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Guideline: Working with Intermediaries and Implementation Partners

Hand-out for Projects within the BMBF Programme

“Sustainable Land Management” (SLM)

Module A

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Introduction and Summary

Objectives of the guideline

This guideline is a complementary to the first hand-out for the projects within the BMBF Programme 'Sustainable Land Management' Module A: "Guideline: Stakeholder Analysis and Involvement". It builds on the steps described there:

- Targets and scope of the project
- Target groups and topics
- Strategy development and selection of tools and methods
- Implementation and adaptation.

The first guideline gave an introduction into the necessary tasks for stakeholder analysis and involvement in research projects in general. This second guideline goes into more detail concerning the tasks and challenges of implementation-oriented research, and co-production of knowledge and solutions with partners from practice. It helps to identify those actors within the larger group of stakeholders, who could be cooperation partners for the implementation of the project's results. And it provides ideas how to manage partnerships and points out typical stumbling blocks. It is based on existing approaches and experiences in the practice of cooperation management. Like the first one this guideline is no recipe for success. Within each task the approaches suggested here have to be adapted to the specific circumstances of the concrete project and region.

Tools and Strategies for working with Intermediaries and Implementation Partners

Asking research projects to produce results that contribute to sustainable development – or as in the case of this BMBF-programme to sustainable land management (SLM) – is nothing new or rare. There are many terminologies and methodologies in use:

- 'science communication' or 'research communication'[1],(more generally),
- 'knowledge translation'[2],
- 'CEPA – Communication, Education and Public Awareness'[3],
- in more policy-oriented contexts: 'evidence based policy'[4],
- 'pathways to impact' or 'science into policy'[5],
- 'research into use'[6], or
- 'theory of change'[7] (in more strategic, long-term policy contexts).

Much of the related work focuses either on one target group (e.g. policy), on one kind of results (e.g. knowledge), or on one approach to 'bridge the gap' (e.g. communication). This guideline – focusing on how to work with different kinds of partners in order to support the implementation and use of project

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1 used e.g. regularly by the European Commission
2 used e.g. by IDRC - International Development Research Centre, Canada
3 by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature
4 with a long tradition in health research (Cochrane Foundation and others)
5 used e.g. by NERC – National Environment Research Council, UK
6 often used in development research contexts, e.g. by DFID – Department for International Development, UK
7 used e.g. in the programme 'Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation, ESPA

results – goes beyond communication although communication always is a very important component of a partnership.

Even in implementation-oriented research projects the researchers themselves seldom implement the results of their work in practice. Implementation is done e.g. – in the area of sustainable land management – by the farmers and farmer associations, the politicians, the administrators in agriculture, water management, and nature conservation, companies, civil society organisations etc. Though many research projects involve those implementers in some ways they usually don't produce results fit for immediate implementation.

This is where **intermediaries** come into the picture. They help to translate research results into an implementation process and facilitate the necessary dialogue between the involved parties. They can be organisations or people, networks or institutes. To have one or more intermediaries as a project partner supports the general implementation orientation of the project as well as the impact in praxis.

Another important kind of project partner is an **implementation partner**, who can directly implement results and co-produce the necessary solutions together with the researchers. This is possible when the research is already close to the practice, and cultural and language barriers are low, so that no translation is needed in between.

Often the roles of those partners are at least slightly mixed involving tasks of translation and facilitation as well as implementation.

When choosing an implementation partner or intermediary, a central importance lies in their longer-term perspective in the relevant implementation context. Those 'organisations' stay – or at least should do so – after the project ends. Thus they are the ones who can take the baton and continue with the implementation process, which usually takes longer than most research projects. Sometimes securing the continuation of those organisations can be part of the projects tasks.

Use of terms

We use the term *project partners* as an overarching term for all partners of the research project, whether they are formally part of the consortium or not. *Implementation partners* are especially involved in the implementation of research results. If the project does not co-operate directly with implementation partners, then *intermediaries* come into play as an interface between the project and those who implement and use results. So we use the terms 'implementation partners' and 'intermediaries' both as subgroups of 'project partners'. As said above, sometimes a partner carries out both kinds of work: intermediation and implementation. Thus those two groups, implementation-partners and intermediaries, can overlap.

