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Sustainable Livelihoods Enhancement and Diversification (SLED)

A Manual for Practitioners

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRMN	Agatti Coral Reef Monitoring Network (Lakshadweep Islands, India)
AEC	Atoll Ecosystem-based Conservation Project (Maldives)
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
ANET	Andaman and Nicobar Environmental Team (Andaman and Nicobar, India)
ANIIDCO	Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Co-operative (Andaman and Nicobar, India)
CARESS	Centre for Action Research on Environment, Science and Society (Lakshadweep, India)
CARI	Central Agricultural Research Institute (Andaman and Nicobar, India)
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CHF	Community Help Foundation (Sri Lanka)
CORALI	Coral Reef and Livelihoods Initiative
CRMP	Coastal Resource Management Project (Sri Lanka)
DWLC	Department of Wildlife Conservation (Sri Lanka)
IMM	Integrated Marine Management Ltd.
FEYLI	Foundation of Eydhafushi Youth Linkage (Maldives)
ICRAN	International Coral Reef Action Network
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KBCA	Karen Baptist Churches Association (Andaman and Nicobar, India)
MCPA	Marine and Coastal Protected Areas
MCRCF	Marine and Coastal Resource Conservation Foundation (Sri Lanka)
MDS	Maliku Development Society (Lakshadweep Islands, India)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAD	People's Action for Development (Mannar, India)
PADI	Professional Association of Diving Instructors
PUGAR	Yayasan PUGAR (Centre for People's Movement and Advocacy)
SACEP	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
SLED	Sustainable Livelihood Enhancement and Diversification
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UT	Union Territory
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society

INTRODUCTION

Livelihood enhancement and diversification has been recognised, by conservationists and development practitioners alike, as a mechanism to promote livelihood development and encourage people to move away from the harmful exploitation and degradation of natural resources. However, the majority of the efforts to support livelihood enhancement and diversification have, so far, tended to be supply-driven and focused on single, "blueprint" solutions. Such solutions are not built on an understanding of the underlying factors helping or inhibiting livelihood diversification, and often fail to appreciate the obstacles faced by the poor in trying to enhance and diversify their livelihoods.

The result has often been "alternative livelihoods" initiatives that promote unsustainable solutions that are poorly adapted to people's capacities, have limited market appeal and fail to reflect people's aspirations for their future. Where livelihood enhancement and diversification work has been undertaken in parallel with coastal and marine ecosystem conservation efforts it has often been done after the introduction of management measures, when people are already attempting to cope with reduced livelihood opportunities and their capacity to adapt has already suffered.

Ultimately, such failures affect the success of the management measure themselves, as people are forced to continue activities that degrade coastal and marine ecosystems through the lack of better alternatives and in spite of the risks involved.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Enhancement and Diversification (SLED) approach has been developed by Integrated Marine Management Ltd (IMM) through building on the lessons of past livelihoods research projects as well as worldwide experience in livelihood improvement and participatory development practice. It aims to provide a set of guidelines for development and conservation practitioners whose task it is to assist people in enhancing and diversifying their livelihoods. Under the Coral Reefs and Livelihoods Initiative (CORALI), this approach has been field tested and further developed in very different circumstances and institutional settings, in six sites across South Asia and Indonesia. The sites and the partner organisations are:

- Aceh (Weh Island), Indonesia: Partners – the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and Yayasan PUGAR (Centre for People's Movement and Advocacy);
- Andaman Islands, India: Partners – the Andaman and Nicobar Environment Team (ANET) and Karen Youth Association;
- Baa Atoll, Maldives: Partners – the Foundation of Eydhafushi Youth Linkage (FEYLI) and Atoll Ecosystem-Based Conservation Project (AEC);
- Bar Reef, Sri Lanka: Partners – the Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP) and Community Help Foundation (CHF);
- Gulf of Mannar, India: Partners – People's Action for Development (PAD);
- Lakshadweep Islands, India: Partners – Centre for Action Research on Environment, Science and Society (CARESS).

While this process of testing and refining SLED has been carried out specifically in the context of efforts to manage coastal and marine resources, it is an approach that can be applied widely wherever natural resources are facing degradation because of unsustainable human use. The SLED approach provides a framework within which diverse local contexts and the local complexities of livelihood change can be accommodated.

The aim of this document is to provide development practitioners with an introduction to the SLED process as well as guidance for practitioners facilitating that process.

However, a set of guidelines like this is not a substitute for proper training, experience and skills in community engagement, planning and livelihood development. This is one reason why coastal and marine resource managers, however experienced they may be in natural resource management issues, are encouraged to seek out well-qualified and experienced community development specialists to work with them as SLED facilitators. Preferably, they should seek out organisations or practitioners who have good knowledge of the communities they are working with, and who are already well respected by those communities. Even if they do not have specific experience with SLED, such practitioners should recognise many of the elements within the approach and be able to take on board the key principles underlying it.

A. Structure of guidance materials

In the following sections of this manual, an introduction to the SLED approach is given. This sets out the demand for SLED, and in particular the need to build on past experience, and existing conservation and development practice. An overview of the approach is then given.

Sections 1-3 of this manual contain the guidance for implementing SLED, and introduce the phases and steps of the SLED approach. For the first two phases of SLED, the manual sets out: (a) a general overview of the rationale for the phase and a list of phase outcomes; (b) an overview of the key steps; (c) objectives for those steps; (d) the skills involved in implementation; and (e) the processes required to undertake those steps. For the third phase of SLED, the activities of the field teams will be defined by the outcomes of the first two phases. Therefore, the guidance for this phase is based around the roles that the SLED team may play when supporting the process of livelihood change in the long term. In section 4, supporting processes for SLED, which are important throughout its implementation, are described. These are presented with illustrations from practical experiences of implementing SLED.

B. Overview of the SLED process

With increasing frequency, people who live in coastal areas of Asia find themselves facing a cruel paradox. On the one hand, the coastal ecosystems on which many of them depend are affected by increasing levels of degradation caused by a range of human activities (such as unsustainable fishing practices, pollution and mining) and environmental trends (such as climate change and natural disasters). These processes are affecting the livelihoods of coastal dwellers dependent on these ecosystems, particularly for the poor who often have limited alternatives at their disposal, leading to declining living standards or forced migration. In some cases, local resource users are themselves at least partially responsible for some of this degradation, but often the causes are beyond their control. This process is illustrated by figure 1.
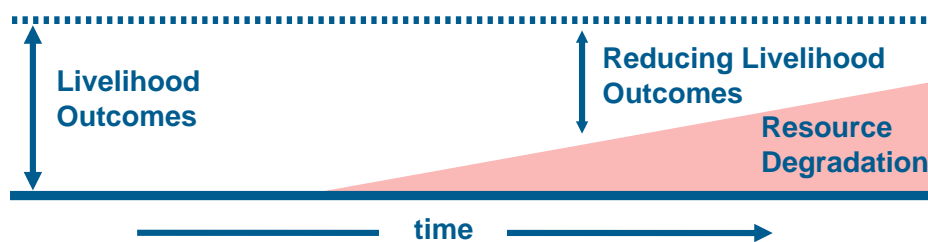
Figure 1. Reduced livelihood outcomes caused by long-term resource degradation

On the other hand, efforts to manage, protect and conserve these ecosystems more effectively often involve preventing or limiting the access of some or all local resource users to the resources they depend on for their livelihoods. Protecting these ecosystems clearly generates benefits for society as a whole and for future generations by ensuring that they are sustainable, and that the services and benefits that they provide will continue to be available in the long term. However, from the point of view of local resource users, particularly the poor, the impacts of such protective measures in the short term are potentially even more serious than the gradual decline of resource access that results from ongoing processes of ecosystem degradation. The introduction of new forms of management or protected areas – such as Marine and Coastal Protected Areas (MCPAs) – can constitute a sudden shock where people find themselves denied access to resources that provide them with a key part of their livelihoods.

For the poor, such shocks can be particularly severe as their capacity to adapt to sudden change is limited, and they will often find themselves facing either greater levels of poverty, or attempting to circumvent new restrictions on resource use in order to continue to exploit coastal ecosystems as before. Even if the poor recognise the long-term benefits of better management, the day-to-day necessities of finding a means of livelihood from the limited choices available to them will often mean that they are forced to ignore long-term benefits in favour of short-term necessity. In extreme cases, this can lead to the "criminalisation" of the livelihoods of the poor, adding greater risk to their livelihood strategies, which are often already precarious, and ultimately deepening their poverty.

