"Is it possible to imagine [...] a world where individuals and communities recognise and respect their common humanity, and live out their full potential to contribute to society as a whole? "

GENEVA GROUP
23rd to 25th June 2017
Introduction

Face-to-Face and Online trainings delivered by Constellation facilitators or Coaches are generally the first exposure for participants to the concepts and principles underlining the Community Life Competence Process (CLCP) and the SALT approach. Although these trainings are intended to be as participative and interactive as possible, none of them can really replace the experiment of the interactions with people in communities and groups.

The purpose of the current guideline is therefore to summarize and explain the rationale of the concepts and principles of the approach, to present the CLCP steps in a chronological manner and to illustrate most of them with tips for the facilitation taken from the field and with communities.

We recognize that there are many ways and style of facilitation among experimented facilitators-coaches of the Constellation; these varies according to the context and to the necessary emphasis that each wants to give to some specific part of the process. It is generally agreed that explanation and demonstration of the SALT approach remains the most important element for the development and the dissemination of the Local Responses.

This guideline aims at being a generic collection of suggestions and tips for the facilitators to face a wide variety of situations and audiences at the community level. In that regard, the Constellation team expects that new and experimented facilitators and coaches will constantly help to enrich the guideline with new examples and ideas/tips for a more efficient facilitation practice both at community level and in other specific situation (trainings or lecture).

What is a Local Response?

Communities can and do respond to the challenges that they face when they take ownership of their challenges. Communities change themselves: we do not change communities. The change they own is sustainable change. It is not enough to engage with communities about programmes for them. It is not enough to consult with communities about programmes for them. In the Constellation, we seek to accompany the community as it takes the path to ownership of its challenge. We call this path local response and we call the methodology that they use the Community Life Competence Process (CLCP). Facilitators accompany the community as it applies CLCP with a mind-set that we characterise with the acronym SALT.

The SALT approach

1 The facilitator’s attitude: a change in perspective

It sometimes feels like our world today is governed by a limiting belief that reduces us all, somehow, to being spectators of our lives- especially when the latter does not please us. The belief? Surely someone knows better than me what I should do! And I can wait until someone will come to solve all my problems!
In this light, dealing with the challenges that life never ceases to present us with, is somehow reduced to looking to one person to hold all the knowledge and the key to our future: the expert.

What our experience in community development has shown us is that this one-way relationship of handing our fate over to a person or institution who “knows better” disempowers people. However, if a different kind of relationship can be built, when weaved in equality and appreciation of what is there, where everyone can recognise their own strengths and limitations and those of others, then a new-found energy is liberated for action and sharing.

Such relationships are typically the types of bonds a “SALT” facilitator seeks to weave with and between people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From expert...</th>
<th>To facilitator...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We believe in our own expertise</td>
<td>We believe in people’s strength to respond</td>
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<tr>
<td>We respond to needs</td>
<td>We reveal strengths</td>
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<tr>
<td>You have problems. We have solutions.</td>
<td>Together, we have solutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>We mobilize expertise</td>
<td>We connect you with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>We instruct and advise</td>
<td>We learn and share</td>
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2 The SALT approach: A Way of Thinking and a Way of Working

We are all human. We all have concerns and hopes. We can all learn, grow and change. Progress happens when people own their challenge. Communities have the capacity to respond when they own the issue they struggle with. That capacity remains to be revealed and nurtured. That is the purpose of SALT.

The approach we call SALT is founded on the facilitator’s behaving and thinking as described in the table beside.

Facilitators stimulate communities by looking for people’s strengths and by seeking to learn from their experiences. Their challenge is their own. It is not ours (external).

When a community owns the issue, the community will find ways to solve it. We will encourage them and support them as they do this.

2.1 Stimulate and Support

Often, community members are not aware of their own strengths. Facilitators appreciate and reveal those strengths. They encourage and stimulate communities. Support does not mean bringing equipment, information or techniques, but rather encouraging communities to take ownership and

Authenticity

Facilitators position themselves as learners, and in order to genuinely listen to the community and learn from them, they cannot hide behind the mask of a status of function: they are simply human. This is the condition to true authenticity, and it means that facilitators must also be ready to show their own vulnerabilities in front of the community.
responsibility. Specific themes and concerns such as issues emerge during dialogue thanks to the questions of the facilitators, who should be able to stimulate community members to reflect on the link between their individual concerns and the challenges facing the entire community.

