

Session Plan Ten

Community Envisioning

1. Objectives

- To understand how community envisioning facilitates a developmental picture of aspirations to be achieved
- To visualise how important it is to have a vision for ourselves if we want to succeed
- To understand the process of community envisioning

2. Session Outline

- Meaning of community envisioning
- The purpose of community envisioning
- Dynamics of community envisioning
- Planning community envisioning exercises
- Conducting community envisioning exercises
- A case study on community envisioning

3. Assumptions

- Planners and policy-makers have the right visions for community development.
- There is a lack of appreciation for articulating collective community envisioning in an organized way.
- There is a lack of understanding about community vision as a powerful tool and a guide to motivate local people to carry out community development actions.

4. Session Outline Topics (Notes for Trainer)

5. What is a community envisioning exercise?

Community envisioning is a social interactive process. It aims to help define the community's development aspirations and develop a mental picture of the state to be achieved. It is a way of bringing into focus a community's collective interest into a common agreed vision.

6. What is the purpose of community envisioning?

A vision is a powerful tool that motivates action to achieve success. If we want to succeed we must have a vision for ourselves. For this purpose, a community is defined as a group of households living in a defined geographical boundary such as a watershed.

7. What are the dynamics involved in the community envisioning exercise?

- A continuing process
- It is a participatory process
- It must be a consensus document
- It must be owned by the community
- There must be a mission to attain the vision

8. How to plan a community envisioning exercise?

Community envisioning can be undertaken for a general development purpose or for any specific concern. The nature of the work undertaken determines the planning process for community envisioning. The main elements involved in the planning process are given below.

- Prerequisite - Community envisioning is a prerequisite for the planning process.
- Participants - Local people in the watershed who depend on the natural resources for their livelihood will be the participants.
- Facilitators and Reporters - The planning process should be facilitated by good facilitators with recording of the envisioning and mission statements by good reporters. These people could be local or outside experts able to do such work.
- Duration - The envisioning requires about nine hours, though the time can be adjusted. Experience has shown, however, that it should not be less than five hours.
- Schedule - The framework can be the guide for the agenda schedule for the envisioning process:

- dividing participants into groups,
- group-wise brainstorming session,
- groups' mission statement preparation,
- groups' reports are presented at the plenary session and discussion is facilitated, and
- a collective draft mission is finalised.

9. How to conduct the community envisioning exercise?

The Workshop Process

A quick and effective way of doing community envisioning is through a workshop. A group of carefully selected

participants from the community is invited to participate. Participants divide into groups and carry out a brainstorming exercise, discuss and come to a consensus on the issue raised.

The Plenary Process

In the plenary session, each group reports on its respective group discussion. After all groups have presented their reports, a general discussion is held to validate, prioritise, and build consensus.

The Second Workshop

Participants again go back to their respective groups to discuss the second question that helps them articulate the mission. The groups will discuss how to achieve the vision drafted. Each group should be facilitated by an appointed facilitator and notes of the proceedings will be recorded by an appointed reporter.

The Second Plenary

Each group makes its report to the plenary. This is followed by discussion to validate, prioritise, and build consensus. Again a good facilitator, supported by two writers, is assigned to draft the mission statement.

Community Consultation, Validation and Endorsement Process

This provides a draft vision and mission statement of a community for its development through sustainable use and management of its watershed. This is a continuous process.

10. A case study on community envisioning

Following paragraphs outline a case study carried out in one community, in the Philippines by the Farmer-centred Agricultural Resource Management (FARM) programme.

Steps

1. Through a stakeholder workshop, a draft vision and mission for sustainable resource use for community development was undertaken.

2. The draft vision was discussed, validated, and endorsed as a collective community vision and mission.

The Vision

Promoting protection and conservation of the ecosystems providing life sustaining means for community members.

The Mission

It was recognised that the agricultural resource base was essential for survival and livelihood. The community made the following commitment:

- adopting sustainable agricultural practices,
- increasing food production for food security,
- conserving environment, and
- involving people in planning, implementation, and decision-making.

11. How do we know we are making progress with our mission to attain our vision?

To be able to do this we need some milestones that give us an indication of the progress of our vision. These milestones are known as indicators.

- One group of indicators - priority given to the care and conservation of natural resources
- The second group of indicators - changes in agricultural practices
- The third group of indicators - improvement in household food security
- The fourth group of indicators - people's participation in the local decision-making process.

12. What are the benefits of the community envisioning exercise?

Three distinctive groups of benefits can be observed

- A very effective way of bringing a community together for a common purpose
- An excellent medium for community empowerment
- A powerful motivational mechanism for collective commitment and initiation of action