Like all changes, new conservation efforts can represent either a threat or an opportunity for local resource users. Those with better access to a diverse range of livelihood assets – and who are less dependent on the

resources that are likely to be protected, have greater confidence, better skills and capacity, and are able access support from institutions and pay for services – are more likely to be able to adapt to the changes that result from conservation measures (such as the creation of an MCPA) or even capitalise on the opportunities that such measures represent.

However, the poor in coastal areas in Asia are often poor precisely because they do not have assets at their disposal, because they lack confidence, because they have limited or non-transferable capacities and skills, and because they face difficulties in dealing with institutions and accessing the services they need. For these people – members of fishing communities, fishing labourers, the elderly and infirm, and the uneducated, tribal groups – for whom coastal resources are often an important safety net that provide a means of living when other sources of livelihood fail, the introduction of management measures can represent a disaster. To cope with it, many will be forced to ignore new measures and bypass regulations in order to survive. Figure 2 illustrates the effect of such measures on local resource user communities.
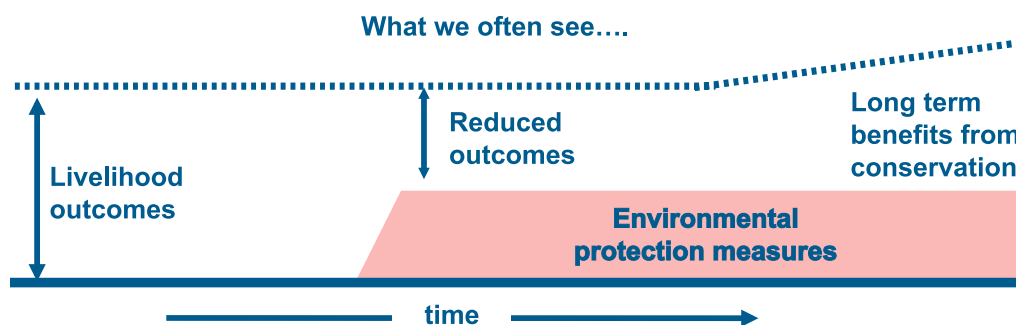
Figure 2. Where people are unable to adapt to changes in resource access they are likely to find their livelihood outcomes reduced as a result

Coastal and marine resource managers, and policy makers working on conservation and ecosystem protection, have long recognised that measures to protect coastal and marine ecosystems can only work if the people who depend on those ecosystems are able to compensate for losses to their livelihoods as a result of new management measures. Increasingly, initiatives to establish protected areas are accompanied by measures to develop "alternative livelihoods". These measures aim to both reduce people's dependence on protected natural resources and provide them with other options for their livelihoods to make up for their lost access to protected areas.

However, the effectiveness of these measures has been mixed. The emphasis of such "alternative livelihoods" initiatives is often on single-solution, supply-driven measures that may experience some initial success when they are being supported by projects but often prove to be unsustainable in the long term. These initiatives frequently fail to take proper account of the complex interactions between the different elements in people's livelihoods, the capacity of different groups within communities to take up new activities, market factors, and the policy, legal and institutional context required to initiate sustainable livelihood change.

Where the promotion of alternative livelihoods is treated purely as a mitigation measure, and taken up at the same time as, or even after, the introduction of new forms of management and protection, the effectiveness is also compromised – poor resource users must have viable options for diversifying away from the use of protected resources **before** their access to those resources is restricted. Just as important, the process of developing livelihood alternatives for poor resource users should be seen as a means of **enhancing** their livelihoods (not only ensuring that they remain unchanged) and building their capacity to **take advantage** of the opportunities that protected areas can create. Particularly for the poorer members of those communities, the time required to build such capacity, and make it sustainable, should not be underestimated. Figure 3 illustrates the phasing of this process.
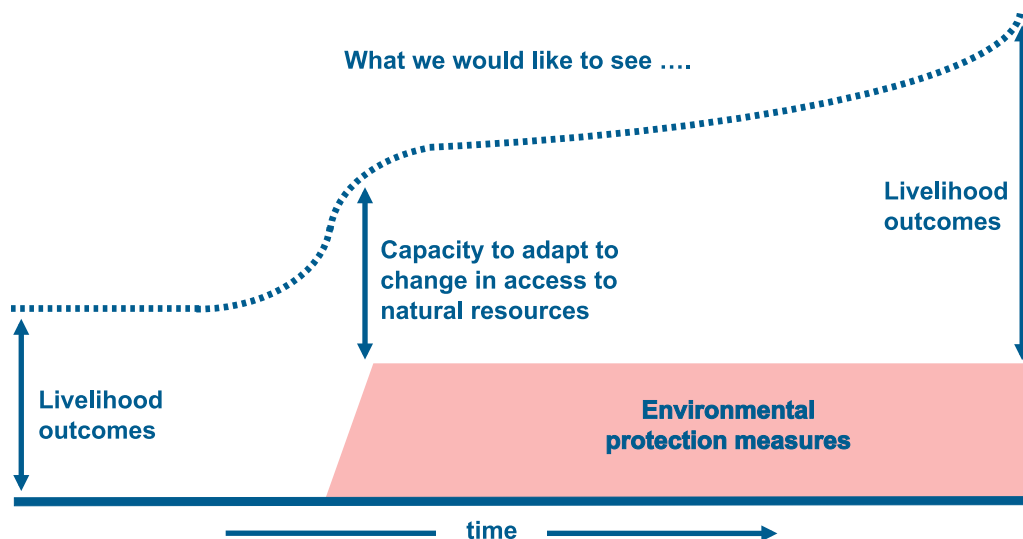
Figure 3. People who have the capacity to respond to change can cope with, and even capitalise on the introduction of environmental protection measures

The **Sustainable Livelihood Enhancement and Diversification (SLED)** approach described below is designed to help those working to establish effective conservation measures to engage with local resource users and communities in enabling them to deal effectively with the changes in their livelihoods that these measures will cause. SLED does this by working with local people to identify and develop opportunities for positive change in their livelihoods, based on their strengths and capacities, which take proper account of factors that help and inhibit livelihood change as well as reflect people's aspirations and hopes for the future. It has been developed and piloted in the field using an action research approach, in collaboration with ground-level practitioners across Asia. The SLED approach has therefore been created and tested by the type of stakeholders who will ultimately be instrumental in implementing it, and represents a methodology that is grounded in real-world experience.

Introducing the SLED approach

SLED is a dynamic approach that has been developed through the synthesis of best practice, and has been tested and refined in the field. It is comprises a series of key stages and supporting activities that need to be undertaken when taking on the challenge of supporting livelihood change. The process is equally applicable to an individual as it is to a group of people or a community as a whole. The SLED framework also helps to identify and address the wider policies, institutions and processes that should work to enable livelihood development.

For coastal and marine resource managers, the SLED approach will help them to work effectively with the communities that are affected by the introduction of management measures. If they start work on SLED **before** they introduce such measures, it will help the communities concerned to deal more effectively with the changes that these measures will cause to their livelihoods and to take advantage of the opportunities that it represents. This will, in turn, help to ensure that (a) the restrictions on resource use resulting from conservation and management measures will not negatively affect the livelihoods of local people, and (b) resource-users will be more prepared to accept and observe the regulations associated with a protected area. This will help coastal and marine resource managers to bring together livelihood development and conservation.

Undertaking SLED is a challenge that requires a broad range of cross-sectoral skills and capabilities. Coastal and marine resource managers will need to appreciate this challenge and recognise that they themselves, and their organisations, often do not necessarily possess all the skills needed. Therefore, they will often have to form partnerships with other agencies that do have the required skills and capacity (e.g., community-based organisations and NGOs as well as others whose role it is to support livelihood development).

The SLED approach builds on a broad range of worldwide experience in social and economic development. However, two key development approaches form the basis for SLED:

- **The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach** (SLA), which provides practitioners with a framework and the tools to understand the complexity of people's livelihoods and to develop appropriate responses to that complexity; and

- **Appreciative Inquiry** (AI), which provides SLED practitioners with an approach for working with communities in a way that builds their confidence and genuinely empowers people to make better choices for themselves, their families and their communities.

These approaches are described in more detail below.

(i) Sustainable Livelihoods Approach

The SLA is an approach to thinking about, and working for development that evolved in the late 1980s with the objective of enhancing progress towards poverty elimination. It is an approach to development in which people's **livelihoods** are the focus of attention. In this approach, "livelihoods" is defined broadly to include all the different elements that people make use of, or are influenced by, in creating a means of living for themselves and their families – a livelihood is **not** just about income-generating activities (see box 1 for a definition of sustainable livelihoods).