Rather than positioning themselves as experts, facilitators listen to the community and encourage members to question themselves and find their own solutions to their challenges.

Community members give each other help and support; they become aware of their own strengths - both individual collective.

2.2 Appreciate

A vital attitude is to appreciate (authentic) whom the community is, what people are going through and what they have been doing. A facilitator’s first contact with a community is always about appreciating and revealing their strengths rather than listing their challenges.

This participatory approach helps the community realise what is working well, become aware of their potential. This is an essential step before people can project themselves in a common vision and begin to apprehend the issues and challenges on the way to achieving that vision. Our experience is that appreciation starts by asking the right questions.

2.3 Listen, Learn and Link

The facilitator goes into communities to listen, learn, understand and appreciate the strengths the community members demonstrate to overcome any challenges.

Facilitators help link the different groups in a community, and the different communities with one another. S/He accompanies communities as they take stock of available or potential resources (information, services etc.) within the community, helps them link up with resources that may be available elsewhere and links them up with other communities who may inspire them with their stories of change.

2.4 Transform, Transfer, Team and Trust

Everyone (individual or community) involved in this approach will discover that they must first apply it to themselves in order to develop their competences based on experience. Developing our “life competence” leads to personal and community transformation. Community members transfer their knowledge to one another and to the facilitators who can then apply it in their own context, and vice-versa. This transfer also occurs between communities who connect and inspire one another to change.

Facilitators stimulate, support and connect communities in order to help spread local responses and ownership.

Facilitation work with the SALT approach is always done in teams of minimum two people.

1. A learning cycle.

The Community Life Competence Process (CLCP) is a learning cycle through which facilitators accompany communities as they move towards development and implementation of Local responses related to their challenges in the near future.

This process will be implemented in a stepwise manner; during all these steps the SALT approach defined above will be applied in a consistent and continuous manner in order to reveal strengths and create ownership of the issues and of the actions undertaken by the community.

CLCP is based on the belief that every community has the capacities, the strengths and much of the resources to face their health challenges. This is “life competence”. Moreover, communities can and do respond to the challenges that they face when they take ownership of those challenges. The change that we own is sustainable change.
Facilitators encourage communities to act based on their strengths rather than on shortcomings. They help them develop their full potential and harness their strengths for action. Communities are encouraged to regularly take stock of their own progress and to reflect on lessons learned from experience, so that these lessons may inform the next action plan and inspire other communities.

2. The implementation steps.

2.1. WHO ARE WE? Initiating community dialogue.

At community level, the length of that step may greatly vary, as there is a need for building trust between community members and the facilitator(s). Home-visits, SALT visits and any other way could be consider for building that trust. Facilitators will pay careful attention at each moment of the process as people change and people come in and out of the community. It is also about the community defining the who are we!

In a training context, this step can easily be done over the course of a half-day (from one to 3 hours).

Although most of the facilitators are already well known\(^1\) in their respective community, there is need to create a space for discussion and dialogue around issues at stake. The goal is for community members and facilitators to meet discover the strengths/talents/skills present in the group, to get a feel for the collective identity of the group (what bonds people together), and to also realise the realities experienced by people locally.

The ingredients of a successful dialogue are the following:

The **way the space is arranged**: space to enable the conditions for a true dialogue between equals. The ideal formation is a circle, with everybody sitting on the floor, log or on chairs, benches and no table to separate participants.

We introduce ourselves as human beings: the facilitation team do individual presentation and do not mention their functions or professions, preferring to talk about their passions, their family situations, etc. **Facilitators explain that they come to learn from the community, its realities and aspirations.** Facilitators encourage participants to introduce themselves in the same way.