Overview

In sum, this hand-out compiles information and guidance about: How to identify those important partners and how to manage these co-operations especially with regard to continuation strategies beyond the projects time-frame. Quite similar to the 4 steps of stakeholder analysis and management the following 4 steps or tasks are important. Those tasks partly build on each other and thus follow a timeline. But they also have to be carried out in an iterative process and should be repeated in a cyclic feedback process during the project time.

Task 1: What - Identifying potential use cases and products

Implementation-oriented project results, areas of implementation and use, specific use cases and concrete products

Timing and priorities

Task 2: Who - Identifying implementation partners and intermediaries

Users, implementers, and other partners

Developing a partner profile: What is needed for this task?

The special case of intermediaries

Task 3: How - Developing a cooperation

Interests in cooperating and incentives to do so

Building trust

Developing joint targets

Creating ownership

Clarifying roles and responsibilities, budgets and means of communication

Task 4: Securing continuation

Long-term strategy, financial resources, capacity building and coaching, outreach and lobbying, hand over

Task 1: What - Identifying potential use cases and products

As with the overall stakeholder work, the projects own aims and objectives are the starting point of any consideration for building co-operations. Based on the implementation-oriented targets of the project the project team can develop first ideas of possible results that can be used in practice within and beyond the projects timeframe. Guiding questions are:

- **What are the most implementation-oriented results** that can be expected from or could be achieved by the project? This question can be asked quite early on in the projects running time. An analysis of the implementation-oriented potential can help to prioritize also the stakeholder strategy.
- **In which areas could these results be put into use?** E.g. policy, farming practice, education, community level, national level etc.
- **What would be concrete use cases?** Which user groups could benefit from the projects research and how? Under which circumstances can project results be put into use? The more concrete the conditions of use can be described, the easier it is to identify concrete users.
- **What could be concrete products** based on the research results? Products don't need to be a technology prototype or another material object. They can be descriptions of approaches or processes to improve SLM, agricultural practices, policy recommendations, training courses, etc.

These questions are basically four different ways of asking: How can the research results be put into practice? In this first analysis of course only a potential can be assessed. In the course of the on-going research and in cooperation with practice partners the most promising and useful results can be selected and realized. Also new ideas and results can be identified in a later state of the project.

Going from 'implementation-oriented results' to 'areas of use' to 'use cases' to 'products' in this potential analysis the questions become more concrete. But using different keywords in communicating one question also triggers ideas. Different people respond to different keywords. This is why this guideline often asks one question in different ways. In working with partners from practice it can be a communication strategy to use a set of keywords first and then use those, to which the partners respond most openly and develop a joint understanding of them.

Timing and priorities

The identified use cases and products can be structured along a timeline. Some results may be developed and tested within the projects time. Others might require longer-term processes that can only be started during the project but would reach beyond the projects timeframe. This is an important aspect for choosing partners. If a large variety of possible use cases is identified the project team should set priorities to make most efficient use of time and budget – their own as well as their partners. Possible questions to identify priorities could be:

- Which use case or which partner would have **most impact** in terms of the projects overall objectives?
- Which implementation targets have the best **prospect of success**?
- Which partnerships can build on already **existing contacts** and collaboration experiences?
- In which cases are concrete results **possible within the project timeframe**?

In the beginning of the project the list of products and implementation or use cases is an assessment of potential to give orientation in choosing partners and giving focus to the stakeholder work within the project. Identifying or choosing those project results that can or should be implemented in the practice of SLM sets the course for all the following decisions. Depending on the character of the 'object' of implementation different actors are important and different ways of implementation are feasible.

The 'product list' should be **open to change and adaptation**. New opportunities can be discovered together with potential users and partners from practice. Thus developing a strategy for implementation of research results is an iterative process between the work within the project and the context of its implementation (stakeholders, structures, conditions): testing first ideas, going back to the analysis of results, testing again etc.

Task 2: Who - Identifying implementation partners and intermediaries

A key of success in terms of implementation orientation can be to find one concrete partner for the implementation of results, either a direct user/implementer or an intermediary (see below) who facilitates the implementation process among a group of users. Such a partner is especially important when a longer-term process is needed to implement results. The general stakeholder analysis provides a starting point for identifying more specifically the implementers and users of the research results.

Guiding questions are:

- **Who are the specific users** in the project region for each identified use case or product? In this step user groups should be identified in terms of the relevant organisations and contact persons.
- **Who would or can implement the projects results?** Also: Are there actors or organisations that would be able to support implementation of results for more than one use case or product?