Box 1 – A Definition of Sustainable Livelihoods

"A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living: a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels in the long and short term."

- Chambers, R. and Conway, G. 1992. Sustainable rural livelihoods: practical concepts for the 21st century. IDS Discussion Paper 296. Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton

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The SLA is made up of three key elements:

- A *Livelihoods Framework* helps facilitators and planners as well as people in communities, to understand better the different factors that affect the livelihoods of different people (see figure 4 for an example of a Sustainable Livelihoods Framework);

- A set of agreed *Sustainable Livelihoods Principles* (box 2) provides a guide on how to take action to bring about positive and sustainable change in livelihoods;

- A set of *tools*, which are not exclusive to the SLA but which draw on experience and best practice in development, provide a range of options for implementing action, bearing in mind the Sustainable Livelihood Principles and Framework. The SLA seeks to "add value" to these tools by using them within a more comprehensive framework of understanding and action, so that different tools complement each other and can be used most effectively.

Many of the tools that have been used for the implementation of the SLA come from the "repertoire" of participatory development and Participatory Rural Appraisal, because these tools are particularly appropriate for working in a "people-centred" way and for giving people voice and choice. However, almost any development tool, provided it is applied with the right attitude, can be adapted for use within the SLA (just as so-called "participatory tools", used in the **wrong** way and with the wrong attitude, are **not** appropriate).
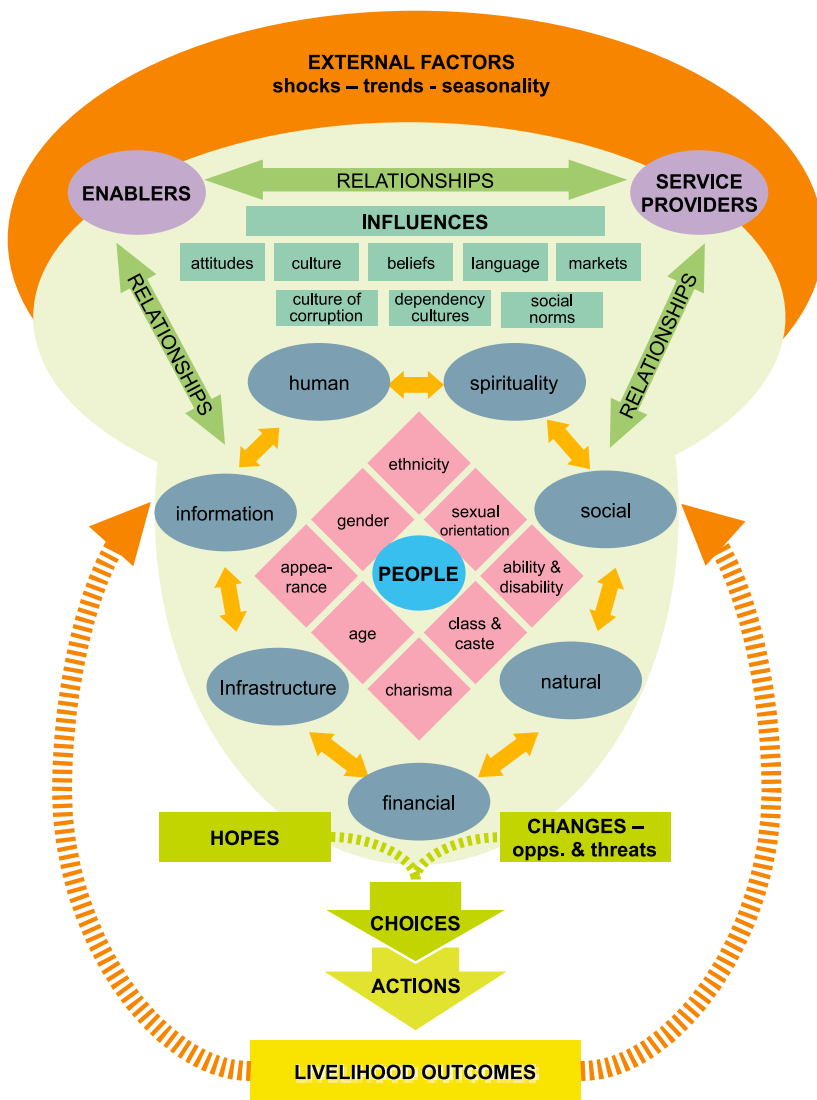
Figure 4: Sustainable Livelihoods Framework – Developed by SLED Field-team January 2008. The figure illustrates the different elements that contribute to the ability of a person to achieve specific livelihood outcomes. Starting with the individual. **"you"** in the centre, the framework recognises that there are certain **personal characteristics**, which are largely unchangeable, that have a profound influence on opportunities that a person has access to. The individual is also affected by their access to **livelihood assets**, which come in the form of different types of capital (e.g., natural, social, financial). A further tier of factors that will influence people's choices are the **influencing factors** that can determine and affect what assets a person has access to, as well as define how broader society responds to their personal characteristics. **Enabling agencies**, such as government authorities and service providers form another layer of influence and opportunity, as determined by the strength and quality of the **relationships** that the individual has with these enabling agencies, as well as the relationships these agencies have with each other. Beyond this sphere of factors that can, to some extent, be modified or influenced, there are also factors that individual cannot have any control over for the most part, but can have significant

EXTERNAL FACTORS
shocks – trends - seasonality

RELATIONSHIPS

ENABLERS   SERVICE PROVIDERS

INFLUENCES

attitudes | culture | beliefs | language | markets
culture of corruption | dependency cultures | social norms

RELATIONSHIPS

human   spirituality

information   social

ethnicity
gender   sexual orientation
appearance   PEOPLE   ability & disability
age   class & caste
charisma

Infrastructure   natural

financial

HOPES   CHANGES – opps. & threats

CHOICES

ACTIONS

LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES

implications on their livelihood options. These constitute **external factors** that can create uncertainty, such as natural disasters, global trends and seasonal changes. In response to all of these factors a person will make **choices**, as influenced by their hopes and aspirations, as well as the shifting opportunities or threats that the individual is presented with. These choices, lead to physical **actions** and activities, ultimately resulting in livelihood **outcomes**. These outcomes may change the nature of the underlying livelihoods assets (e.g., increased income will result in more financial assets), thus feeding back into the chain of influencing factors and ultimately resulting in changes in future livelihood outcomes.

These three basic elements in the approach – framework, principles and tools – are not necessarily fixed, and they need to be modified and adapted to suit local circumstances and priorities. Depending on the capacities and priorities of the people who are at the "centre" of the approach as well as on the priorities and concerns of the institutions involved, the framework and its components may change, the principles may be different and different tools may be regarded as appropriate. The framework shown in figure 4 illustrates some of the elements that people in a range of circumstances have commonly identified as being important but a critical part of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach is the process of developing, together with the key actors in the development process, a livelihoods framework, an agreed set of principles, and appropriate tools that development practitioners have the capacity to use effectively.

The SLA is focused on PEOPLE. This may sound obvious, but many development activities in the past have tended to focus on technologies, resources, sectors, institutions,

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

The impacts of SLA on development practice

Though PADs core strength is its participatory approach, the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach demands more than a faith in participation to generate information. It also demands analytical as well as intuitive ability to put everything in its right perspective.

- PAD, SLED field level implementer, Gulf of Mannar, India

production, markets or particular sets of issues in such a way that the "people" involved have often been forgotten. By contrast, the SLA places people firmly at the centre of attention. It insists that all development must begin by looking at people – as individuals, households, groups and communities – and by understanding their capacities and potential (and **not** just their problems).

Box 2: Key Principles of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach for SLED

Key principles that should guide all action that aims to support the development of sustainable livelihoods include:

Being people-centred – action should focus on the impacts it will have on the livelihoods of people (not on institutions, resources, technology)

Building on strengths – all action should seek to build on people's own capacities, skills, knowledge and aspirations

Giving voice and choice – action should always seek to increase people's capacity and opportunity to give voice to their concerns and it should aim to increase their choices and their capacity to make informed choices

Focussed on sustainability – action should always take account of economic, social, institutional and environmental sustainability

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(ii) Appreciative Inquiry

Achieving SLED not only requires development professionals with technical and managerial skills, but also local people with a vision of a sustainable future in which all will benefit. It requires collective thinking and effort.[1] (Also see box 3.)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a facilitated process that enables people to develop visions for their future that build on their strengths, past successes and the conditions that led to those successes. By supporting people in learning to "appreciate" their own strengths and capacities, the visions are both challenging and achievable. It is a process that gives people voice, and empowers them to take choices based on their own visions and aspirations.

