



WWF

BRIEFING

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Climate-smart conservation

LEARNING FOR CLIMATE ADAPTATION

Tools for learning 1 – learning histories

WWF Nepal's reflections on their climate adaptation learning history:

“Lesson learning through this type of process is crucial for updating institutional memory, for M&E and for up-scaling.”
“We need to document these histories and find a way to embed this documentation in our M&E processes.”

Introduction

The learning histories approach was used by WWF Colombia and WWF Nepal to map the development of their climate change adaptation and climate-smart conservation practice.

This guidance note uses quotes and photographs from WWF Nepal's climate adaptation learning history workshop and subsequent learning history workshop held for a community living in the buffer zone of the Langtang National Park.

The learning histories approach

Learning histories is a learning tool that helps us and our partners to:

- deepen our appreciation of how changes are happening in a climate changing world
- understand how change has happened within institutions and communities
- adapt our strategies, programmes and theories of change
- foster a more critical and reflective way of thinking and acting
- produce a document, or any other form of (multimedia) presentation, to communicate our learning on a broader scale.

It involves a group of people looking back over an agreed period – say, 2, 5, 10 years – to gain insights into how events unfolded, how decisions were taken and to notice patterns of institutional or community change. The process leads to insights that guide us going forward.



Purpose of the learning histories approach

Learning histories have a range of complementary purposes:

- To recognise and capture the different ways people make sense of and understand their experience
- To enable people to collectively make sense of a shared experience
- To harvest what we have learnt from our real experience of doing something such as implement a pilot programme
- To make adjustments to strategies, plans and theories of change
- To document our experience in a way that has value for people involved as well as people seeking to learn from it (donors, decision-makers and other partners)
- To give insight into the internal dynamics of change within a team, institution or community.

A learning history does not synthesise several accounts into one dominant researched 'truth' but presents a multi-voiced and multi-levelled account so that alongside the narrative that charts what happened there are quotes from those involved, together with reflections, questions and thematic analysis.

Who are learning histories for?

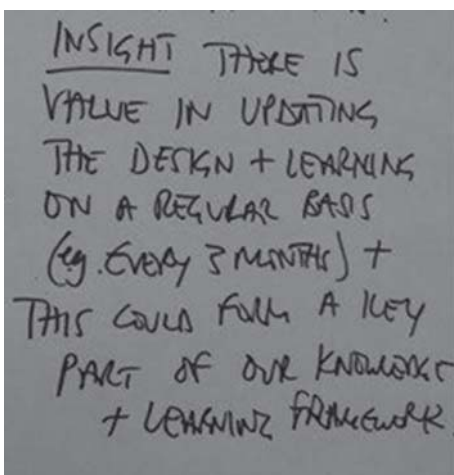
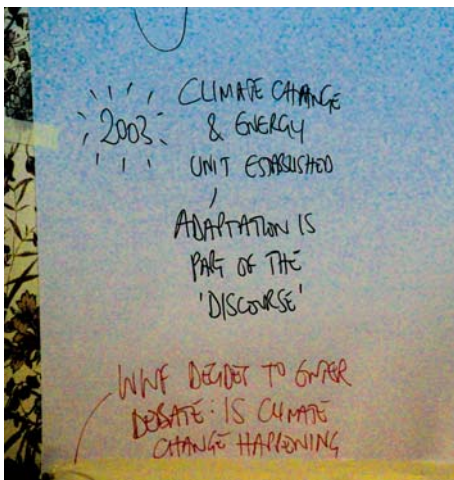
The first audience for learning histories is the people directly involved. Through reflecting on and recounting their experiences, and having the story played back with the voices of others, participants have an opportunity to take time out from fast-paced organisational life, to reflect and to learn and agree adaptive action.

Narratives based on learning histories are of value to a wider group of people who face a different set of similar challenges elsewhere. A learning history narrative is qualitative evidence and can contribute to monitoring, evaluation and reporting processes.

When can we use a learning histories approach?

Learning histories can be used to kick start a strategic planning process, in the 'define and design' stage of the programme cycle. It is particularly valuable:

- during and at the end of a large, complex programme of work to identify learning and make collective sense of how change happened
- when piloting and innovating new partnerships, methodologies, processes and tools or when mainstreaming new approaches such as climate adaptation or livelihood approaches into a wider programme of work
- before strategic planning processes to ensure lessons from the past are integrated and new pathways for change identified
- when key people move to new jobs as a way to harvest their insights and learning.



Who participates in making a learning history?

