

# VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGH AWARENESS BUILDING

## LEARNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY (L4S)

### Need and request for new tools

The improvement of quality of life does not only depend upon more income but also upon better education and health, a satisfactory social network, or personal freedom and choice. Many of these aspects are directly and indirectly linked to the utilisation of natural resources. Their sustainable use and management is thus a key condition for improving the livelihood of people. Such an understanding requires individual and collective responsibility and a corresponding behaviour.

Mountain inhabitants and local authorities alike need to assume this responsibility which implies joint decision making and implementation of actions. Ultimately, the mountain communities are to be considered as the real managers and custodians of their inherited natural resource base. Fostering the self-responsibility at individual and community level to shape the future life in mountain regions appears crucial for a sustainable development process. Funds and information play an important role but are as such not sufficient. A change of mentality within the mountain communities as well as among the external intervening actors is necessary. Support is particularly needed to raise awareness, provide relevant information, introduce novel ideas, and create individual and institutional capacities e.g. to formulate comprehensive village development strategies.

In this context, the various L4S modules elaborated by CAMP and CDE can be considered as a powerful tool.

### Learning for Sustainability (L4S)

The original concept and first training module of L4S was elaborated by the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) based on the request of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as a scientific mandate on environmental issues in development cooperation.

The tool was first designed as 'autodidactic training' for sustainable resource management. Meant for development and environmental specialists working at local level, it was first tested in Mali, Madagascar, Ethiopia, Bolivia, India, and Thailand before being introduced, adapted and further developed in Central Asia.

The instrument has proved to be useful in raising awareness, building individual and institutional capacities, bringing representatives from various stakeholder groups and levels together as well as in producing concrete outputs such as project proposals or village development strategies. It has thus been incorporated into extension training programs at the national level.

### Goal and interdisciplinary approach

The main goal of an L4S workshop is to support a self-learning process based on individual experience and leading to an increase of competence and knowledge.

#### WHY AN L4S WORKSHOP?

- *It mobilizes villagers and raises awareness at individual and village level*
- *It creates an atmosphere for open discussion at local level*
- *It generates (new) ideas for village development planning*
- *It helps in identifying and evaluating village resources, potentials and opportunities*
- *It represents the 'first step' for creating village partnerships and active initiative groups*

External resource persons – e.g. from state or academic organizations, NGOs etc. - are chosen to combine different disciplines relevant to the topic of the workshop.