The principles of AI have been adopted in the SLED process out of recognition that conventional approaches, based on addressing people's problems and needs, often encourage people to develop a negative perception of themselves and of their own capacity to take control of their future. This contributes to creating a "culture of dependency" where people regard problems and needs as things that require the intervention of outsiders to solve.

By contrast, AI is an approach that complements the principle of "building on strengths", which is central to the SLA, and aims to encourage people to develop a **positive** perception of themselves and their own capacity. This does not ignore that problems and needs exist and that outside intervention may be required to address them, but it only looks at these issues **after** people have understood what they are capable of themselves as well as what they can contribute to their own development.

AI is an approach that is conventionally based on four steps, commonly referred to as the "AI cycle":

• Discovery – identifying your best experiences;

• Dreaming – using these experiences to build a vision of where you want to be;

• Design – using the community's strengths as a basis for planning how to achieve the visions;

• Delivery – community-lead implementation that may or may not be supported by external agencies.

Box 3. Resources for the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and Appreciative Inquiry

• REPSI/NRP, 2007. Training Materials on Sustainable Livelihoods. REPSI/NRP, Colombo.

• Sustainable Livelihoods Guidance Sheets. DFID, London. Available online at www.livelihoods.org

• G. Ashford and S. Patkar, 2001. *The Positive Path: Using Appreciative Inquiry in Rural Indian Communities*. DFID/IISD/MYRADA, London; Winnipeg, Canada; and Bangalore, India.

• C. Elliot, 1999. *Locating the Energy for Change: An Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry*. IISD, Winnipeg, Canada.

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[1] G. Ashford and S. Patkar, 2001, *The Positive Path: Using Appreciative Inquiry in Rural Indian Communities*. DFID/IISD/MYRADA, London; Winnipeg, Canada; and Bangalore, India.

The SLED process responds to the complexity of people's livelihoods and gives them the capacity and confidence to respond to the challenges set by resource degradation and conservation measures.

While coastal and marine resource managers may well approach the SLED process with a view to improving the effectiveness of management measures, it is important that they recognise SLED as a "people-centred" process and appreciate that the objective of the process has to reflect the priorities of those people involved. With this in mind, a generic objective of SLED can be defined as:

> *"to empower people to make choices, take action and gain access to the support they need to sustainably improve their livelihoods".*

The SLED process is designed, first of all, to encourage people to recognise their own potential and strengths, then understand and take advantage of opportunities to positively change their livelihoods and the nature of their dependency on natural resources by making use of their own potential and strengths. This, in turn, will help them to identify more clearly what type of support they need, and thus to become more supportive of conservation measures for coastal and marine ecosystems (see box 4).

Ultimately, SLED creates the conditions where all people are able to make informed choices about their livelihood options and gain access to the support they need in order to realise those choices.

The SLED approach, as described in these guidelines, has been specifically developed for managers of marine and coastal areas. However, all of the elements within the guidelines are equally applicable to other situations where development practitioners are working with communities that are dependent on natural resources, and where reduction of that dependence through livelihood enhancement, diversification or change is considered necessary or desirable.

The reduction of natural resource dependence, together with livelihood diversification, is increasingly seen as a key part of more general poverty reduction strategies for rural areas; SLED aims to help organisations and practitioners in the field concerned with conservation to work more closely with agencies concerned with more general rural development and poverty reduction. The objectives of conservation and development agencies should be complementary but, because they often work independently, they frequently come into conflict. SLED offers an opportunity for conservation concerns and poverty reduction concerns to be addressed together and to be harmonised.

Box 4. A portrait of an empowered individual

We think of a person who is confident, has a positive attitude, is knowledgeable, skilled (trained) and has access to the resources and infrastructure they require for their livelihood activities. The person is adaptable to changing circumstances, has the means to develop alternative livelihoods and is less vulnerable because they can count on the support of other members of the community, a constructive relationship with service providers, and effective enabling rules and regulations. The person is well-informed, aware of the situation and the opportunities available and able and ready to make choices about their livelihoods.

In other words:

CONFIDENT VOICES MAKING INFORMED CHOICES

- Participants at the third SLED Development Workshop, Sri Lanka, October 2007

Summary of the SLED process

The SLED approach is structured around three distinct phases:

1. **Discovery Phase** – During this phase the practitioner is required to gain a full understanding of the complexity of people's livelihoods and their relationship with natural resources, the wider economy and society. This is carried out through collaborative learning with people about the diversity of resources, skills, capacities and interests in the community, and those factors that have helped or inhibited people from making changes in the past. This joint learning process helps to build a consensus for the need to change resource use

patterns and livelihood strategies. Based on their learning, participants then build "visions" that express the desired outcomes of future livelihood change.

2. **Direction Phase** – This phase focuses on understanding and analysing the opportunities for achieving people's visions developed during the Discovery Phase. Options for changing livelihood strategies are considered, choices made and more detailed planning for action carried out.

3. **Doing Phase** – During this phase, the emphasis is on developing people's capabilities and adaptive capacity, together with networks of government, civil society and private sector services to support the plans for sustainable livelihood development that they have developed in the previous phases.

These phases are underpinned by a series of supporting processes. These processes are designed to address important associated factors that will build the confidence and capacity of individuals and create the enabling conditions for SLED. These processes are not a luxury add-on if time permits, they are fundamental to the successful implementation of the SLED process. The SLED framework is shown in figure 5.

Discovery ▶ **Direction** ▶ **Doing**

1.1 Preparing for SLED	2.1 Scoping opportunities	3.1 Supporting the poor
1.2 Learning about livelihoods	2.2 Turning visions into reality	3.2 Capacity building
1.3 Building consensus for change	2.3 Detailed planning for SLED action	3.3 Building an enabling environment
1.4 Building visions for livelihood development		3.4 Improving market access

Supporting Processes for SLED

Building confidence and appreciating strengths	Building partnerships for SLED
Establishing ownership of the process	Supporting people to have voice
Establishing systems for joint learning and feedback	Fostering leadership, innovation and enterprise skills

Figure 5. SLED framework

Within each of the SLED phases are a set of key steps, each with clearly defined objectives. These steps allow for considerable flexibility, and the implementing teams need to adapt them to the specific circumstances of the communities where they are working. However, the SLED facilitation teams will need to keep the overview of the general process in mind. The process of livelihood change is complex and it is easy to get "lost", particularly as the SLED approach aims to work at a range of levels – with individuals, common-interest groups and communities – all of whom may have different priorities. It is important to realise that different community contexts may result in the development of different objectives and activities.

C. Guidance for implementing the SLED process

The guidance in this section is designed to illustrate all of the elements of the SLED approach and the relationships between them. It can act as a checklist and planning tool for field teams and an aid when they need to reflect on the overall process.

The way that development practitioners approach SLED is as important as the approach itself. In all cases where the approach has been tested, the field teams involved have emphasised the importance of approaching SLED with the right "attitude". The key elements that practitioners have identified in this "attitude" are listed in box 5.

Box 5. Key attitudes needed for facilitating SLED

People can do – recognising that people are able to plan and act for themselves if they are given the space, the confidence and the means to do so.

Confidence, common sense and flexibility – nothing in the SLED approach can be applied as a "blueprint". While recognising the objectives of SLED, project teams should always look to adapt what they do so that is appropriate to the resources and capacity available, the local social and cultural context and the priorities and objectives that emerge from local people.

Be a facilitator – in order to be genuinely people-centred in their approach, SLED teams have to become facilitators who support others to plan and act for themselves, providing advice, new techniques and a positive example and support where it is needed. But they should not "take over" the process or try to take control of the outcomes. They must be willing to let people make decisions for themselves.

"Self-critical awareness" – the capacity to constantly reassess what you do as a practitioner and analyse your own strengths and weaknesses in order to improve.

Openness – to new ideas, to the ideas of others, and to criticism of what you do; also willingness to share your knowledge and experience with others.

Listening – implementing SLED involves being constantly open to new learning and this means being a good listener.

Patience – building relationships with people and working with them to understand their livelihoods and develop their visions takes time and resources and should be treated as a continual process – not a one off event.

Recognising the limits of knowledge – accepting that you don't know everything and can't know everything is an important step in approaching the complexity of other people's livelihoods.