The people who were/are involved in the central issue or programme of work which is the focus of the history. If possible involve external stakeholders who have been engaged in the programme or who have a stake in the issue under discussion. Individuals who may contribute to the design of future programme plans are also important.

How long does it take?

There are 6 steps set out below.

Step 1 is the facilitator's preparation. Steps 2-5 cover the workshop and take 2 -4 hours depending on the number of participants and the length of history being covered.

It takes between a half and full day to write up the initial learning history document (step 6) depending on the level of detail chosen.

The 6 steps for creating a learning history

1. Pre-design of workshop

Some pre-design work is required to finalise the design of the learning history workshop.

The learning history workshop

2. Introduction

Places the learning history activity in the organisational or community context and clarifies the purpose of the activity.

3. Charting the learning history

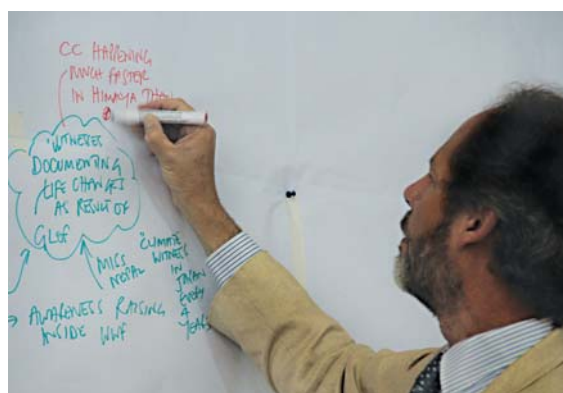
This is where the raw, 'unworked', learning history is first mapped and co-produced by workshop participants.

4. Reflecting on the learning history

Reflections on the learning history begin to reveal the shape of the learning history e.g. critical decisions or partnerships. This stage also fosters a more critical and reflective attitude, and deepens participants' appreciation of the internal dynamics of change within their community or organisation.

5. Action planning and closing

This closing activity provides an opportunity for participants to agree next steps.





Post-workshop

6. Writing up the learning history document, including further analysis

This activity focuses on the initial writing up of the learning history, to produce a document for further development by participant/s. See separate guidance note on documenting learning histories/story-telling.

Doing a learning history in the Langtang National Park buffer zone:

Participants were direct beneficiaries and influential people at the local level who are able to contribute to the future direction of WWF Nepal's programme.

It was particularly helpful to ask local resource people, who are directly involved with the community, to facilitate the process.



Step by step guidance for facilitators:

	Purpose of step	Task
<p>Step 1</p> <p>Pre-design of workshop</p>	<p>For the facilitator and sponsor to work together to clarify the learning history's focus, the time period to be covered by the history and who should be involved in the learning history workshop.</p> <p>Agreeing the focus of the learning history helps to draw a boundary around the activity – what is the overall theme you want your participants to consider and in which they all share an interest?</p>	<p>Key questions to consider with sponsor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why are we undertaking this activity (purpose)? ● Who should be involved (linked to purpose) – which individuals and/or stakeholder groups and why? ● What is the theme of the learning history? ● What do you want the learning history to focus on? And over what period? <p>The focus of the WWF Nepal Learning for Adaptation learning history was climate change <i>adaptation work in Langtang and PIPAL programmes over the period 2003 – 2012.</i></p>
<p>Step 2</p> <p>Workshop - introductions</p>	<p>To introduce the sponsor, facilitator and participants to each other (especially important if external stakeholders are participating or if a community workshop).</p> <p>Facilitator introduces the purpose of the workshop and workshop agenda and agrees ways of working (i.e. ground rules).</p> <p>The purpose of the ground rules is (a) to encourage particular ways of interacting (e.g. 'one person speaks at a time'; 'everyone's voice is valid') and (b) to manage workshop boundaries (e.g. 'stick to time'; 'cell-phones on silent at all times'). Invite everyone to agree to the ground rules (and add any others that are requested and agreed).</p>	<p>Time required: 30-60 minutes</p> <p>Make introductions in a way that work for your context.</p> <p>Have the workshop purpose and agenda visible to all participant e.g. on flipchart posted-up in the room or on a hand-out.</p> <p>Write ground rules on a flip chart and post-up in the room once agreed.</p>
<p>Step 3</p> <p>Charting the learning history</p>	<p>The role of the facilitator is to elicit and chart the learning history on the large wall chart.</p> <p>This is a dual role which involves both asking good questions and recording the answers on the wall chart.</p> <p>Rather than divide the sheets into years beforehand, allow the space to be filled as it needs to be (some years will take up more of the story than others) and label the sheets with the years as these emerge.</p> <p>Try to use colour pens e.g. black pens for events, blue for motivations, green for insights and learning.</p>	<p>Time required: 60 - 120 minutes depending on timescale of the history and size of the group.</p> <p>Ideally it is best to leave enough time to ensure that the group feels that all the main moments of the history have been recorded.</p> <p>Materials required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wall space covered with large sheets of paper. ● Use lots of paper to ensure that there is enough room to record the history. ● Coloured pens for the facilitator (four different colours)