Ultimately the L4S should help in changing the



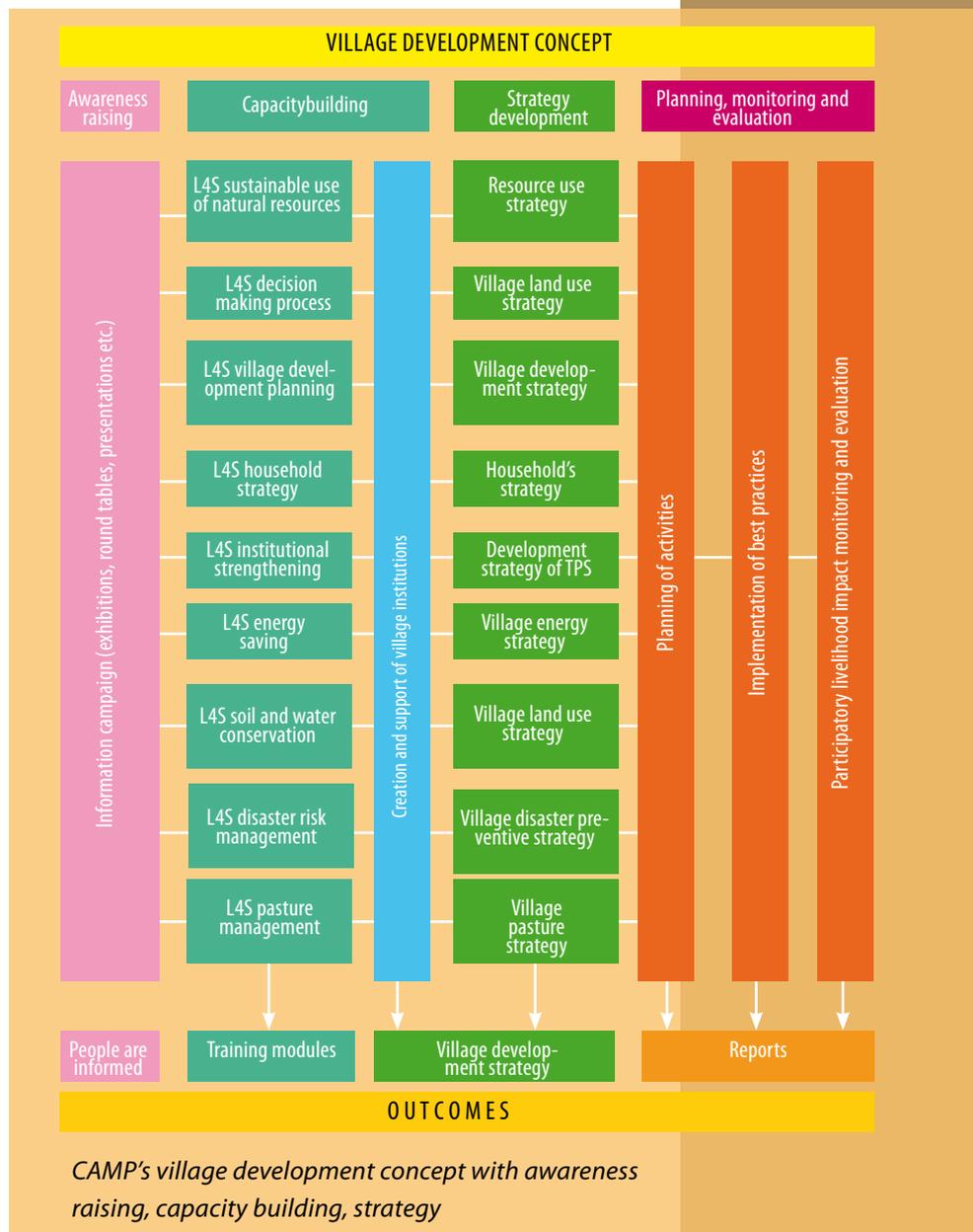
frequent passive role of communities acting as 'recipients of social aid' who let powerful people take decisions. The L4S workshops inspire thus communities to be more self-confident, to believe in their own power to improve their situation and to actively participate in decision-making processes concerning their village.

### How to organize an L4S workshop

CAMP usually conducts an L4S workshop as first activity in a village where subsequent interventions are foreseen.

#### SELECTION CRITERIA FOR LOCAL PARTICIPANTS

- active and motivated villager
- reliable partner (based on previous experiences)
- representation of various village institutions (e.g. NGO's, local self-governance bodies, village committees)
- competent in the topical field of the L4S and eventually interested in later implementation activities
- good mix/balance of age and gender



Food for all and accommodation for external resource persons and moderators are organized in the village. This basic service is considered to be a very important precondition for a good group atmosphere and establishing mutual trust. Participants should represent a good cross-section of village inhabitants and combine different knowledge and experience. Local participants should also be motivated in taking actively part in such a learning and exchange process. A key role is given to the external moderators whose task is to mainly create the frame conditions for mutual learning and act as facilitators.

### CAMP concept for strengthening self-responsibility of communities

CAMP activities in favour of village development appear on two levels and are established and realized simultaneously:

- 1) Strengthening or initiation of a new village organization meant to continue addressing the issue of the L4S topic (sustainability of the CAMP effort).
- 2) Development of methods and concrete appropriate working instruments such as guidelines for elaborating energy saving strategies in villages.

The necessary processes will be prepared and started by village inhabitants and local authorities who are jointly responsible for decision-making. The expectable outcomes may consist in validated guidelines for village planning or e.g. a new 'Village Energy Committee' (VEC).

### L4S learning concept

The program of an L4S workshop generally includes an introduction to the topic, an analysis of the current situation, a definition of reasons of perceived

problems and possible joint solutions. During an L4S training, the moderators gradually involve the participants in interactive discussions using different methodologies and tools such as brainstorming, working with cards, group work, role play etc. This partially requires specific training materials purposefully developed for the CAMP L4S modules.