Photo: Fishers, Tamil Nadu, India (© J Tamelander/IUCN)

1. DISCOVERY

1.1 Preparing for SLED

1.2 Learning about livelihoods

1.3 Building consensus for change

1.4 Building visions for livelihood development
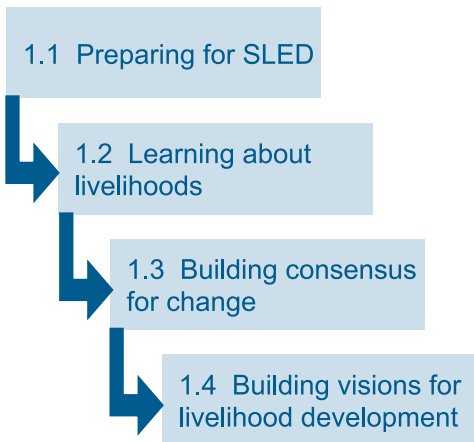
The SLED process presents a complex challenge for those who facilitate it, and the support of the local government and service providers is essential if concrete and sustainable results are to be achieved. In **preparing for SLED** the practitioner has to ensure that key stakeholders in the community, within local government as well as among local NGOs and local service providers are aware of the process, understand its purpose, and are willing to participate and respond to its outputs. Communication with the community will be a key challenge throughout the SLED process. Understanding how people access and use information will help the SLED team to prepare their strategies for informing and influencing as they work through the SLED process.

Learning about livelihoods and helping resource users to analyse and understand the dynamic relationships that they have with coastal ecosystems is a critical component in building their capacity to make environmentally responsible livelihood choices for the future. This learning will also mean that people are in a much stronger position to engage with conservation and management initiatives as they will not only understand the implications of resource degradation, but also the possible impacts (positive and negative) of proposed conservation and management measures. This process of learning about livelihoods should focus on building people's own capacity to continually assess what they do and how it affects the environment.

A key step in any process of change management is developing a shared understanding of the need for change and **building consensus for change**. Without such consensus it will be difficult to generate the energy and enthusiasm that is required for people to take ownership of the SLED process. It is also important to inform and influence government and NGO workers regarding the needs for livelihood change – and the roles that they can play in facilitating that change.

The process of visioning provides the reference point around which people can assess options and make the choices that will most effectively contribute to their livelihood development. Visioning helps people to think, not immediately about what they would like to **do** in the future but about the conditions that they would like their future actions to create. **Building visions** first of all with groups of people with common interests and common characteristics creates an environment where people have the confidence to participate and can reflect on both their individual, and the group's, strengths. Working in small peer groups can also build recognition that people have visions in common and can help to create confidence and build capacity to articulate ideas and aspirations. This, in turn, can play an important role in enabling people to participate effectively in larger meetings, such as community meetings.

Discovery Phase outcomes

The desired outcomes of the Discovery Phase can be defined as individuals, groups and communities who have:

• Reflected on, and understood the nature of their livelihoods and their dependence on natural coastal resources;

• Identified and appreciated their strengths and potential;

• Developed visions of their desired future conditions that are appropriate to different individuals, groups and communities;

• Developed the confidence to articulate their potential and their aspirations for the future.

1.1. Preparing for SLED

The quality of the process undertaken for SLED is critical to its success. This process requires flexibility from the field-team and confidence to shape their approach to suit their logistical constraints and the local context. Careful preparation is an essential first step for ensuring this quality.

- Select the field team
- Identify key information relating to the community and validate with community
- Undertake activity planning
- Prepare SLED partners for the process.

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

- SLED Approach
- Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
- Appreciative Inquiry
- Information assessment and review
- Project planning
- Report writing
- Meeting facilitation
- Informing and influencing
- Systematic analysis of information.

Process overview

The process of preparing the team and partners for the SLED process involves the stages shown in the flow chart below.

1.1.1 Preparing the SLED team	1.1.2 Understanding information access	1.1.3 Secondary information review & validation	1.1.4 Planning SLED work	1.1.5 Preparing Partners
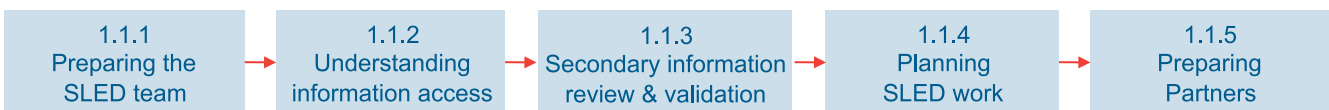
Process guidance

1.1.1. Preparing the SLED team

Basic skills and knowledge: The field teams should have a good appreciation of the two key elements that underpin SLED – Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and Appreciative Inquiry. Beyond this, they should be confident in explaining the objectives of the work and in using the fieldwork tools (table 1). As the SLED process progresses the field teams should learn along with the community and take time to reflect on the process that they are undertaking.

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

Changing attitudes to development

"SLED is as much about changing behaviour in the facilitator as it is changing behaviour in the target audience".

– CARESS, SLED field level implementer, Lakshadweep Islands, India

Taking a holistic approach to livelihood change

"In the SLED evaluation work people revealed that the impacts of the SLED process were not limited to income generation but it extended to the other areas such as building social harmony, team work, confidence and trust."

– CHF, SLED field level implementer, Bar Reef, Sri Lanka

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE	DISCOVERY	DIRECTION	DOING	SUPPORTING PROCESSES
Table 1. Skill and knowledge requirements for SLED				
Sustainable Livelihoods Approach		++	++	++
Appreciative Inquiry	++	++	++	++
Participatory approaches	++	++	++	++
Community mobilisation	++	++	++	++
Using informing and influencing frameworks	++	++	++	x
Meeting facilitation	++	++	++	++
Process planning	++	++	++	++
Market analysis	x	+	x	x
Risk assessment	x	+	x	x
Environmental impact assessment	x	+	x	x
Log-frame planning	x	+	x	x
Project management	++	++	++	++

(++ essential for the SLED team; x essential for the process)

As the SLED teams take participants through the process there are particular skills that they themselves may not have, such as market analysis or risk assessment. It is important for the SLED teams to identify such skill deficits and form partnerships with other service providers who have the required skills.

The teams should be aware that the following factors are useful in supporting an effective SLED implementation:

- **Accessible SLED materials** – translating the SLED materials for partners and the community into a local language will help with building a solid understanding;

- **Having a balanced team** – in selecting the field team it important to ensure an equal gender balance. Having women in the field team often makes engagement with women in the community more effective and thus strengthens the team's working relationship with all members of the community;

- **Continuous learning** – throughout the fieldwork process the teams should continually reflect both on their findings and on the process that they have undertaken. Lessons learnt from this constant reflection should then be used to refine and adapt the SLED process.

1.1.2. Understanding information access

A key element in any process of community engagement is the way in which the field team shares information with the community. People will access and utilise information in many different ways, and it is therefore important for the field team to understand the most effective ways to communicate with the community.

As the first step in this process, the SLED team should try to understand what information is currently available, who has access to it, how this is delivered and how people use this to make their choices. The SLED team should talk with community leaders and a cross-section of people to build this picture. Table 2 provides a basic structure for this exercise.

Table 2. Information mapping matrix					
SUBJECT OF INFORMATION	**INFORMATION SOURCE**	**INFORMATION USERS**	**INFORMATION FORM**	**ACTUAL EFFECT OF INFORMATION**	**OTHER COMMENTS**
What aspect of the person's livelihood strategy is this related to?	Who produces the information e.g., NGO (say who), friends and family, government?	Who uses or has access to this information?	Is this written down, verbal, on the radio, internet etc.?	Is the information used effectively – do people understand it, ignore it?	
e.g., Status of the coastal and marine ecosystems	e.g., Government research department	e.g., Literate people, local teachers, local administrators	e.g., Academic paper	e.g., Researcher access – fishermen don't understand or have access, and so don't respond	e.g., Information is not disseminated to the resource users in a way that is accessible to them
e.g., New livelihood opportunities	e.g., Family and friends; Observing others in the community; TV programmes; Radio		e.g., Verbal information	e.g., Often information is incomplete and not based on evidence	e.g., Information often leads to people making choices for new livelihood opportunities based on what they see others doing rather than on an assessment of their own skills and potential, and the real risks associated with the change

Throughout the SLED process, the SLED team will be required to build on this understanding to inform and influence people within the community. For example: preparing partners for the SLED process (step 1.1.5.); developing strategies to build consensus for change (step 1.3.2.); publicising opportunities (step 2.1.3.); establishing systems for joint learning and feedback (step 4.4.); and building partnerships with supporting agencies (step 4.5.).

