expectations are realistic and the potential for success is high, you may want to invite the community to focus initially on only one or two features in the landscape e.g. indigenous treeregeneration or water quality improvements. As progress is reviewed annually, the community can decide if they want to add other landscape issues into the plan the following year.

It is important to support people to develop a plan they can achieve. If they make a huge plan that tries to regenerate everything at the same time the potential for failure is high and people may get discouraged and reduce their engagement. Support the community to identify the feature to work on where there is the most consensus and energy and potential for success; seeking to build on the biggest strengths and the biggest opportunities they identified in the research process.

The process outlined below proposes both a small group and a plenary discussion (small group discussions provide participants some time to think and reflect on the issue and decide their response). However the community may want to do everything in plenary. This is a community decision, however the facilitator needs to ensure that all social groups have an opportunity to voice their views and they are heard.

The process may be completed over a few hours or take a series of meetings to complete. Some tips to avoid an overly ambitious vision and action plan are provided at the end of this section.
Community vision, plan and governance meeting

Meeting purpose: for the community to identify the initial landscape features to improve/restore, develop a vision and a plan to achieve the vision and identify governance options.

Materials and venue: Big space where people are comfortable, with somewhere to stick up the landscape map and relations diagram (side of a vehicle or the wall of a building), flipchart paper, tape and felt markers.

Time: 2 to a maximum of 3 hours for the community: leaders, men, women and youth, to debate and decide their vision and plan and governance options.

Team roles: Community members involved in the research process decide who will facilitate the various activities involved in this planning process and assign a note-taker.

Process: The community takes the lead in opening the meeting per established cultural norms and protocols.

The appointed lead facilitator explains the purpose of the meeting and outlines the agenda. The facilitator briefly sums up the map and relations diagram and reminds people of their initial views on priority areas to focus on for landscape improvement.

Agreeing the priority to focus on

- The facilitator invites people to go into groups (by social group) to discuss the priority (s) and verify whether this priority (s) is still valid, or a change is needed and the reason for their position. Give groups 10-15 minutes for discussion.

- Invite a spokesperson for each group to present their priority and the reason for it with the note-taker writing the priority (s) on a flipchart with the reason beside it.

- If there is agreement on the priority, celebrate in a culturally appropriate way.

- If there is no agreement on the priority, vote in a culturally appropriate way to select the priority.

Agreeing on the vision

- Once the priority (s) is clear, invite groups to reconvene and create a vision. Proposed question for them to answer: What will the landscape look like if we work on this issue for the next three years or so? Invite people to draw or write words in the sand or a piece of flipchart paper so they can present their vision back. Give groups 10-15 minutes for discussion.

- Invite each group to present their vision.

- Lead facilitator draws out the commonalities and the note-taker writes them up on a flipchart. The facilitator notes any differences and invites comments on whether there is agreement to include these points or they need to be dropped. The final vision is read out by a community member and everyone is asked to validate its accuracy.
Agreement on the initial plan

- Facilitator invites participants to develop activities to be done in year one and note who will do them (everyone individually or in groups, the partner, extension staff, etc.)
- Invite socially mixed buzz groups to debate the top two or three activities to be done in year one and who will do them. Give groups ten minutes to discuss.
- Invite each group to present their ideas. Note taker writes them up on a flipchart.
- Facilitator verifies the commonalities and overlaps and reconciles the differences, encouraging the group to focus on activities where there is agreement about the action and to set aside actions where there is no consensus at the moment.
- The facilitator refers to the key groups in the relations diagram to confirm that they are adequately covered in the plan (e.g. whether groups are expected to do something or they just need to be informed).
- Once the plan is agreed, celebrate in a culturally appropriate manner.

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)

Agreement on the governance plan

- Facilitator invites participants to discuss who and how plan implementation will be ensured/governed; inviting participants to consider what is culturally appropriate and will ensure representation of each social group.
- The note-taker writes down the highlights, the main discussion points, on a flipchart.
- If there are differences the facilitator sees if differences can be reconciled.
- IF this is not possible, the facilitator asks the group what is the culturally appropriate way for them to reach a decision on the governance structure.
- The facilitator respects the process proposed by the group.
- The facilitator invites the governance group to meet at a later time and date to discuss their code of conduct for their internal working and also for how they will engage with others to ensure the plan is delivered.
- The facilitator invites participants to sum-up the meeting – happy about and improvements needed for next time.