Everybody listen deeply, and practice empathy with the community, while remaining aware of various

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\(^1\) The Constellation strategy is to create internal facilitation capacities at community level through training of local facilitators who could then accompany their own people on the long term for a wide variety of challenges. That usually happens after or during a first accompaniment of the community through a complete learning cycle.
sensibilities. We ask questions at human level rather than material, appreciative rather than journalistic. This usually allows for deeper conversation and opening new doorways for reflection and growth.

An interesting way to create dialogue within the community and to identify strengths/talents/skills of the community is to carry out the historical calendar exercise or and the social mapping. These two exercises need a bit of preparation but are worth to do before starting

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**Exercise 1: The Historical calendar.**

**Equipment:** marker and 1 flip chart for each group; sticks, stones, leaves, flowers - any symbols which can be found around the location.

**Objectives:** Participants discuss and document the history of the community indicating key happenings and events.

**Instruction to the participant:** Draw a time line and indicate the years of the past to present someone of the participants can remember. Indicate what happened in the community in terms of infrastructure (schools, churches, road, electricity, water supply, health institutions, etc.), disease outbreaks, type of houses, or any other important event you can think of. Encourage participants to use symbols instead of writing on the flip chart. This also allows illiterate people to actively participate in the process.

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**Exercise 2: Social mapping.**

**Equipment:** 3 – 4 flip charts for each group / Markers in different colours / Tape to attach maps to the wall / or: sticks, stones, leaves, flowers - any symbols which can be found around the location

**Objective:** Participants identify health, social and religious entities in their community.

**Preparation:** Participants are divided into groups of 4-6 persons who are familiar with the whole area of the community; forming women and men groups is an option. Each group is given the equipment and looks for a place in the room.

**Instruction for participants:** Please draw a map of our community area, and locate on it all key entities, i.e. all groups that you think are important for social life in the community – such as elders, authorities (health or others), women, sportmen, religious groups, youth groups, people in recreational areas/locations, market etc... These groups may be linked to a specific place or not.

The maps are presented and discussed in the plenary. The facilitators ask questions like, “How did you decide who to include? What was difficult to represent? What have been areas of disagreement?”

By discussing and comparing the different maps, the facilitation team gets a knowledge of which entities might be of high importance.

The maps and/or digital photos are kept for recording.

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We do not discuss problems but rather choose to speak of people’s realities and preoccupations, as problems come from outside, whereas preoccupations rather come from within (and so we are more likely to feel empowered to do something about them).

Maintaining positive body language and being able to answer questions calmly and carefully in any situation.

A good facilitator does not try to prevent or avoid difficult or troubling situations. If individuals show resistance and dissent, the facilitator listens deeply and tries to understand where the resistance is coming from. Humour is a valuable ally - the more people feel at ease and relaxed enough to laugh – the easier it is to get over differences.
Sometimes, conflict of interest or hierarchy might divide a community. How does one react to such situations? By seeking to give each person a chance to introduce themselves and making sure talking time is distributed evenly. Gaining people’s trust through appreciative questions, games, and by splitting people into smaller groups for more intimacy.

In communities where hierarchy is really strong, facilitators should first discuss with the leaders in order to explain the spirit of the discussion (SALT) and ask them to respect this Way of Working by letting people express themselves. Presence of authorities/leaders should be acknowledged at the beginning of the meetings.

**Exercise 3: What makes us human?**

**Equipment:** 3-4 sheets of paper (format flipchart) + markers + post-it/stickers of various colours. The sheets of paper will be assembled in a large piece of paper and laid on the floor.

**Objectives:** To create a discussion around the human values and to stimulate participant to reflect on their own values.

**Preparation:** ask one of the participants to lay down on the big piece of paper and draw a line around his/her body to materialise a human body (see picture).

**Instructions for participants:** participants will respond to the first question: “What makes us human?” or what differentiate us from animals? They respond by noting a quality, a character, an idea on a sticker/post-it and stick it on the silhouette. Once participants have put all their stickers, we try to group them as a way of summarising.

Then the participants should reflect and respond on the second question: “If these are qualities for a human being, how would you like to be treated?” Every participant will respond openly in the plenary or in small groups.