1.1.3. Secondary information review and validation

Secondary information is valuable for improving the field team's understanding of the community with which they are working. Through taking that information back to the community for validation, the field team will be able to show the community the types of information that exist, giving them an early opportunity to express their opinions and allowing them to see that the field team respects their opinions.

The field team should collect available information regarding the community from sources such as public records, academic studies and past development projects. They should talk with a diverse range of people who have worked on past projects in the community (government officials, local business people, researchers and NGOs) to learn about past experiences; they should use this exercise as an opportunity to visit the offices of the agencies or organisations that play a role in the area. This can be a useful first step in introducing the SLED approach to these agencies and perhaps engaging with them as partners in the process.

The field teams should also prepare a meeting with key stakeholders in the community to validate the secondary information gathered. In synthesising the information, the teams should work with key informers to identify information regarding:

- Livelihood diversity

- Community resources

- The local environment

- Local history

- Agencies and organisations

- Key informants in the community (community leaders, CBO leaders etc.).

Organisations, agencies and institutions that are likely to affect the implementation of SLED include:

- NGOS working in the area

- CBOs that are active and have a track record of effective work

- Government departments or agencies

- Other projects or programmes

- Business leaders

- Educational and research institutions

- Informal or traditional institutions.

1.1.4. Planning the SLED work

Each phase of the implementation of SLED is made up of related steps that have to be carefully planned to ensure that they complement each other, that the approach used is consistent and that the sequencing is appropriate. Wherever possible, the team should engage with potential partners and community representatives in this process.

The fieldwork to complete each step will require careful planning. The field teams should take time to plan their work using the planning structure shown in table 3.

Table 3. Planning structure for SLED
Step objective – As defined by the objectives listed for the different SLED steps.
1. Community context – assessment of the current state of knowledge, attitudes and activities underway that may contribute or inhibit the way in which the step objective is achieved. This assessment should describe the following: • Strengths – factors that are contributing to the step objectives (e.g., previous work done, an existing socio-economic monitoring system, community willingness to participate);   • Weaknesses – factors that will make achieving the step objectives more difficult (e.g., a lack of information, a dependency culture);   • Opportunities – factors that the team could utilise to help them to achieve the objective (e.g., opportunities for collaboration, existing village structures);   • Threats – factors that could make achieving the step objectives more difficult (e.g., a lack of enforcement for coastal and marine ecosystem management, bad experiences with past development projects).
2. Outline of how SLED supporting processes will be integrated into the activities.
3. Skill requirements of the facilitation team: • Outline training materials and capacity-building process.
4. A plan of action: • Method   • Approach   • Time frame and milestones   • Resources.
5. Objectively verifiable indicators – consider how you and the community will know when you have achieved the objective.

1.1.5. Preparing partners

The field teams will need to identify agencies and institutions that should play a role in the SLED process (including government agencies and service providers). This is a key element in the process of building linkages between the community and key service providers.

In doing this, they will need to assess which groups are likely to be required to respond to the demand for services and support generated by the process (see box 6), and which groups will be needed to enable the implementation of the process itself. Once prospective partners have been identified, the teams should develop a strategy for informing and influencing them to support the SLED process.

Based on this strategy the field team should plan how they will present the SLED objectives and process to potential partners. The field team should meet with the potential partners to present the SLED objectives, and process and discuss their potential role in SLED. The field team should decide:

- Which partners should directly participate in the activity;

- Which partner will just need to be informed of the progress of the process;

- What further work they will need to undertake to prepare the partners for engaging in the SLED process.

The teams should record their assessments of the partners who have been selected by using the table 4.

Box 6. Example of a partner skills and capacity assessment matrix

	Capacity	Resources	Time	Willingness
CHF	H	M	H	H
SFCS	H	M	M	H
HFCS	M	L	M	H
CL1	H	M	L	M
CL2	M	L	H	M
CRMP	M	H	L	H

The matrix was developed by the Sri Lankan SLED field team to assess the viability of different partners using a range of ranked variables. This provides a quick and systematic way of assessing potential SLED partners [L (low), M (Medium), H (High)].

Table 4. Partner assessment				
POTENTIAL PARTNERS FOR SLED	**DESCRIBE CURRENT ROLES**	**WHY THEY HAVE BEEN SELECTED FOR THE SLED PROCESS - what role do they have to play in the SLED process**	**WHAT ARE THEIR PRINCIPLE INTERESTS REGARDING THE PROCESS - why they may be interested (incentives) or opposed to the process**	**WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED TO INFLUENCE THEM TO PARTICIPATE IN SLED AND WHAT IS THE BEST WAY TO DELIVER IT**
Describe the groups / individuals who can assist	What services do these groups offer now e.g., licencing, health care, business support etc.	Assess the services that they can provide either for the facilitation team or directly to the community in the context of SLED	e.g., time constraints, fear of new methods, interested in collaboration etc.	e.g., details of the SLED process given through: training programmes
				SLED information sheets
				Trips to the community to see the process

1.2. Learning about livelihoods

1.2.1
Community context & resources

1.2.5
Identifying service providers & enablers

1.2.2
Understanding livelihoods & diversity

1.2.4
Identifying common interest groups

1.2.3
Factors that help or inhibit change
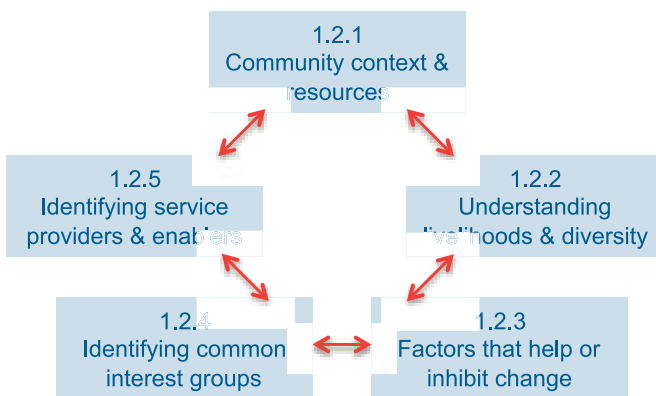
Only by understanding people's livelihoods, and the differences between the livelihoods of different groups, can we see how people are likely to respond to new "opportunities" and actually use them to create positive change. This understanding must go beyond an aggregated view of a community so that it reflects the diversity of livelihoods **within** a community. It must also include considerations of people's relationships with the resource – relationships that may well extend beyond simple economic ties.

People's livelihoods are complex and in any community there will be different types of people who have different types of livelihood strategy. Often this diversity of livelihoods is ignored in community-level planning. The SLED process is designed to ensure that the diverse households and individuals, and particularly the poor and more vulnerable groups, have the opportunity to participate and that their livelihoods are properly taken into consideration.

The SLA will be a key point of reference for the facilitation team when they are learning about livelihoods, and will help them to explore the many different aspects of people's livelihoods. Recognising and building on the positive capacities and strengths of people is at the centre of the SLED process, and using participatory approaches that combine the SLA with Appreciative Inquiry will enable SLED facilitators to focus on people's strengths and what they do well.

Box 7. Key principles for learning about livelihoods

- Respect other people's views and attitudes;

- Approach this exercise as a process of joint learning with the community;

- Be realistic about what we can know – we cannot learn everything about people's livelihoods;

- Recognise that learning is a continuous process and cannot be limited to a one-off "study" – seek ways of facilitating continuous learning;

- Use methods to communicate with people that will help them to learn with you – but remember that the communication (not the method) is what is important;

- Avoid raising expectations during the learning process – focus on what people already do as well as their strengths, capabilities and capacities (not on what you can do for them);

- Learning about livelihoods takes time – do not rush.

Objectives:

1. To learn with the community about:

   • What people have and what people do;

   • Livelihoods and change;

   • The factors that help or inhibit changes;

   • Relationships with the marine environment;

   • Key service providers and enablers;

   • The diversity of livelihoods within the community;

2. To identify groups of people who have common interests for livelihood change.

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

1. Participatory field tools:

   • Resource maps

   • Time lines

   • Venn diagrams

   • Transect walks.

2. Scoping the factors that help or inhibit change.

3. Informing and influencing strategies.

4. Livelihood diversity matrix.

1.2.1. Community context and resources

The teams should first develop a broad understanding of the background of the community, an overview of key changes, the resources available and how they are used, and the institutional structure of the community. Teams should:

1. Identify and establish a reference group of community members who they consider to be representative of the diversity of different people (based on their discussions and validation of secondary information component 1.1.3).