The community takes the lead in closing the meeting per established cultural norms and protocols.

* Adapted from: Assessment in the growth of social groups for sustainable agriculture and land management, August 2020 by J. Pretty et al.: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343507429_Assessment_of_the_growth_in_social_groups_forsustainable_agriculture_and_land_management
Governance can be by traditional leaders, or as discussed in the paper cited above, by various user groups that take collective responsibility for co-managing resources and landscape regeneration e.g. water user groups, community based forestry committees, micro-catchment restoration groups, management of intensive grazing groups, etc.

It is important to build on existing local cultural institutions and established norms, rules and sanctions. It is also important to consider the size of groups (25-50 people) ensuring that it is possible for people within a group to know and trust one another and collaborate together to bring about change.

**Tips on visioning**

Avoid communities developing a ‘science fiction vision that is impossible to achieve’ by:

- Ensuring they have a clearly defined issue they have agreed to focus on.
- Agreeing on the time frame in which they want to achieve change (3 to 5 years).
- Critiquing the vision using agreed criteria such as:
  - Does this build on our biggest strengths and opportunities
  - Do we have the resources to make such change(s) happen
  - Do we have the time available to devote to the work required to achieve such a change(s)
  - Do we have the cooperation and support from across the community to achieve this change(s)
  - Do we have the cooperation and support from government to achieve this change(s).
- Adapting the vision based on the critique.

If the vision continues to be ‘science fiction’, the facilitation team takes off their facilitation hat and asks if they can provide their critical reflections on the vision’s strengths and areas where the vision could be more realistic, noting that we all want the work to succeed and once the landscape regeneration process gets underway than the vision can be expanded.

Find a way of prioritising the parts of the vision that will succeed and areas that can be left for the future.
Tips and useful questions to ask when planning (avoid planning for the impossible or a shopping list plan)

- Ensure the actions are clearly linked to the achievement of the issue prioritised in the vision.

- Focus the action plan for a one year period only with an agreement to review it one year on and adapt it based on experience.

- Use similar criteria as for visioning to critique the action plan e.g. does it build on strengths in the community and the natural environment; does it build on the big opportunities. This is to avoid problem or deficit oriented planning which can make people feel hopeless.

- Is it doable given the time we have available given all the work we need to ensure our families well-being?

- Do we have the resources to hand to do the activities or will we need to find them?

- Have we identified in our plan how to link or engage with relevant ward or district plans?

- Do we have the skills and confidence to negotiate with government to build an alliance with them to regenerate the landscape or do we need to develop these skills?

Adapt the criteria to your circumstances and culturally appropriate ways of working when making hard decisions.

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
10. Template - Report for community X
landscape vision and plan

Documentation of the vision and plan will enable the community to monitor and evaluate their progress over time.

Not all the research processes, meetings and discussions leading up to the vision and plan need to be documented in detail. Rather brief bullet point meeting minutes with photos of any maps and diagrams produced during the research and decision-making discussions may suffice. **Important is to store the brief notes from each process in an easily retrievable way so information can be retrieved easily and referenced.**

An outline of a report format is provided below to assist with the production of a report that can be shared widely and enable the community and partner to conduct their annual reviews. Much of this can be in bullet points rather than narrative to keep it brief and to the point.

**Report Content**

1. **Introduction**

Community and partner name
Purpose and broad outline of report
Timeframe over which the process was carried out to create this report

2. **The community and their location**

Who is the community that owns this plan e.g. all households in village X; specific user groups; specific user groups with their allies from specific government ministries

How many community members and other actors are committed to ensuring this plan is a success

Where is the landscape that they will work in and its approximate size.

3. **How did we make this vision and plan**

- What processes did we go through and the dates of each main process (this could be a timeline)
- What specific research was done (tools used)
- Who was involved in each process and who actually owns this vision and plan

4. **What findings/discoveries were made about the landscape, it’s use and management**

- What were the specific landscape features we assessed in detail
- What were the different social and interest groups we assessed in terms of their use, management and power to influence the way landscape features are regenerated
- What were the main issues, threats and especially the strengths and opportunities discovered.