**2.2. THE SALT VISIT. Principles and purpose**

A SALT visit is an appreciative learning visit. We visit an organisation or community we have identified in advance or we work with, not as professionals but as human beings. One person among the visitors (the bridge person, someone who is already familiar with the
visited group) introduces the goal of our visit: we come to learn from the strengths of the group or team we visit. “We heard you do great things and we would like to come and learn from you”.

The purpose of a SALT visit depends on the context:

- Within the framework of a training, the SALT visit aims at practicing the SALT approach by the trainees. It will illustrate the concepts presented during the training and allow trainees to understand the behaviours to be adopted during those visits;
- During the accompaniment of a community or group through the full CLC Process. In that context, the SALT “visit” is the regular way of interaction with communities & groups. Each visit may have a specific topic for discussion, depending on the step of the cycle the group is in (Where are we? / where do we want to be? etc.).

In all cases, visitors should be appreciative, supportive and stimulating for the people they visit. Very often, the community might be a bit surprised at first. They would not expect that we come to learn from them. As mentioned before, the relationships should be created at human level in order to deepen the conversation and to be inspiring and uplifting for both the visitors and the receiving group. Practising or being in touch with an appreciative and learning attitude leads to increased trust in human potential and possibilities.

Open questions should be used such as the ones mentioned in the box beside. They belong to 3 categories: What, how and why?

Sample questions
- What are you doing?
- What is the goal of your organization?
- What are you proud of?
- What makes you happy?
- What does your community do well?
- How did you achieve it?
- How do you feel about it?
- Why do you do this for your community?
- What is your dream/hope for your community?

Practical steps for the organisation of a SALT visit (in the context of a training):

- A SALT visit (travel + visit) may take up to half a day, depending on the proximity of the community to be visited. Plan for a 2-hour meeting.
- Selection of the community to be visited: a community or group that has already achieved or is in the process of achieving something on its own. Ideally, the facilitator(s) or some of the participants should know the group.
- For every group to be visited, 1 contact person from the visitors’ group to build the bridge and introduce the “what and how” of the visit + supervise the transport arrangements.
- Introduction calls or email from the bridge person to the community to be visited. Explain purpose of the visit + ask community members or staff to be present with as many people as possible (we want to visit them as a team or group) + ask for the exact location of the visit and the phone number of the person receiving you in the organisation.
- Day + time: - time slot of 60 to 90 minutes
- For each visited group, teams of 4 will be formed (if possible); select on person who will facilitate the conversation
- After the visit, you will do a short debrief (After Experience Review - 20’) with the team to identify & discuss the learning from the visit.
2.3. WHERE DO WE WANT TO BE? The common vision (the Dream).

The full scope of this step (vision + practices) may take up to a full day (2 half days) a first time. But during the full process the facilitator continues to accompany the community towards fine-tuning it’s dream.

A community’s vision is the ideal state that community members want to reach as a group. It is a source of energy and motivation that has the potential to sustain the community’s drive towards life competence. This community’s vision is the basis for any strategy for action and progress.

During this step the community describes a situation where challenges have been overcome as part of the day-to-day activity. To build a vision (dream) one thing to bear in mind is that participants should project themselves into a distant future that could be 15-20 years ahead, in order for those things that may constitute obstacles to the dream not to hinder the process.

Before initiating the discussion with the community around their vision/dream, the facilitator’s team prepares the topic and the question that will be proposed to community members or participants. That question must relate to the current challenge(s) or the common purpose of the people gathered for that step. For communities that have a challenge around health, the question could be: “In 20 years from now, your community has become a healthy community: how would it look like? Describe it”. If the challenges refer to Water & Sanitation, we can ask: “Can you describe your community in 15 years, when all issues around water & sanitation would have been solved? How would you want it to be?”

When training facilitators who are coming from different communities or groups, or in general with people coming from different contexts, a suggestion can be: “Describe how you like to be as facilitator in 10 years? How will be the context around you, personal and professional?”

The general path of the process goes as follows:

THE INDIVIDUAL VISION/DREAM.
What is each participant’s vision? Everyone reflects on his or her personal view of an ideal community.