The process unfolds as follows:

- Start by asking some open questions, such as: So, how did this all start? Who was involved? When and where?
- Follow the energy in the room, writing up answers as they are given, gradually moving from left to right, linking statements where appropriate with arrows. Start new strands as appropriate. Add more sheets to the right hand of the chart during the process if you need to.
- Depending on how many people are involved, you may get different (even conflicting) accounts of what happened – you can try to agree a single version or write up different versions alongside each other and explore why there are different versions.
- From time to time check that dominant voices are not over-dominant – by asking: Who else was involved and wants to add to the story at this stage? (recognising that not everyone in the room was involved at the early stages).
- Help the group go deeper into the story e.g. ask from time to time – so why did you do this? Why did you approach it in this way? What led you to try this differently? – record these ‘motivations’ in a different colour to ‘events’.
- If people offer insights that speak to what they learned, rather than events or motivations, record these in a new colour.
- As the learning history unfolds, try to connect key events using arrows, so that there is an emerging picture of chains and webs of events
- As you come to more recent events, make sure that you bring in people who have recent knowledge. Another way to bring in quiet people is ask them - when did you join the organisation? What do you want to add to the learning history?
- Keep going until the learning history reaches the present day, and the energy to contribute is exhausted.

Space required and room set up:

- Participants need to gather round the ‘learning history wall’, seated in a semi-circle one (or if necessary two) chairs thick, so that everyone can clearly see and follow the charting process.

<p>Step 4</p> <p>Reflecting on learning history</p>	<p>After a break, participants are invited to reflect on the learning history and what it reveals. This step consists of two parts:</p> <p>Part A: Participants work in smaller groups (e.g. 6-8 people) to address the following questions, recording reflections on flip chart paper:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Looking at the learning history as a whole, are you able to identify periods of significant change and periods of more consolidated activity (i.e. ‘phases’) within the whole process? How would you label these phases? ● What was the main focus of learning within and between each phase? ● How did the learning happen? What helped or hindered this learning? ● Reviewing the activity as a whole, what insights and lessons emerge for us? ● How might we draw on these lessons in moving forward? What choices do they give us? ● Do we want to share these lessons with others? How should we do this, and with whom? <p>Part B: Plenary reflections: Facilitator invites reflections from the small groups. Start with question one and ask groups to share; then go to question two taking each question in turn in this way. The facilitator captures the reflections on a large piece of flip-chart paper (best to mind-map reflections rather than make a list).</p> <p>After working through all six questions, the facilitator invites final reflections from the whole group and captures these on the flip chart. Follow the energy of the group – if there is energy for a lot of reflection, allow that but if the group is quiet, allow that too.</p>	<p>Time required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 60 minutes in small groups ● 20-30 minutes in plenary <p>Materials required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flip chart stand and/or flip chart paper per table ● Range of coloured pens per table
<p>Step 5</p> <p>Action planning and closing</p>	<p>Part B: Plenary reflections: Facilitator invites reflections from the small groups. Start with question one and ask groups to share; then go to question two taking each question in turn in this way. The facilitator captures the reflections on a large piece of flip-chart paper (best to mind-map reflections rather than make a list).</p>	<p>Time required – 20-30 minutes in plenary (depending on the size of the group)</p>

<p>Step 5</p> <p>Action planning and closing</p>	<p>After working through all six questions, the facilitator invites final reflections from the whole group and captures these on the flip chart. Follow the energy of the group – if there is energy for a lot of reflection, allow that but if the group is quiet, allow that too.</p>	
<p>Step 6</p> <p>Initial write-up of learning history</p>	<p>Using the photos of the flip charts produced during the learning history workshop, the facilitator and the note taker collaborate in writing up the learning history.</p> <p>The main purpose at this stage is to ensure that the workshop material is accessible to participants, so the amount of further analysis is kept to a minimum.</p>	<p>Up to 1 day</p>

Mapping the learning history of WWF Nepal's climate adaptation work in Langtang National Park buffer zone.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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	<p>Why we are here To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.</p> <p>www.wwfnepal.org</p>
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