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5. What do we want to achieve

Our vision – that in three or five years-time we will have for example:

- Covered the landscape with indigenous trees.
- Increased connections between community people and government ministries to work together.
- Increased the use of locally relevant monitoring of tree coverage.
- Increased awareness of the multiple biodiversity benefits of indigenous trees.

The outcomes we desire to see (the differences or benefits of achieving this vision)

- An increasing retention of rainfall and water run-off across the landscape.
- An improvement in local habitats that can provide food and shelter for insects, birds and small animals which helps to maintain a healthy and productive ecosystem.
- A greater understanding among community members of their own collective knowledge and of scientific knowledge on indigenous tree management and its ecological benefits, providing them the means to work together to take positive action to help their environment.
- The work allows them to see the positive impact of their actions transforming the way they think and engage with nature.
- The community has agreed a way to manage (govern) the project.
- Community and government have created an alliance to ensure the vision is achieved.
- The work will provide a positive experience of landscape regeneration work that can be shared widely to encourage other communities to work together for similar purposes.

How will we know whether we have succeeded

- Number of people making a commitment to take agreed action.
- Number and type of commitments made by government/others to support community actions.
- The number and type of trees planted and managed each year.
- The differences people say the actions are making to their well-being and the well-being of the environment.

Image source: SKI Mini Barefoot Guide: Whole Landscapes Whole Communities (2020)
What actions will we take in year one

(a more detailed plan can be included as an annex noting who needs to do what and by when including the data people will collect).

- The committee or governance structure to ensure that the work is carried out is clarified or set up and their code of conduct developed.

- Priority areas for initial tree planting are identified.

- Sourcing seedlings are from ...xyz

- Community members willing to plant in priority areas sign up for the work and are assisted to obtain seedlings and set up their tree planting record.

- Training on planting and caring for indigenous trees is provided, along with information on the benefits of increased indigenous tree cover so people are motivated to care for the trees they plant.

- Quarterly reviews are held to assess what is working and what needs to improve.

- Annual review is held at the end of the year to evaluate what was done, what changed, what worked, what didn’t work and what needs to improve so the year two plan is even more successful.

- Based on the evaluation, the year two plan is developed.

6. Annexes

- Research maps/diagrams, photos and the notes from the analytic discussions on these visuals particularly notes on the strengths, opportunities, links, relationships, issues and problems discussions.

- Notes on key decisions from community meetings and how they were made.

- Notes on the governance or management process agreed and the rules of engagement by this group.

- Notes on who is part of the alliance and the commitments they have made.

- Any other notes that the community thinks important to retain in their record log that will assist them to monitor progress over time and update their plans annually.
11. Community monitoring and evaluation of their landscape vision and plan

The community’s vision, action plan and governance plan is the basis of the community’s monitoring and evaluation system. The landscape map and relations diagram plus the discussions based on such research provides baseline information. All these documents need to be safely protected so they can be used annually, if not more frequently. SKI and partners need to provide communities with an environmentally friendly way they can protect their documents.

**The vision:** presents the change the community aspires to see.

**The plan:** presents the main actions to achieve the change.

**The governance plan:** presents how the community will ensure the plan is achieved.

**Annual review and reflection session**

(this can be a combination of small group and plenary discussion. It is up to the community to decide the discussion session process. However, the facilitator needs to ensure that each social group has an opportunity to voice their views and they are heard by the wider group).

**Meeting purpose:** to review progress over the last year, verify what was done, what changes are occurring and how well the governance process worked per the code defined by the governance group. To adjust the vision, action and governance plans so they reflect what the community needs to do in the coming year and also update the landscape map and relations diagram if gaps are identified.

**Materials and venue:** Big space where people are comfortable, with somewhere to stick up the landscape map, relations diagram and the community vision and plan (side of a vehicle or the wall of a building), flipchart paper, tape and felt markers.

**Time:** 2 to a maximum of 3 hours for the community: leaders, men, women and youth, to debate and reflect on their work and update all their documents.

**Team roles:** Community members involved in plan governance decide who will facilitate the various activities involved in this review and planning process and assign a note-taker.