The difference between users and implementers here depends on what kind of results the project can provide: Is it something that can be directly used by a practitioner (e.g. a tool, a simple procedure, a handbook etc.) or is a more complex implementation process needed (e.g. the development of new regulations or incentive systems). Also, implementation processes often involve a series of actors, although one of them can take the lead. Both users and implementation partners should ideally be involved in the development of the products or solutions.

Who are potential partners?

As said above, researchers seldom implement the results of their research themselves. Depending on the character of what can or should be implemented and the context of the implementation the project can choose implementation partners. If the process of developing a solution for SLM in the project region is more open, the partner could be a forum or network bringing together scientists and practitioners, conservationists, farmers and other businesses, people from agriculture, water, and spatial planning departments: All those who have a clear interest in developing a solution for the current problems in the region. In working with such a group, the project can identify those who show the highest engagement and/or have the highest impact and/or are most willing to cooperate with the project.

This is one way of selecting suitable partners for implementation of results, especially when the project is not so familiar with the regions protagonists. If contacts and a tradition of collaboration with specific partners already exist, it can be helpful to build on this fundament of co-operation and trust. In some research projects the implementation partners are already part of the project team and have been involved in developing the project proposal. The following list can also help to find those partners before the project start.

Developing a partner profile

A very useful first step in finding a suitable cooperation partner is to develop a partner profile. This usually helps a lot in achieving a better understanding of "Who fits the job?", The following aspects should be considered:

- **Competences and skills:** e.g. communication skills, project and process management competences, conflict management, …
- **Knowledge base:** Expertise in the relevant field(s) of practice, basic scientific understanding, specialised knowledge or overview knowledge, …
- **Characteristics:** an administrative body, a network, an institution, an independent actor, …
- **Credibility:** Is the potential partner credible among the target group / the involved stakeholders. Is the choice for this praxis partner helpful for the implementation process?
- **Contacts:** well connected, well known among the relevant actors, good at networking, …
- **Values and objectives:** Is the general mission and orientation of the partner in line with the purpose of the cooperation?
- **Mandate:** What kind of mandate is necessary for decision-making and actions within the implementation process?
- **Vested interests:** stakes, established position and/or role within existing power structures?
- **Financial resources:** How can the activities for implementation be financed? Does the partner have a long-term perspective?
- **Place:** Where should the partner be situated to have the best impact in terms of implementation as well as to enable the cooperation with the project?

It is helpful to have an understanding of all the points above when choosing a cooperation partner. But there is one point that – for a close cooperation – usually is more important than any of the others:

- **Getting on / Human Chemistry:** Do the people involved in the concrete work get on with each other? Is there mutual understanding, good-will and inspiration when people meet?

The chosen partner does not need to fit in all and every aspect. E.g. lack of financial resources can be compensated with raising external funding. Lack of mandate can be compensated by working with people who are highly respected and well connected, so that they can influence those having a mandate etc.

Special case: Intermediaries

Depending on the identified implementation or use case and the target group it can be more efficient for the project to work with an intermediary than with the users or implementers directly. Reasons for choosing an organisation or person as an additional interface between research and implementation could be:

- **Practicality, usability of results:** The character of the research results is more scientific and they need translation into a specific practical use context.
- **Culture and language:** The implementation context has a different cultural background than those of the researchers and the concepts and ideas need to be culturally embedded. The involved users/implementers speak a language the researchers are not or not sufficiently familiar with.
- **Scale:** The target group of users/implementers is large and an intermediary who has the relevant resources to reach them could do so more efficiently than the project.
- **Contacts:** An intermediary is well connected in a specific implementation context whereas the project would need to build all of these contacts from scratch.

In the end a partnership with an intermediary is about closing gaps between knowledge and action. The question for choosing a most suitable partners is: What steps in between research and practice are needed to make use of the research results? and: Who can do that?