2. Working with this group they should present the information that they have, and work towards developing a profile of the community that includes:

    • A general description of the village;

    • Historical development of the village – including the impacts of key changes in people's livelihoods;

    • Village resources – including an understanding of the access available to different groups;

    • Village institutions – including services delivered and relationships with the community;

    • An analysis of livelihood diversity – using a household diversity matrix;

    • Potential common interest groups;

    • Key community strengths.

3. Where information regarding specific elements of the community profile is missing from the secondary information, the field team should use appropriate participatory tools to fill in the gaps (e.g., Venn diagrams, timelines, resource maps etc.).

4. Once the assessment has been undertaken, the team should validate the information with the community members and ensure that it is available to all.

1.2.2. Understanding livelihoods and livelihood diversity

In order to generate a deeper understanding of livelihoods, it is especially important for the team to talk to a diverse range of different households and individuals that "represent" groups with distinct characteristics. The teams should not restrict themselves to those people who are obviously linked to coastal ecosystems (fishermen, scuba divers, reef gleaners etc.) as they may find very significant, but indirect, linkages with coastal ecosystems as they explore different people's livelihoods. Indeed, particular attention needs to be paid to identifying poorer and more vulnerable groups in the community, such as women, the aged, the disabled or people belonging to marginalised social, ethnic or caste groups.

In this process of learning with people, it is important that the teams focus on what strengths people have and what they can do. Likewise, teams must treat this exercise as one of "joint learning"; however, this should not be used as an extractive exercise and households should benefit from the work.

To implement this exploration of livelihoods and livelihood diversity the teams should:

1. Organise and conduct a series of transect walks to observe the different groups of people within the community. As the teams learn more about the diversity of people in the community they should make records of the groups with which they should talk.

2. Following this process, the teams should arrange a series of household interviews and use their knowledge of the SLA to explore issues such as:

    • The situation of the household or individual;

    • The assets they make use of, being as specific as possible about what assets are referred to (not just human, social, physical etc.);

    • The relationships they have with different service providers and enablers;

    • Key changes or events that have occurred;

- The key factors that helped or inhibited them in the change process;

- The sort of livelihood outcomes they currently experience;

- The livelihood outcomes to which they aspire;

- Keep attention focused on the household or individual and the events they have experienced (not on what else is going on around them).

3. The information from the household interviews should be used to add to the community profile, and summarised in a livelihood diversity matrix. Table 5 provides an example of how this matrix should be structured.

Table 5. Example of a livelihood diversity matrix						
HOUSEHOLD/ GROUPS	LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES	CHANGES/ VULNERABILITY/ CHALLENGES	RESPONSE TO CHANGES	FACTORS THAT HAVE HELPED OR INHIBIT THEM	ASPIRATIONS	PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITIES
e.g., Full-time long-line fishing households	e.g., Long-line fishing Fishing labour Fish vending Some fish processing Small home gardens Children helping parents (no school)	e.g., Storm destroyed fishing boat and gear	e.g., Worked hard as a labourer and focussed on fish processing Saved up money to develop fish processing business	e.g., Friends provided support immediately after Government regulations on fish processing difficult to understand Local money lender provided loan Very driven man confident in his ability Literacy	e.g., Would like children to get education Would like to enter the processing business	e.g., If access is available would like to supply fish for export Sees the local hotels as an opportunity

1.2.3. Factors that help or inhibit change

Using the information from the household surveys, the teams should systematically analyse and record the factors that help or inhibit livelihood change. This will provide the field teams with information about past experience in livelihood change, which will be important later when participants begin to consider options for the future.

1. Field teams should analyse the fieldwork findings from the secondary information review and household interviews.

2. Use the structure provided below, and for each aspect of the livelihoods framework:

   (a) Look through the information that has been generated, and identify any factors that have been linked to changes in the community or were identified in the work as being important in people's livelihoods;

   (b) Focus on the different pull-and-push factors causing change and the constraints to future change by considering:

      (i) How the different factors influence the household's ability to change their activities;

      (ii) Who, or what type of household, is affected by these factors; and

      (iii) The types of response that could support those positive factors or address the negative factors.

Table 6. Format for identifying influencing factors			
FACTORS RELATED TO LIVELIHOOD COMPONENTS	**HOW DOES IT INFLUENCE THE HOUSEHOLD'S ABILITY TO CHANGE THEIR ACTIVITIES (PUSH/ PULL/CONSTRAINT)?**	**WHAT TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD IS AFFECTED?**	**IDEAS FOR ACTIONS TO SUPPORT POSITIVE INFLUENCES AND ADDRESS NEGATIVE INFLUENCES**
Use the livelihoods framework to list each of the components (e.g., personal characteristics, assets, service providers, influencing factors etc.)	With respect to each of the factors consider their influence on the change	Consider the diversity of households in the community; are single households affected, groups or the whole community?	Identify key positive and negative factors that can be influenced and develop specific actions to tackle these
e.g., Lack of technical skills	e.g., CONSTRAINT / PUSH - lack of technical skills constrains opportunities to find new work, and forces people to take up low-skilled labouring jobs	e.g., Very poor, poor households	e.g., Consider options for targeted vocational training for the very poor

On completion of the assessment the field teams should validate this analysis with the community.

1.2.4. Identifying common interest groups

"Common interest groups" may be defined by: (a) common characteristics – for example, poor elderly widows, disabled people or female heads of household may have certain common characteristics and concerns that could bring them together as a group; or (b) involvement in common activities – smallholders engaged in cultivation of particular types of crops on a particular type of land might have many things in common. Their role is to provide a mechanism for allowing participation by a broad range of people in SLED as well as an environment within which people with common interests can explore their strengths and visions for the future. The groups are not expected to form units of operation for the economic activities that may be identified in the SLED process, although in some cases this may occur.

The field teams should use table 7 to identify the common-interest groups.

Table 7. Format for identifying common interests		
KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS TARGETED	**WHY HAVE THEY BEEN SELECTED FOR THE SLED PROCESS**	**WHAT ARE THEIR PRINCIPLE INTERESTS REGARDING THE PROCESS – why they may be interested (incentives) or opposed to the process**
e.g., Youth	They will be entering the job market soon and without support their options are limited. They may increase pressure on the coastal ecosystems	How this process can help them
e.g., Women fish traders	They rely on a sustainable source of fish from coastal areas	They are not used to participating in such processes
	They benefit from reef gleaning.	They don't have time to participate
		Women may be restricted from this type of process

1.2.5. Identifying service providers and enablers

The way institutions function (or **fail** to function) will become increasingly important as SLED groups and the community move from the Discovery Phase to the Direction and Doing Phases. In order to help to establish an "enabling" environment, SLED facilitators need to understand which of the existing institutions can play an effective and supportive role. It will be equally important to understand those institutions that may constitute barriers to positive change and which either need reforming or to be by-passed in some way.

People's livelihoods are strongly affected by the organisations and institutions operating in the communities and areas where they live. In the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework discussed in the introduction, these organisations and institutions are divided into "enablers", who can be thought of as those who establish the "rules", and "service providers" (see figure 6). However, in reality, the dividing lines between the categories are often vague, especially where there are informal or traditional institutions that have important and complex roles but which are not well defined or documented. Understanding how these organisations and institutions work (how they are organised), what they are supposed do (their formal or recognised roles and responsibilities), what they **actually** do, how they influence people's livelihoods and who in the community participates in them (and why) will play a key role in understanding the livelihoods of different groups of people.

Institutions are often complex, and the way that they function in a community will often be linked with institutional arrangements on a wider level – the local area, the region and even the country as a whole. Many of these institutions will become particularly important as the SLED process develops and SLED facilitators work on creating an "enabling" environment for livelihood change. However, at the beginning of the process, the first step is to identify those organisations and institutions that operate locally and are recognised as having an active role in the community.