**Process:** The community takes the lead in opening the meeting per established cultural norms and protocols.

- The appointed lead facilitator explains the purpose of the meeting and outlines the agenda and the time proposed for this process.
- The facilitator reminds people of the vision and action and governance plans that are on the wall, inviting people to read out the vision.
- Either in small groups or in plenary, invite everyone to brainstorm and call out all the activities that they have been doing to achieve the vision. The note-taker writes them on a flipchart.
Invite people to consider how the activity list relates to
1) their action plan
2) what activities worked well and
3) what activities need to be improved so the vision can be achieved?

This can be done by small groups with each group considering a different aspect. Group members can visit the action plan on the wall and make notes to present back in plenary.

- Discuss what has changed as a consequence of the action (possible questions)
  - what changes are emerging in the landscape (positive and negative)
  - how is the environment changing (positive and negative)
  - how is the well-being of the people that live here changing (positive and negative)
- How well has the governance process worked and what needs to be improved?
- Invite people to consider their experience so far and based on their learning make adjustments to their landscape map, relations diagram and note any new strengths, opportunities and threats and issues or problems.
- Invite people to update their vision, either confirming that it is still okay or completely changing it if they have achieved it or if they think it needs to focus on other issues.

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Based on the vision, and review update the action and governance plans for the coming year.

Thank everyone for their contributions and celebrate the review results.

The community closes the meeting in a culturally appropriate way.

Participatory action research (PAR) is an approach (see PAR assumptions chapter on page 2) underpinned by principles and ethics. PAR is not a method or tool. This toolkit to implement Agroecology at a Landscape Level suggests tools that could be used for the pilot landscape work by partner organisations. These M&E tools were designed to fit the SKI Landscape initiative's purpose. As such there are no completed examples that can be provided for reference.

The tools presented in this toolkit are derived from a standard set of participatory tools. Sources for these tools are provided below. They present completed examples of specific tools. Within PAR many different participatory tools are used with the most common being: semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, community workshops, diagramming, mapping, video, surveys and the collection of data, planning for action and communications.

A standard set of participatory tools evolved in the 1970-80s. Participatory practice in development spread rapidly in the 1990s. Tool adaptation and the creation of new tools has continued with guidebooks multiplying for their use in many sectors (agriculture, health, education, etc.).

WoMin Alliance’s participatory action research process

WoMin is an alliance of 19 local partners from 13 Sub-Saharan Africa countries who work with communities, particularly women to build their skills, knowledge and confidence so they create a movement to challenge destructive extractivism of natural resources and propose development alternatives that respond to the needs of the majority of African women and the communities of which they are a part.

WoMin uses PAR as its main movement building process. The Alliance’s strong culture of action-reflection and learning practice ensures that its PAR process is reviewed and improved overtime. WoMin started using PAR in 2013. The process has always aimed to strengthen women’s participation, leadership and action to address the inequitable development processes they face that threaten their use of natural resources (dam construction, coal burning, and diamond mines, etc.).

The WoMin PAR process involves two separate 5-day PAR trainings for women that are already taking action to address inequitable development processes. Training one focuses on power and development and the PAR process. Before women leave they agree a plan on how to inform their local leaders and community about PAR and work with them to consult more widely on the process within the community, particularly with women, about their issues and involvement in a PAR process.

The community consultation results are written up and trainees return for a second five day PAR training usually four months later. In the second training women present their community’s plan. They are then trained in the research process and methods they can use, plus on communications and documentation. A first step upon return to their community is to train community researchers (minimum 5 days) with part of this time spent testing and adjusting methods and further strengthening their PAR design and communications plan. At the end of the second 5-day training, WoMin commits to provide mentoring support in the community over a two year period.

A report from its work with women affected by coal mines in South Africa is here: https://womin.africa/community-activists-resources/women-activists-confront-energy-inequality/. The report clearly describes the full PAR process, with local activists from Phola-Ogies. They approached WoMin to be trained and supported to do a PAR process.
The research and the actions taken by local women are clearly presented in the report.