When working with intermediaries the following points need attention:

- **Examples for intermediaries in SLM:**
  Typical intermediaries in the area of sustainable land management research are NGOs, educational institutions, extension services, administrative bodies on all levels. All of them can also be direct users and implementation partners. Development funding agencies often work with intermediaries who manage the implementation work on the ground. Those organisations may be partners for research projects as well. They have experience of working in the specific context in the region.
- **Serve more than one target group:**
  In terms of efficiency the project ideally has one central addressee for the implementation of project results – at least for the main use cases and targets. The advantage of an intermediary could be, that they are often not so specialised in one field of implementation and could serve different target groups at once.
- **Scope of expertise and activity:**
  An intermediary works best, when it not just fills the gap between the research project and the users or implementers. There should be some overlap in both directions that enables better understanding of the project and the target groups, e.g. people or an organisation which are rooted in the science of the project and at the same time in the cultural environment in which the research and its possible implementation is taking place.
- **Less control:**
  For the research project working with an intermediary means to have less control over the communication with target groups and the process of implementation. Thus a deep understanding and knowledge about the project and its goals from the intermediary is important (see also task 3).

Task 3: How - Developing a cooperation

Building partnerships and managing co-operation means dealing with human nature and is thus often beyond any checklist or guideline. Still there are some key points that can help in a cooperation with project and implementation partners.

▷ Interest in cooperating and incentives to do so

All partners need to be able to take advantages from the partnership. The project team should be clear about what is expected from the partnership and if that is worth the additional time and work that goes into it. And the partner should have a genuine interest in working with the cooperation based on their own field of activity: a competitive advantage, a rise in their image or standing, an increase in efficiency or effectiveness of their work, etc. This can build on the results of the stakeholder analysis (analysis of interests). Sharing the project funding with the partner can be a strong incentive for the cooperation but the interest in the topics and objectives of the project should be there as well. Personal interest of those with whom the project works together closely supports the collaboration (the opposite would be someone who has been delegated by their boss and more ore less bides his/her time). The ideal would be, when personal (and/or organisational) professional perspectives and project implementation targets can be integrated in a longer-term perspective.

All partners should **be transparent about interest and expectations** throughout the cooperation. If there are conflicts of interest or the partners perspectives or circumstances of implementation change within the project time, it might be necessary to adapt or even choose another partner.

▷ Building trust

The ability to build trust is the key to success. This is not achieved only by clarifying roles and responsibilities (see below) although the way in which all those clarifications are carried out can help to build trust. Existing experiences of collaboration between partners (at least good ones) have the great advantage of having built that trust already. Basically building trust requires time together and a supporting environment:

- Create opportunities for joint work and joint learning (reflect together and draw conclusions).
- Mix people from different areas (disciplines, fields of practice).
- Involve people with good soft skills (or train them).
- Create opportunities to spent time with each other beyond work.
- Facilitate an open information policy on both sides.
- As the ‘manager’ of the partnership: Keep an eye open for disturbances in the chemistry between people and resolve conflicts at the earliest possible state.

▷ Developing joint targets

A way of finding common ground at the beginning of a partnership is developing joint targets for the cooperation. If a partner has no say in what should be achieved, this would rather be a contract than a partnership and would have to be paid. Developing the concrete targets together – although overarching targets and ideas for implementation already exist – also helps to develop the joint understanding of them. This can often only be achieved when talking about the details, the nuts and bolts of the implementation process. Taking part in the planning and concretion of the use cases and products inspires commitment.

▷ Creating ownership

Especially when working with an intermediary and when the implementation process goes beyond the project it is important to support ownership of the process and the results on the side of the implementation partners. This can be supported by involving them in planning and development at all stages. Also, the handing over to the intermediaries or implementation partners does not have to wait until the end of the project. Responsibilities can be transferred step by step to the partners in the course of the whole project. This can be accompanied by capacity building and coaching if necessary (see task 4).

▷ Clarifying roles and responsibilities

This clarification process at the beginning of a partnership is central to a good collaboration. It is difficult to do so, when partners don't know each other well and there is not yet a basis of trust (see above). But transparency about expectations and clear distribution of tasks and responsibilities can help to build trust as well. The closer the cooperation is, the more important is this clarification process. An insufficient clarification of roles and responsibilities can lead to power struggles later in the partnership. It is often helpful to lay down the basics of this collaboration in writing even without making a formal contract. Guiding questions are:

- What do the partners **need and expect** from each other?
- **To what end** are we working together (objectives, target groups, …)
- **Who does what** and where are the interfaces in the workflow?
- **When**: developing a basic timeline of the work.
- How can we **evaluate** our impact / success?

On both sides one person should be identified as central contact person. Not every single contact needs to be managed by them but they should always be aware of the main activities going on in the partnership. Partnerships also make the decision making process more complex. It should be clear to all involved who needs to be asked for what level of decision? This sometimes is a tricky balance between trust and control. To develop a complete governance structure is only necessary in formal partnerships or networks, in which institutions operate together longer term. Usually it is enough to lay down some basic rules, principles or frameworks and, if necessary, adapt them in the course of the project.