Each person draws that vision of an ideal community on a piece of paper (what matters is

Tip 3 : The free creative dream:
First everyone has some time for an individual reflection, then sharing is done in small groups.
For the presentation of the dreams of each group in plenary, the facilitator gives the instruction that they are “free to be as creative as they want to be” in the manner in which they choose to present their dream.
This opens the door to all sorts of little improvisations, songs, dances, rhythmic movements etc.
A dialogue is initiated at the end of the presentations around the central question: what did you notice that was common to all these community visions? What can we take away as a common vision? How would that look like?
Again, here we ensure that we capture the common dream in whatever shape or form (video, photo, drawing, text, etc.).
expressing the vision, no artistic skills required). What drawing allows is to free the participants’ creativity.

**Within communities**, such individual visions can be developed through individual encounters/discussions between the facilitator and individuals or at family level through home-visits.

**THE VISION IN SMALL GROUPS**

Depending on the number of participants, the group is divided into small groups of 3-4 people. Each person brings his or her individual vision to the group. One by one, each participant explains his/her vision to the rest of the group based on their drawing if that was the chosen method.

All the visions are brought together, through resonance, into a single representation of the group’s vision (dream) [through a drawing or, some communities prefer to present their dream in a story, a poem, a song, a theatre play].

**Within communities**, the facilitators will take advantage of the social mapping realized with the larger group, where the various social groups/entities are identified. Bringing the discussion about the issues/challenges within these social groups and accompanying them to develop a vision for the community will help to prepare the development of the common vision.

**THE COMMUNITY VISION (DREAM)**

Each small group presents its vision/dream to all other participants; At the end of the presentations, facilitators will ask participants to look for similarities and commonalities between these dreams. People present listen and appreciate, and get a chance to ask clarifying questions. One or two persons will be dedicated to draw a larger picture from these commonalities, following the interactive discussion with all participants.

**At community level**, each social group selects one or two persons to present the group’s vision [drawing] to the rest of the community members during a special meeting – in some cases called by the authorities. During the community conversation points of resonance and dissonance between the different individuals and social groups are explored collectively. Together, we build a collective community vision that reflects the visions of the individuals in each social group.

Facilitators make sure all participants are satisfied with the result, and additional suggestions/ideas may be added (strive for maximum inclusion).

Facilitators congratulate each group and participants as a whole for this beautiful effort to bring their individual aspirations together.

**Clarifying questions that may be asked by other participants.**
Facilitators should constantly remind participants that every person is important and that every vision is valuable.

We all have the right to dream and envision; therefore there is no such thing as an "unreasonable" vision. Therefore avoid critical comments, mockery or discussion on the way in which a dream is expressed.

No vision is to be rejected without a conversation, and facilitators face the challenge to find a way to include even the seemingly dissonant ones. This is particularly important to stimulate ownership by individuals of group visions first, and of the collective community vision eventually.

This will encourage individuals to commit themselves fully to making this vision/dream come true.

In case of hold-ups, facilitators use the "miracle question": this helps people momentarily put aside obstacles to change and the idea of something being "impossible".

2.4. PRACTICES: Identify the stepping-stones towards the vision

Once the community has formulated its vision in words or as a drawing, they are ready to start formulating what is happening in the vision - we call these sentences "practices" or "results". Realising what people are doing in the vision/dream to make this "ideal" possible will give the community something against which to assess its current situation, and therefore come to terms with the actions that they will need to undertake to move closer to the vision of an ideal community (with regard to the identified challenge).

It is important that the community understands the difference between a practice/result and an activity: a practice or a result describes one aspect of the vision (1, 2, 3…8 below). It could be formulated as a result. The vision/dream is described by a set of results reached for the various elements of the vision.

An activity is carried out in order to reach the practice, the result, and thus move closer to the vision.

The practice/result is expressed as "we (we = community) + active verb + complement"

Facilitators help consolidate the common vision by grouping ideas together, and ensure that each group of ideas is reflected in the practices/results chosen by the community. They follow the rhythm of the community.
The facilitators’ vocabulary will always be adapted to the context of the community and they should use positive language and appraisal. It is essential to ensure common understanding of the words used (such as practice or result for instance), and for participants to find a word in their own language.