**WoMin’s views on research, evaluation and PAR:**

Research and evaluation is generally undertaken by ‘outsiders’ to a community and it is they who decide the purpose of the research. They may be staff working in a non-governmental organisation, or consultants contracted by government, and very often, they come from universities. Their interests may be to inform actions for change locally or to build new policy or they may have an interest to understand an issue better and build what is called ‘new knowledge’. The researchers and/or the funders are the ones that hold power in relation to the research. They decide on the focus, methodology and outcome of the study. The people who are studied are reduced to objects to be understood and analysed. In addition, they are often the source of local or indigenous knowledge which researchers wish to extract, analyse and build ‘scientific’ knowledge from. There is no accountability or responsibility in this very unequal relationship between the researcher and those who are ‘researched’. The researchers analyses and draws conclusions from the research and they use this knowledge without the involvement of those who have been ‘researched’.

The ‘theft’ of local knowledge and experience through extractive research in the global South has its origins in colonialism where colonial science was used to study the colonized people in order to better control them. These research approaches and methods have been replicated for decades by researchers who have been trained in the universities and institutes of the global North or Southern universities staffed by scholars of western origin.

**Participatory action research**

Participatory action research (PAR) or social action research is revolutionary and turns on its head this approach to research. PAR is a research process involving collaboration of the ‘outsiders’ and the ‘insiders’ with a view to deepening a shared understanding of the world by trying to change it. Researchers utilizing these methods identify a problem along with participants (who are the co-researchers) and carry out a process of fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, implementation and evaluation to solve problems and generate new knowledge at the same time. PAR emphasizes a strong link between research and action, meaning that research generates information and knowledge which is used to inform action. In addition, the insights gained from reflection on action informs our knowledge about power and how change happens leading to a new phase of enquiry/research. This is called the action reflection cycle.

In PAR the external ‘researchers’ usually have an existing relationship of solidarity with the community/constituency who will co-research the problem/issue. If this relationship does not exist then the process begins with relationship building and negotiating of roles and responsibilities.

PAR researchers argue that the research process must be democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing. PAR breaks away from traditional research and forms alliances with individuals with the least social, cultural and economic power. PAR often uses the term “researcher” to refer to both the outside academic and the insiders to the research.

Supporters of PAR generally uphold ideas about the world, which emphasize deep differences of power and interest among social groups. The research process therefore works to make visible these differences in the distribution of power, authority, the allocation and control of
PAR is based on the ideas of Paulo Freire, a radical Brazilian educator, who argued that the road to social change is through dialogue and “conscientisation” wherein marginalized people engage in critical analysis and organize action to challenge unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices. The research process aims to be a liberating and transformative experience. Research conducted using PAR is risky because one can expect resistance from dominant groups and authorities.

Guiding Principles of PAR:

- Change process includes simultaneous change in the individual and in the culture of the groups, institutions and societies to which they belong
- PAR is a collaborative process that includes all those who are affected by the issue being researched
- PAR practitioners serve as guides and facilitators
- PAR facilitators ensure that participants, not just researchers are involved in the process of gathering evidence and theorising (building new ideas) from this process.

Other Source Materials

The IIED website on participatory learning and action (PLA) is a good source for examples of participatory methods and tools. The website provides web links to all of IIED’s PLA notes series. This PLA series was produced twice yearly from 1987 to 2013. The link to the PLA website is here: https://www.iied.org/participatory-learning-action-plan.

PLA notes provides many examples of completed processes from countries in Africa, and other continents. Issues in the archive that maybe helpful are:

> 24: Critical Reflections from Practice
> 31: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
> 49: Decentralisation and community-based planning
> 54: Mapping for change
> 55: Practical Tools for community conservation in southern Africa, and;
> 65 Biodiversity and culture

Diagram showing the Participatory action research reflection cycle

The 1995 *Participatory Learning and Action: Trainer’s Guide* is another useful resource. This guide is for those training others in the use of participatory mapping and other tools. Examples include: *mapping* (pages 235-38), *transect walks* (page 239) and *Venn diagrams* (pages 242-243). The link to the guide is here: [https://pubs.iied.org/6021iied](https://pubs.iied.org/6021iied)

However as stressed throughout the guide: all tools need to be adapted to your context and the purpose to which you want to use them.

The Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: tracking change together article describes the use of participatory processes overtime for monitoring purposes and provides examples. Link is here: [https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G01749.pdf](https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G01749.pdf)

This article includes an example of how an appraisal process was used to develop a baseline for a natural resource programme (page 4). To quote:

‘The Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) is an Indian NGO that supports local village institutions (VIs) to use their natural resources in a sustainable and equitable manner. AKRSP helps these VIs to carry out their own appraisals and plan their development priorities. As part of the pre-project appraisal, local people prepare detailed maps of their village which incorporates their analysis about the available resources, how these are used, ownership, problems and constraints. These detailed maps represent an inventory of resource-related issues and are used as the basis for planning village projects. All the proposed activities are depicted on the maps, and include: soil and water conservation, minor irrigation, forest plantation and protection, etc. These maps are kept in the villages and are displayed in a convenient location that is accessible for all members of the VI. During meetings and project reviews, these maps are used to monitor the project activities and resolve problems’.

*Source: Kaul Shah, 1995.*
Another example on page 4 discusses how participation was facilitated to agree a monitoring indicator for a sustainable agricultural programme:

‘In central Brazil, farmers, NGO staff, farmers union representatives, and university academics are working on more sustainable forms of agriculture. They had chosen ‘the percentage of vegetation cover’ as one indicator for monitoring an agroforestry activity, and were identifying which method to use. Quite quickly they agreed on using a wooden frame to estimate visually the surface area covered by vegetation.

But problems arose when deciding how that information should be recorded for easy comparison. The farmers rejected several forms suggested by the academics as too complicated. Finally, they all agreed on the use of a wooden ruler, on which the farmer would scratch a mark to indicate the estimated percentage of vegetation cover in terms of a certain segment of the ruler. Each farmer would get the same length stick twice a year, one for each time the vegetation cover would be monitored.

To compile and analyse the information, the farmers involved in agroforestry would bring their marked rulers to a meeting, register the findings on paper, and discuss the findings and their significance for their agroforestry plots. By using a new stick for each measurement and recording the marks, they would be able to easily keep track of changes in vegetation cover.’


This link is to an article on completing Transect walks separately with farmers and then with a group of forestry, soil and agricultural experts in a district of Kenya. It demonstrates how different local and expert knowledge can be and shows how this reflects in the views on what can be done to improve natural resources. Link is here: https://pubs.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/G01744.pdf

Reflection Methods: Tools to make Learning more Meaningful, 2018. Practical Guide for Trainers and Facilitators. This is a guide for facilitating reflection processes on the learning taking place in the context of multi-stakeholder partnerships in the food security sector that is published by the Centre of Development Innovation of Wageningen University. Link is here: http://www.mspguide.org/tool/reflection
Good Practices in participatory mapping, 2009 IFAD. This is a review of participatory mapping processes across IFAD projects. See page 30 on the importance of process and page 40 onwards for a matrix of different participatory mapping tools (Strengths and advantages and disadvantages of various mapping approaches from community sketch maps to the use of aerial GPS maps). Link is here: https://www.ifad.org/documents/38714170/39144386/PM_web.pdf/7c1eda69-8205-4c31-8912-3c25d6f90055

The how to do toolkit: 80 Tools for Participatory Development, 2008 by Frans Geilfus. Overview is well written and the how to do tool presentations are clear. There are many examples of different types of maps.

Some of the language and tools though are outdated for collaborative work with communities e.g. the use of words should as beneficiaries, targets or tools that explicitly rank the wealth of households which when done publicly can be humiliating for people.

Examples of specific tools the landscape group may find useful are: Natural Resource Map on page 62-64, the Venn diagram on page 40-41 and the community planning map on natural resources on page 175. Link is here: http://repiica.iica.int/docs/B1013I/B1013I.pdf
This guide from the GrantCraft series describes *Participatory Action Research for Evaluation*; its strengths, the skills needed for it to work and how the process can build ‘within communities a culture of civic conservation about justice’. It focuses on foundations or grant giving organizations so is a bit lengthy. Helpful pages are:

- Page 9 which lists the skills communities build when they fully participate in PAR

- Page 10 (the table) that sets out characteristics for when you know PAR is going well and when it is not. The link is here: https://grantcraft.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2018/12/par.pdf

**Participatory mapping in a developing country context: Lessons from South Africa, 2019.** This academic article presents the opportunities and the ethical risks of using participatory mapping, particularly digital maps. Ethical issues to consider and the need for clarity on map ownership and use are stressed. The discussion and conclusion sections are easy to read and worth doing so. The link is here: https://www.mdpi.com/2073-445X/8/9/134/htm