▷ Clarifying budgets

Whether the partners get a share of the funding or not, the resources required to develop the partnership and carry out the joint work need to be clarified. This concerns not only the budgets for the work itself (e.g. workshops, outreach, etc.) but also time and budget that is needed for the partnership itself: travel, time and space for communication, office space, … It should be as transparent as possible what each party is investing in terms of time and budget and what they get out of it.

▷ Clarifying means of communication

Different cultural backgrounds usually also mean **different cultures of communication**. This concerns the role of meetings in person compared to communication via skype, email or telephone. Especially email communication has many pitfalls. Different handling of urgency of emails (expect answers within an hour / a day / a week?). What does it mean to CC someone (expect reaction / just for information…)? The possibilities for miscommunication and misunderstanding are endless, even within groups of the same cultural background.

When working with partners in developing countries also **technical questions** need to be taken into account; especially the reliability and efficiency of internet access and telephone. In some countries certain internet-sites can't be accessed because they require better/faster connections. The same goes for the size of documents for email attachments and downloads.

Those who are involved directly in the collaboration work should right from the start develop codes of conduct for their communication. This can then be further tested and adapted to the needs of all partners. A regular topic at meetings should be: Does it work? Should we change something? How can we improve? (This also goes for the distribution of tasks and responsibilities).

Task 4: Securing continuation

An implementation partner who is deeply involved in the project and its work is a continuation strategy in itself. The knowledge and experiences of developing and using the results of the project stays with those people and organisations. It is usually people who drive change and innovation processes based on their interests and beliefs. Paper, tools and methods can support those processes but someone needs to take the responsibility to put them into use and make them known to those who should use them.

Most implementation processes in the area of sustainable development and thus SLM take more time than the 3 to 5 years of a research project. To gain momentum and get things started the timeline should prioritize some 'low-hanging fruits' in the beginning. Having those first success stories within the project time helps all partners to become visible and prove their usefulness to the other stakeholders. This can build the fundament for those who carry out the longer-term change processes.

Having an implementation partner or an intermediary organisation is great - but make sure it survives! Sustaining the partner can be crucial for the sustainability of the process. If the partner is an established organisation and has an interest in making use of the project results there is not much additional support needed. In other cases and especially when working with new organisations that are build during the project, a lot depends on the support and the process of handing over the baton to those who carry on after funding ends. This survival strategy consists of several aspects:

Developing a long-term strategy

One of the best roads to continuation is to develop a longer-term perspective for the partner organisation along the lines of the objectives of the implementation process. This is of course only possible if the implementation or use case involves such a longer process and is not just a singular event. This strategy includes the sharpening of the profile of the organisation as a basis for its future development, target groups, customers (who would pay for services or provide funding), 'products' and services that can be provided etc. (see also example of a strategy workshop below). Developing such a strategy is mainly a task for the partner, but the research project can support and facilitate this process. It should be started as early as possible within the projects time because there are many follow-up steps to secure continuation after that.

Secure appropriate financial resources

Its rare to find a partner who can do the implementation or intermediary work within their own mandate or scope of work ‘for free’. Most times the management of an implementation process needs some kind of financing for itself. During the project this might be a part of the project funding. But even then resources are often not living up to the challenges. So securing additional funding is often a task already during the project itself e.g. for outreach activities, workshops (look for sponsors!), capacity building and training, etc. This becomes even more important for the time after the project.

The question is, what are the current and what could be the future financial sources of this organisation. In case of a small and/or new organisation it can be a question of survival to write proposals and find financial sources not only for the work but for the basics of the organisation itself (secretariat, office space, technical infrastructure etc.). As most of these procedures take a year or more before the first payment, this work has to start long before the project’s end. In some research programmes so called ‘post-project funding’ is offered for projects that developed promising implementation strategies and/or products but need additional time and budget to realise them. In many areas of possible implementation funding agencies (national and international sources, private and public) provide grants. In some cases business models can be developed and the continuation of the work can be financed through a market based strategy. The project team can support proposal writing as well as finding sources and making contacts.

