

Capitalization of Experiences: “Water, Land and People”

An innovative process, lessons learned



MALI

A combination of academic knowledge and hands-on experience



Interactions among experts (from the North and the South) within the learning group were needed and have enabled to fine tune working methodologies and to share experiences as well as their presentation in useful formats: PowerPoint, leaflets, Word and PDF documents, images and sounds.



And yet, results are largely the outcome of the involvement and strong interaction among all the actors: (national and local) decision makers, peasants, social and professional groups.

Lesson 1:



The process has provided the opportunity to gather the various categories of actors, first within their own structure and then among each other...

... Every participant in the process has benefited from knowledge exchange and an increased understanding of others in terms of experience, potentials, challenges and expectations.



Story Telling: An easy and not less productive method:



Rosaline Dacko,
Member of the
learning group

...During the training, this tool first appeared to me as a game (or a joke) as Mali traditions are embedded in legends and problem solving is done through story telling. I sensed that the other members of the group had a similar reaction when told to tell a story...

...I can say that story telling is a simple and revealing tool, which places the storyteller and the audience at ease. It allows to recall stories which people tend to forget and which help to solve conflicts in a peaceful way.

Lesson 2:

However, the story telling and narration validation exercise is a lengthy process that can create time conflicts to peasants. It is important to adapt the approach in light of this consideration.



Lesson 3: Everyone is free to express himself/herself in the way that better suits him/her:



...sitting down...



...or even
singing.



... or standing...



... or demonstrating...

The Learning Group

- The multidisciplinary character of the teams has enabled to produce and analyze a large amount of high-quality information.
- Members have appreciated both this multidisciplinary character and the diversity of actors represented within the teams: discussions and assessments took place based on different perspectives and positions.



The Learning Group, continued:

- The learning group's multidisciplinary character - given that several members participate in regional technical commissions - could exert an influence on the development strategies of this sector at the Sikasso region level. However, the group composition was not really adequate to have an influence on the political dialogue at the national level.



Lesson 4:

- The lack of clear and precise guidelines spelled out at the beginning of the process lengthens the process itself without ensuring that the outcomes are aligned with the final goal: neither the approach nor the outcomes are defined in advance. It is like proceeding by trial and error.
- At the end of the process, there is a serious risk of ending with a large amount of disorganized information, not knowing how to convert it into useful and interesting outcomes; while at the same time realizing that crucial information is missing!



Lesson 4, continued:

- Such an open approach entails serious and real risks of being too ambitious regarding the diversity, quantity and quality of the products. Thus estimations are not realistic and the allocated resources not sufficient.



Lesson 5:

- The voluntary character of the process is also a constraint in itself: various degrees of motivation and commitment among members quite seriously jeopardize a successful outcome for the process.
- In Mali, even the most dedicated were about to give up after 9 to 10 months!



For facilitators

- Such a process is a real learning ground for:
 - knowledge and know-how acquisition in any domain;
 - understanding life in its fundamental dimensions: solidarity and cooperation, modesty, patience;
 - acknowledgement of the contribution of all those (decision makers, donators, NGOs, etc.) that work towards making life «worth living» for the largest number of people living in instability.