## Conclusions

- During and after an L4S workshop different ideas are developed, which often serve as base for formulating small grants projects as follow-up activities. Experience shows that projects proposed by a Territorial Public Council (TPC) have a high probability of funding and successful implementation. A concrete example for such a project is the collective action to fence a degraded pasture in order to avoid further grazing carried out in Akkya (Kyrgyzstan) in 2007 immediately after the L4S workshop on pasture management.
- The primary effect of an L4S workshop is more on the participating individuals than on the whole village community due to the limited number of participants.
- The activities and role of the TPC strongly differ from village to village; some are very dynamic e.g. in fundraising and democracy building while others are rather passive.
- L4S workshops allow identifying the most hidden problems of a village through its lively and spontaneous communication character.
- L4S workshops are not lectures, but provide opportunities for interactive self-learning based on specific examples from the concerned village and building on the knowledge of the local participants.
- For high quality L4S workshops an in depth theoretical, conceptual, methodological, and practical ('on the job') training of the moderators is crucial.
- One of the main expectable results of an L4S workshop on village development planning (Basic Module 3) is to provide substantial inputs for a strategic village development plan under the responsibility of the respective local authorities (Aiyi Okmoty in Kyrgyzstan, Akimat in Kazakhstan, Khukumat in Tajikistan).
- The main conclusions of each L4S workshop can be used as a discussion input to the Annual Conference of the Alliance of Central Asian

Mountain Villages (AGOCA).

- Holding of L4S workshops jointly with other development organizations based on existing village organizations seems a promising way to further disseminate L4S efforts.

## Results

The CAMP agencies offer a series of different L4S training modules consisting of 5 'Basic Modules' and 4 'Thematic Modules'. The conduction of L4S workshops started in all three countries in 2000. So far over 130 L4S workshops have been carried out in Kyrgyzstan, 21 in Kazakhstan, and 82 in Tajikistan. Through L4S workshops villagers identify poten-

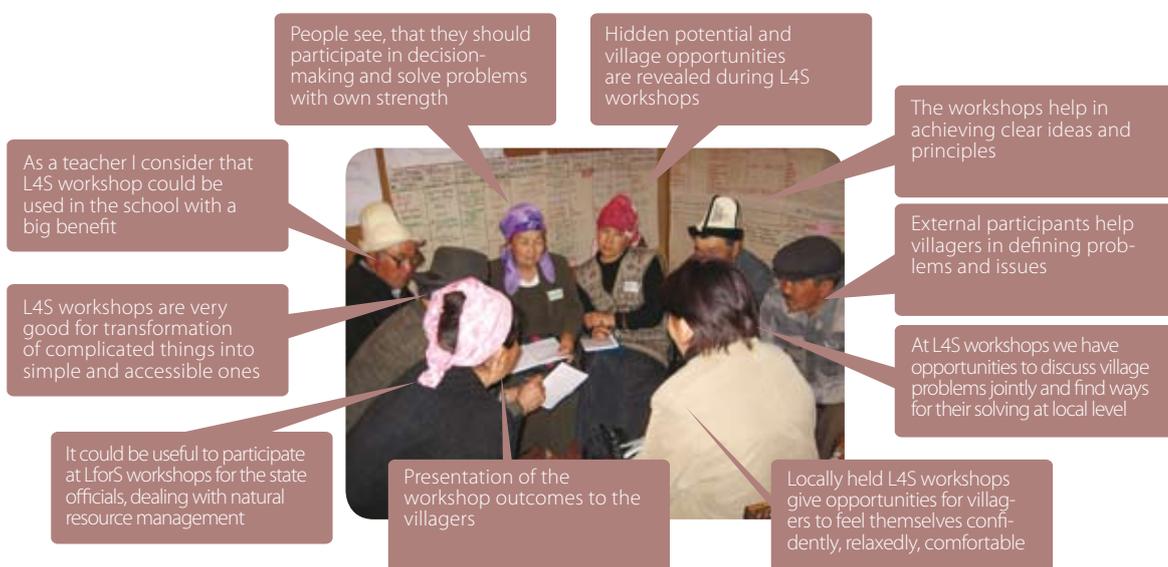
<b>Basic Module 1</b> <b>Sustainable use of natural resources</b>  <b>KG: 18</b> <b>KZ: 7</b> <b>TJ: 9</b>	<b>Basic Module 2</b> <b>Democratic decision making process</b>  <b>KG: 18</b> <b>KZ: 4</b> <b>TJ: 5</b>	<b>Basic Module 3</b> <b>Village development planning process</b>  <b>KG: 19</b> <b>KZ: 2</b> <b>TJ: 5</b>
<b>Basic Module 4</b> <b>Livelihood and community development</b>  <b>KG: 1</b> <b>KZ: 1</b>	<b>Basic Module 5</b> <b>Institutional strengthening of local NGO</b>  <b>KG: 4</b> <b>TJ: 1</b>	<b>Thematic Mod. 6</b> <b>Energy saving</b>  <b>KG: 31</b> <b>KZ: 6</b> <b>TJ: 9</b>
<b>Thematic Mod. 7</b> <b>Soil and water conservation</b>  <b>KG: 19</b> <b>TJ: 12</b>	<b>Thematic Mod. 8</b> <b>Integrated local risk management</b>  <b>KG: 14</b> <b>TJ: 40</b>	<b>Thematic Mod. 9</b> <b>Pasture management</b>  <b>KG: 8</b> <b>KZ: 1</b> <b>TJ: 1</b>