Capacity building and coaching

A newly developed organisation can also be supported through coaching and consulting in those areas where the capacity still needs to be developed: e.g. outreach work and communication, language, process management, organisational learning, or any other field, methodology or skill that might be important to carry out the work. To improve their capacities can be an additional incentive for the members of that organisation. When working with partners in developing countries there are several sources of additional funding for this kind of capacity building.

All of this needs to be done with consideration of cultural differences. Strategies or methods that are successful in e.g. Germany do not necessarily work in the context of other countries. It requires an “adapted methodology” of coaching: offering opportunities, trying things out, and abandoning fruitless paths where transferability of methods is not helpful. It is a process of accepting and learning about what works and what does not in both contexts. Based especially on mutual trust, those efforts can be very successful.

Support outreach and lobbying

An important part of supporting the continuation of an organisation is outreach and lobbying work: making the organisation known to the relevant target groups and build networks. At this stage the communication strategy of the partner becomes as important as the communication strategy of the project itself. Both should be coordinated and oriented towards achieving the chosen implementation targets.

Apart from the many ways of communication lobby work can be a crucial element in the long-term establishment of an organisation. This involves the development of contacts with key stakeholders, possible partners as well as competitors, and the development of strategies for how to deal with them. National or international conferences (e.g. CBD COP etc.) can be used to increase the visibility of the organisation and make first contacts with international organisations (GEF, UNDP, …). An NGO can establish itself as a key actor in a specific topical area by organising workshops for the community in this area: e.g. farming practices, water management, community development. Networking and finding natural allies in the cause at hand and becoming a ‘hub’ in more than one network is a time consuming but usually successful strategy.

Hand over step by step

As said above with ‘creating ownership’ it is most important for the continuation of implementation efforts that the partners are given the freedom and are trusted to set themselves up as an organisation that can take the results of the project and transfer them into praxis in the specific social, economic, cultural and political contexts of implementation. This requires handing over responsibility for those activities step by step while offering support. Ideally the partner takes over from the project at an early stage and becomes the main driver of the implementation process. With a committed partner the activities towards (possible) implementation can develop way beyond the usual outreach and dissemination activities of research projects.

ANNEX

1 Example: Strategy workshop for a newly founded NGO

When working with an organisation that is not yet fully established in a specific field of action their establishment and survival the following can be a template for developing a longer-term implementation strategy for this organisation. In cases where the partner organisation is already established this can be adapted to develop a strategy for the continuation of the implementation process. The following steps of clarification, brainstorming and concept development should involve all mayor members of that organisation or in larger organisations all those who are involved in the partnership. The work can be carried out in smaller groups and plenary in alternation (depending on the size of the group). The results should be compiled and integrated in a strategic plan that provides guidance for the development of the organisation.

Current and future fields of work and their target groups

Map the state of the art of the NGOs activity fields related to different target groups, for example:

- **Governmental bodies / frameworks / policy interface**
  -> Governmental bodies provide information about needs for research and implementation and serve as cooperation partner in research and implementation / joint development.
  -> The NGO provides scientific findings / professional consultancy, is an implementation partner for putting research into action on the ground in different regions, and can provide a forum for exchange of information and experiences of all stakeholders in that area.
- **Other NGOs**
  -> Other NGOs can be project partners for implementation of research results and strategic partners for lobbying and communication and vice versa.
- **Media**
  -> Media are a communication partner for broader audiences.
  -> The NGO provides interesting issues, scientific sound information as well as training for journalists in a specific topical area.
- **Schools**
  -> Schools and other educational organisations are opportunities for capacity building of larger target groups and serve as partners and facilities with their expertise in education. The NGO can provide content, material and training in their topical area.
- **Implementation partners: businesses, local communities, farmers, unions etc.**
  -> etc.
- **Science world: universities, institutes, researchers, academic periodicals**
  -> etc.

This overview can be prepared beforehand and visualised with cards on a large wall.
-> Explanation of the map
-> Questions on understanding
-> Discussion of priorities and additions

The next 3 steps are overlapping. The strategy workshop can run through all of them in sequence and then revisit all steps while setting priorities and sharpening the profile. Often this feedback occurs already during the discussions. Working with cards or post-its of different colours supports specific focus on each of those steps and allows to alternate between them. The general direction should be from initial opening up possibilities and collecting many different ideas to focussing on the most promising of those ideas towards the end.