Tip 6: Example of Practice and Activity

PRACTICE: We constantly nurture relationships between people.

ACTIVITY: We organise Neighbourhood gatherings each month.

Tip 7: Encourage the selection of results that have a multiplier, snowball effect, those that will bring about rapid and visible change, and activities for which the community has experience: it’s much more motivating! Encourage small doable actions that do not require big structural changes.

One practice may lead to several activities.
Even though a formulation for a practice/result may automatically spring to the mind of the facilitators, our advice is to hold off and allow community members to express themselves and explore different formulations. Facilitators only contribute their own formulation if the group seems stuck or if an important element has been left out. They can then suggest, “another community once decided on a similar practice which went something like … Is that close to what you were thinking?”

2.5. WHERE ARE WE NOW? The self-assessment

This step can be facilitated in one half-day session.

a. What is the self-assessment?

The community strives to determine its current level of capacities with respect to its dream. Community members hold a discussion for all practices/results they previously formulated, and decide, based on what is being done now, where they stand for each result (on a scale of 1 to 5), and where they would like to stand in roughly 6-12 months’ time. Once they know where they are and where they are heading, they can begin to plan “small doable actions” to carry out over the next months or so by mobilising their own resources first.

How to identify a level?

- Level 5: That practice is part of our day-to-day life: we act naturally!
- Level 4: We act consciously and systematically
- Level 3: We act sporadically
- Level 2: We are sufficiently informed to act, but we do not act
- Level 1: We are conscious of the practice, but we do not know what to do…
b. Why the self-assessment?

The self-assessment helps the community have a good understanding of its current position with respect to their challenge. Once we understand where we are now and where we want to be, we can think about the action that we can take.

The self-assessment serves as a kind of looking-glass for the community, whereby they can genuinely explore their current level and identify the priority practices that will help them move closer to their dream.

c. How to proceed with self-assessment?

✓ At first, it is important to define the level 5 (ideal state) for each practice/result.
✓ The community recalls its dream and re-reads the practices/results formulated beforehand. Level 1 is the lowest level, and level 5 is the top level (see scale above).
✓ Conduct a group discussion for each practice/result with free expression, and not a discussion for each level. Ask participants to give their own estimate (based on experience) of the community’s level for each practice/result (experience has shown that it is easier for participants to position themselves if you start by confronting them with the “dream” level 5). Facilitators take good care to illustrate each level using concrete examples (such as washing hands or exercising).
✓ Ask people to justify levels by using concrete examples, and regularly remind them of the definition of each level 5 if need be. Always remind participants to base their arguments on experiences and facts.
✓ Do not resort to a vote to validate levels, but let the discussions drag on if it needs to (the more engagement at this stage, the more commitment later!). This is an exercise in consensus-building, so no votes!
✓ Be vigilant of the possibility of a group leader trying to impose his/her level and/or priority.
✓ Remind participants that the goal is to then move towards doable actions, and that therefore the appraisal of the current level should be realistic - we are not trying to get the highest possible “grades” here. Rather, it is an opportunity to look into the mirror at ourselves, see where we are at and decide where we want to move from here on out.
✓ At the end of the exercise, the community decides on 3 priority practices/results, and then determines the projected level they wish to attain in 6-12 months’ time.

Tip 8: In their first self-assessment, communities tend to indicate levels that are much higher than what is realistic. Confront them with the facts.

2.6. WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO? The action plan

This step can easily be performed in a half day.

a. Why do we need an action plan?

When we formulate an action plan, it is much more likely that we will act to implement it. The
The purpose of an action plan is setting and implementing activities that will help us reach our target level for each priority practice.

b. How to plan?

Community members agree on:

- The priority practices/results they want to focus on (2 or 3 for the period chosen – 6-12 months).
- The actions they want to take to reach the selected level of the desired results (2 or 3 actions/activities per priority).
- A time frame with deadlines by which to reach target level for each result (short and medium term, 6-12 months).
- Indicators (1 or 2) to measure progress, which will tell them whether or not they have reached each target level.