*L4S workshops conducted by CAMP agencies 2000-2007 in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan*

tials and opportunities of village resources. They become more active and may initiate the creation of a new NGO such as a TPC while an already existing TPC may be strengthened. Often villagers start new partnerships with external participating organizations which can provide useful information or know-how for the village development.

## Dissemination

The CAMP agencies have carried out a number of L4S workshops in particular on sustainable use of natural resources, democratic decision making processes and village development planning process.



People see, that they should participate in decision-making and solve problems with own strength

Hidden potential and village opportunities are revealed during L4S workshops

The workshops help in achieving clear ideas and principles

External participants help villagers in defining problems and issues

At L4S workshops we have opportunities to discuss village problems jointly and find ways for their solving at local level

As a teacher I consider that L4S workshop could be used in the school with a big benefit

L4S workshops are very good for transformation of complicated things into simple and accessible ones

It could be useful to participate at L4S workshops for the state officials, dealing with natural resource management



Presentation of the workshop outcomes to the villagers

Locally held L4S workshops give opportunities for villagers to feel themselves confidently, relaxedly, comfortable

They were conducted in cooperation with various partners such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ-CCD), ARIS (Community development and investment agency active in Kyrgyzstan), Mercy Corpus, Red Cross, the Department for International Development (DFID), and the German Agro Action. Currently all L4S training modules are available in local languages as well as Russian and English ready for further use and dissemination.

partner of the CAMP agencies level can take responsibility in organizing work in the respective village e.g. by informing villagers, preparing the workshop venue, overnights etc.

### Impact of L4S on project implementation

- Creates best conditions for implementation of future projects in villages through sharing of knowledge, establishment of mutual trust and high commitments
- Incorporates the vision of rural inhabitants in planning and decision making
- Allows to reuse specific methodological elements in own work
- Strengthens the participatory principle by involving the local population in project implementation
- Supports local initiatives based on demand
- Fosters the exchange of experiences and potential cooperation for village development
- Raises interest of neighbouring villages regarding the CAMP activities

### Difficulties and obstacles of L4S workshops

- Rather long and slow processes which can be considered as too time-consuming when people are busy with other work
- Training of new moderators requires considerable time and efforts
- When not planned well, the coincidence with seasonal work may reduce the effectivity
- Require more motivation from participants (hence pay attention to the selection of internal participants)
- Involvement of women appears sometimes delicate due to the mentality of villagers particularly in Tajikistan

### Recommendations

In order to increase the efficiency of L4S workshops it is important to attract representatives from local administrative bodies (1), to organize exchange visits to share experiences (2), to prepare sufficient hand-out materials (3), to conduct the workshops in an appropriate time period (4), to select a neutral public building place (5) and to preferably have one female moderator to attract women for the workshop (6).

### Advantages

Having strong partners in the region gives more effect in follow-up processes, consultations, monitoring, dissemination efforts etc. The TPC as the local

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