Strengths and Competences of the NGO

For the different fields of activities collect answers to the following questions:

- What are the strengths and special competences of the NGO now?
- What are the main activities in the next two years?
- What could be the strengths of the NGO in three years?
- What can the NGO do better than others?

Collect on cards or large post-its and add to the map (if space is available) or collect on flipcharts.

▷ This step provides orientation for the prioritising of target groups and activities. It is the basis for formulating a so-called ‘unique selling point’ or mission statement that works as a profile for the organisation.

Supplementing competences

For the different fields of activities:

- Which competences are lacking concerning these activities?
- How could they be integrated in the team?
- How could they be integrated by strategic partners -> who?

Collect on cards or large post-its (different colour) and add to the map (if space is available) or collect on flipcharts.

▷ This step provides information on necessary capacity building within the organisation as well as where to look for strategic partnerships with others who would complement the strengths of the organisation.

Completing / focusing activity fields and target groups

- Are there fields in which the NGO should not work?

- Are their other fields than those on the wall, on which the NGO should work?

- Priorities of the members?

- Is it possible to reach the targets (project implementation targets as well as targets of the organisation) with these activities?

After this step it should be possible to define a clear profile for the organisation defining the main target groups of their work and their focus of specialisation. This can be documented e.g. in a list of the following format:

Target group X

Contributions of the target group to the NGO

- …

The NGOs activities towards this target group

1. Next steps
   - …
2. Further activities
   - …

The NGOs competencies related to these activities

- …

In addition there can be a list of “needed competencies” and “potential cooperation partners”.

The next step (financial sources) serves as a reality check. It is important to distinguish between target groups (people, institutions, organizations, companies or groups who are involved in or addressed by the NGOs activities and who might benefit from them) and clients (people, institutions, organizations, companies or groups who have an interest that these activities are carried out and / or are benefiting from that and who are willing and able to pay for these activities). The next step is about identifying clients.

Target groups for funding / financing and possible “products”

- Where does funding / income generally come from and for what?
  -> Listing the current funders / financial resources and related activities of the NGO.
- What could be financial resources in the future? (especially long term funding not just project funding or start up funding) Who are the future clients?
- Who can provide this (right now and in the future)?
- What are the concrete needs and interests of those clients and how can the NGO provide a special benefit for them?
- What could be possible “products”: what is it that the NGO can do better than others?
- What services / products can be listed on invoices to these clients? For what exactly can income be earned?

In this step financial resources are identified for individual activities. It is a strategy that goes for mixed funding not just one source of financing.

These financial sources should then be related to the different activities collected before. For the survival of the NGO it is important to build a reputation in those activity fields where financing is possible and accessible. The participants should differentiate between those activities that get direct funding and those that need cross financing but are important to build the standing of the NGO and to reach its targets.

Next steps / strategic planning

A workshop like that could be concluded by a session on planning next steps, e.g.:

- What are the next steps?

- Who is developing a strategy plan?

- Who is going to contact the identified partners / target groups?

- What can be done to build the identified additional competences?

- …

2 *Strategic considerations: the implementation context*

Supporting innovation and change in the practice of SLM is largely dependent on the concrete context of implementation. A sound analysis of this context for every use case can be the key to success: conditions, obstacles, supporting factors, stakeholders, regulations… This can be done as part of the stakeholder analysis or build on those results. Working with implementation partners who are familiar with the specific context gives a quick access to the necessary information.

Strategy development and inducing innovation or change is a field of its own. This digression on strategic considerations is just a short introduction into three tools that can be helpful in developing a robust implementation strategy. They can be especially helpful when the project has defined very concrete implementation targets or objectives it wants to achieve.

Force Field Analysis

This is a simple tool to get a quick overview over supporting and adversary forces concerning a plan or innovation. It lists both kinds of forces (people, organisations, structures, habits, arguments, …) on both sides of the change proposal or plan and assesses the strength / influence of them with a score between 1 (weak) and 5 (strong) and adds up both sides. Based on the results the chances of the proposal can be assessed and a strategy developed to overcome the hindering influences and use the supporting ones (or give up the plan as unrealistic). It usually works best when carried out in a small group.