For each priority practice, indicate the following in the action plan:

- The priority practice identified during the self-assessment, current level and projected level, and the action or activities that the community proposes to set up (what?)
- The person responsible for each activity (who?)
- The people concerned/impacted by the activity (with whom?)
- The deadline and/or frequency of the activity (when?)
- The location of the activity (where?)

Optional: Quantitative and qualitative indicators to assess the activity. To be extracted from activity reports, records, attendance lists, survey forms, testimonials, etc.

Optional: Lessons learned at the end of the activity that can allow better implementation next time.

Tip 9: Spend more time planning progress than assessing current levels.
Do not try to meet community needs yourself, but rather help the community tap into surrounding resources.
The heart of what we do is about ownership, for a community to own its life challenges and its progress.
Each person measures the indicators of the activities they are responsible for.

2.7. LET’S DO IT! Action!

The community acts by itself; facilitators accompany its action and regularly follow up on progress made, particularly during consultation meetings, or during home or SALT visits. Such meetings allow for sharing, participatory monitoring of activities and constant
adaptation.

2.8. WHERE DID WE GET? WHAT DID WE LEARN? WHAT CAN WE SHARE AND HOW?

Are we making progress?

We evaluate our actions. We go through a new self-assessment of our practices/results and in particular the priorities on which we have worked.

We are then ready to tackle a new cycle

- either starting all over with the first step (“Who are we?”) if our community has changed (new members, departures, etc.)
- or with the dream stage (stage 2), if we realise we would like to strengthen/deepen/modify our dream
- or directly through to a new action plan (step 4)
- or, perhaps we feel ready to share our experiences with others.

Learning Festival and Knowledge Assets

A Learning Festival is an event in which people come together to learn and to share based on their experiences. The guiding principle is that all of us have something to learn and that all of us have something to share. There are no experts. And the organising tool that takes the Learning Festival away from being an enjoyable but chaotic exchange is the Self Assessment Framework.

We have always realised that those who are at the Learning Festival gain enormous benefit from the exchange. But there is a real question about how do we bring this knowledge together and make these experiences available to others. Our answer to this question is that a Learning Festival is an ideal place in which to start building Knowledge Assets and to develop Knowledge Assets that already exist.

This is a milestone to celebrate, share and learn. It should preferably last for a minimum of two days (ideally three days). Constellation uses a range of knowledge management tools in its work to ensure that individuals, communities and organisations learn from their experiences and that what is learned is shared as widely as possible.
During a Learning Festival, communities can exchange experiences and document them in the shape of "Knowledge Assets". One way is to organise "Peer Assists" between communities. The idea is to connect different communities, based on the assumption that the strengths of the ones can also benefit others. Take a community that is very strong in a given practice, for instance: this community can share its experience with another community that is still at level 1 for the similar practice. This could be a great opportunity to learn.

It is important to learn how best to share our experience. If we can tell our story in a way that is compelling, others can learn from us and we can make the most out of our exchanges. There are different ways of learning how to fine-tune our stories: stories carousel and stories in teams. During Learning festivals, facilitators provide a set of themes and register participants into theme groups for the definition of a common vision for the theme; they then facilitate peer-assist discussions that allows the identification of common principles for action. The facilitator asks concrete examples to illustrate these common principles. Interesting experiences are often experiences that speak of change. Through their questions, facilitators should always try to stimulate discussion around the trigger for this change.

Conclusion

This document summarises the principles and purpose of the main steps of the Community Life Competence Process. It also gives an overview of the SALT spirit and how this new perspective can be presented and practiced with facilitators and/or community members. The Constellation has developed new tools and is using interactive exercises to help facilitators in the management and accompaniment of the process. More tools and tips can be found on:

[ https://sites.google.com/a/communitylifecompetence.org/tools-for-learning/home ]
One single training may not be sufficient to become a confident SALT facilitator. For most of us, changing our way of working with groups and communities may take a while and a lot of practice and experience is necessary.

The facilitator is just accompanying these changes through stimulation and appreciation, using questions and exercises that will also support learning and transfer to one another. Through that process, community members will own the challenges they are facing. Facilitators may always remember that:

Communities change themselves; we don’t change communities

The Geneva Group + 2 friends from Nigeria