Links:

- ODI Toolkit: Tools for policy impact, A handbook for researchers, page 22
  http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=3854&title=odi-toolkits
- Mind tools online
  http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTED_06.htm

Impact Strategy

This is an example from the ESPA programme (Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation) in the UK where participants were asked to develop an impact strategy for their project. It includes the key factors:

- Contextual understanding of the situation
- Co-production of knowledge
- Identifying champions for change.
- Knowledge
- Working with other projects and programmes.
- Strategic

More information:

- http://www.espa.ac.uk and
- http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/tools-and-resources/impact-toolkit/index.aspx

Theory of change

This is a method to develop an innovation or change strategy, usually based on a dialogue, and document it in a diagram as well as a narrative. Based on the desired change or innovation the steps are:

- Context analysis for the change initiative
- Stating the long-term changes envisioned and its benefits
- Mapping a sequence of changes leading to the long-term goal (back-casting)
- Reflecting assumptions how these changes might happen (pathways)
- Summary in form of a diagram and a narrative

This can be done in an initial state of the project, even as a tool to design the project. But it can also be used later and then adapted throughout the process of implementation.

More information:

- A basic guide for researchers:
  http://www.espa.ac.uk/files/espa/ESPA-Theory-of-Change-Manual-FINAL.pdf
- http://www.theoryofchange.org
  Also available as a software tool.

For more links and material see also link list at the end of this Guideline.

3 Links and material

In addition to the material listed in the 'Guideline for stakeholder analysis and involvement' here are some interesting sources describing methods and tools for stakeholder management and communication. This list is not entirely focusing on cooperation strategies but also giving updates on more general toolkits and possibly interesting approaches of working with stakeholders.

CEPA – Communication, Education and Public Awareness by IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature: **The CEPA toolkit** has been developed by the IUCN Commission on Education and Communication (CEC) for the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). The toolkit offers information to improve knowledge and skills of communicators in the area of biodiversity conservation and use with fact sheets, checklists and practical examples from all over the world.

Toolkit online and download
-> http://www.cepatoolkit.org

See also further material under 'Links' on this site.

IDRC Knowledge matters knowledge translation toolkit: Thematically the toolkit is based in health research, but it provides many transferable tools and approaches.
-> http://web.idrc.ca/es/ev-128908-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Download: Knowledge translation toolkit
http://web.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/12266886561Research_Matters_-_Knowledge_Translation_Toolkit_.pdf

Outcome mapping: IDRC has developed a tool to manage and document the process of implementation oriented research and support its praxis orientation. This community know has its own platform providing up to date information in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and German. It includes a large Resources Library about the method.
-> http://www.outcomemapping.ca

ESPA the **Ecosystem services for poverty alleviation** programme in the UK provides a platform for those working within the programme. Because the programme is implementation-oriented it supports the researchers with advice how to develop strategic communication and management of the projects. A central approach promoted here is 'Theory of Change'
-> http://www.espa.ac.uk

Download: 'ESPA guide to working with Theory of Change for research projects'
http://www.espa.ac.uk/files/espa/ESPA-Theory-of-Change-Manual-FINAL.pdf

For **Theory of Change** see also the online platform that describes the method and the available tools.
http://www.theoryofchange.org

Knowledge brokerage is a form of intermediary work and a keyword in many forums dealing with the challenges between knowledge and action. A good overview gives the internet forum for knowledge brokers. This approach is different from the approaches listed above insofar as knowledge brokerage is less strategic in terms of trying to achieve identified targets but more an independent form of securing communication among different communities.
-> http://www.knowledgebrokersforum.org

Download: Knowledge Brokering and Intermediary concepts, Analysis of an e-discussion on the Knowledge Brokers' Forum
http://assets00.grou.ps/0F2E3C/wysiwyg_files/FilesModule/knowledgebrokersforum/20110721104502-ugrvcfpatmivjojwi/Knowledge_Brokering_and_Intermediary_concepts_discussion_Summary.pdf

K* / Knowledge management and mobilization - a very broad as well as strategic understanding of a new growing 'field' of Knowledge Transfer (KT), Knowledge Management (KM), Knowledge Translation (KT) and Knowledge Exchange (KE), Knowledge Brokering and Mobilization (KB and KM), as well as Innovation Brokerage and Change Management (IB and CM) has recently been identified at meetings on invitation by UNU, and with support of the World Bank, ODI and others. A Green Paper as well as a Concept Paper and case studies have been published. They are available on:

http://www.inweh.unu.edu/River/KnowledgeManagement/KstarConceptPaper.htm

Download:http://www.inweh.unu.edu/River/KnowledgeManagement/documents/KStar_ConceptPaper_FINAL_Oct29_WEB.pdf