The reporting format shown in table 8 provides a simple framework for thinking through the key aspects of local institutions that need to be understood as they are likely to **directly** affect people's livelihoods. Some of the information required to complete this matrix can be drawn from the initial secondary data review, but the household interviews will be particularly important to identifying informal institutions as well as the real functions of organisations and institutions from the point of view of people in the community. This is important because considerable differences will often be encountered between what institutions are **supposed** to do – their official purpose – and what they **actually** do in practice. Often these differences will provide important clues regarding the way power is distributed within the community as well as the factors that include or exclude different community groups from participation in these institutions or the benefits that they generate.
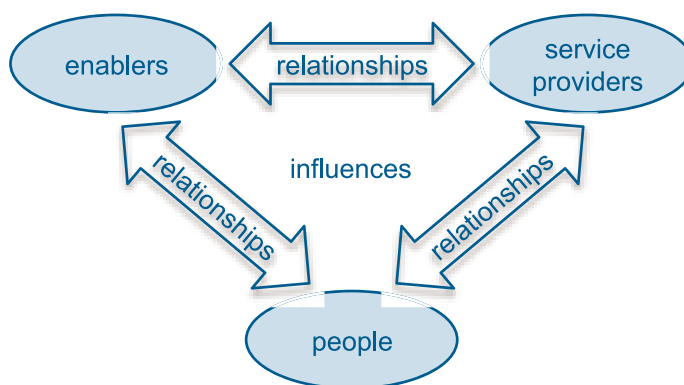
Figure 6. The relationships between people, enablers and service providers

Often, the **relationships** between institutions and different groups in the community (figure 6) are as important as the internal structure and functioning of institutions or organisations. In turn, these relationships will often be influenced by factors such as power, politics, local culture, market arrangements and differences in language (see the diagrammatic representation of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework in figure 4). For example, a local NGO or government department may claim to work for the good of the whole community but, in practice, may only serve the interests of a particular group for political reasons, and/or because they are related in some way to the people in charge, and/or because they speak the same language as the administrators whereas others in the community do not. Therefore, particular attention should be paid to the way these relationships work and who is affected by them.

Like other features of people's livelihoods, the local institutional environment is dynamic and the information gathered during this initial phase of SLED on institutions and organisations will need to be constantly updated and reviewed during the process. In some cases, it may be difficult to fully understand these local institutions right at the beginning of the SLED teams' work, and it may take time and greater familiarity with the community before everything listed in the table 8 can be fully understood. This is particularly the case where sensitive issues concerning local politics or power structures are involved.

Table 8. Format for identifying service providers and enablers				
KEY INSTITUTIONS / ORGANISATIONS	**FORMAL ROLES & FUNCTIONS**	**ACTUAL ROLES & FUNCTIONS**	**MEMBERSHIP & PARTICIPATION**	**IMPACTS ON LIVELIHOODS**
The name of the institution or organisation	What is it supposed to do?	What does it actually do?	Who are the members?	How does it affect the livelihoods of different groups in the community?
	What is its mandate?	What do local people identify as its mandate?	Who participates in decision-making?	What relationships does it have with different groups in the community?
	Who establishes this?	How has this been established?	Why?	
	Is it an enabler or a service provider?	How does it "enable" people in their livelihoods?		
		What services does it provide?		
e.g., Village administration	To ensure the enforcement of laws and regulations	Selective enforcement of laws and regulations	Almost all members from the same local clan	Supportive for groups which are "allied" with village leadership
	To coordinate local level development	Ensures well-being of particular groups linked by kinship and/ or political grouping	Limited participation by village population	Generally neutral in relation to other groups
	To resolve conflicts	Effective mobilisation of resources for community infrastructure		Supports interests of own clan and wealthy groups in conflicts
e.g., Informal fishing caste leadership	To resolve conflicts within caste group	Same as formal roles but mostly internal conflict resolution	All members of the fishing caste	Very active in day-to-day life of fishers
	To promote the interests of the caste group	Role in fisheries management decisions in decline		Important social capital for fishers dealing with disputes and conflicts
	To make decisions on local fisheries management	Also protection of caste members from intimidation by others		Limited effectiveness in protecting caste interests v. other castes or groups
	To organise caste celebrations			Limited political influence
Etc.				

1.3. Building consensus for change

Helping people to explore the linkages between coastal ecosystems and their livelihoods provides key insights into incentives and disincentives for conserving them. Perceptions of the same events will often vary between individuals, groups and communities. These may or may not reflect scientific facts but they often form the basis for people's opinions, and understanding them is a key to developing a consensus around the need for change, and to understanding how people are likely to react to new scientific information and how they may respond to new policy or management decisions.

Conflicts between the people's perceptions and acknowledged scientific fact may arise when (a) the community either does not recognise a change in coastal ecosystems (such as coral bleaching, or new regulations) or (b) where people perceive the causes and impacts to be different to the accepted scientific "reality". In such cases, it may be necessary to develop awareness raising materials, hold events to inform and influence the community, or commission further research to clarify the situation.

Objectives:	*Key skills and knowledge requirements:*
• To build understanding of the changes in coastal ecosystems and their impacts on people's livelihoods; • To build on this understanding a consensus for change.	• Facilitation of group and community dialogue • Informing and influencing.

Process overview

1.3.1 Understanding perceptions natural resource change	→	1.3.2 Developing strategy to build consensus	→	1.3.3 Implementing activities to build consensus
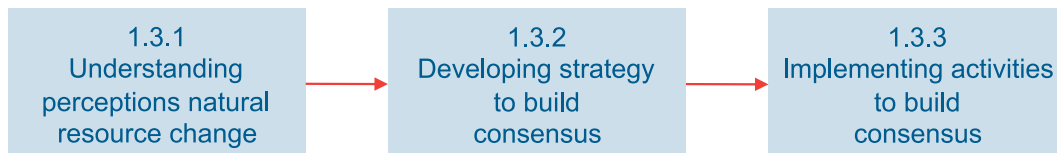
Process guidance

1.3.1. Understanding perceptions about coastal ecosystem status and use

The field teams should utilise a simple two-part research process to initiate a dialogue within the community that relates to the changes that are happening with coastal ecosystems and the impacts that this has on their livelihoods. The process is based on discussions with different stakeholders/interest groups (as identified in 1.2.2 and 1.2.4) who are representative of the diversity of people within the community, and on validating that information with a reference group of key stakeholders.

- Part 1: The process of discussions with different coastal and marine ecosystem stakeholder groups requires SLED teams to focus on the changes that have occurred both in the community and in coastal ecosystems. Using a semi-structured interview format, the teams will discuss the following questions:

  (a) Changes that have occurred;

  (b) What effect have the changes had, either on coastal and marine ecosystems (in the case of changes to community or wider environment) or on people's livelihoods (in the case of direct changes to coastal and marine ecosystems)?

  (c) Who has been affected by those changes?

  (d) How have people responded to those changes?

  (e) How have institutions or organisations responded to those changes?

  (f) Why have those changes taken place?

  (g) What effects have the changes had on people's attitudes and perceptions?

At this point, the field teams should collect stories and case studies (see annex for examples) to illustrate people's perceptions.

- Part 2: Following the discussions with individuals and small groups, the field teams should present back their understanding of the perceptions of the community to the reference group, identifying those perceptions that are specific to groups and those that are applicable to the community as a whole. This process will feed into a strategy for informing and influencing people within the community.

1.3.2. Developing a strategy to build consensus about change

The results of the perceptions survey (1.3.1) should be shared with the community and with different stakeholder groups within the community. Once this has been done, the SLED facilitation team needs to use its findings about people's perceptions, its understanding of people's livelihoods and how they may be affecting coastal and marine ecosystems, and existing scientific knowledge about the actual condition of those ecosystems, in order to decide what key changes in natural resource users' perceptions and attitudes to natural resource use are required. These changes can then become the objective of a **consensus-building strategy** to inform and influence people within the community about the need for change in relation to coastal and marine ecosystem use.

In setting this objective for their consensus-building strategy, the SLED team should bear in mind that changing perceptions and attitudes can be a long-term process. At this stage, participants in SLED from local communities will not have identified livelihood alternatives, and may still regard coastal and marine resources as an essential part of their livelihoods and thus be unwilling to recognise a need for change. However, where change is needed, this strategy will help the team to clearly identify whose attitudes need to change, how they need to change, and what measures are likely to bring about that change.

This strategy will need to be revisited and revised continually as participation in the SLED process itself will inevitably bring about significant changes in the attitudes of local people.

In developing the strategy, the field teams will need to use their understanding of different livelihood groups in the community to clearly identify different sets of perceptions associated with different groups, so that actions to bring about change can be targeted as specifically as possible. Each line of the matrix in table 9 should be completed for each of these distinct stakeholder groups.

Table 9. Elements of a consensus building strategy					
KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS	**RELATIONSHIP WITH COASTAL AND MARINE ECOSYSTEMS**	**PREVAILING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE REEF AND ATTITUDES FOR CHANGE**	**HOW DO THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES NEED TO CHANGE / BE ENFORCED**	**WHAT CAN WE DO TO HELP / ENCOURAGE THEM TO CHANGE?**	**WHAT IS THE BEST WAY (MEDIUM) TO ADDRESS THEIR NEEDS?**
e.g.,	e.g.,	e.g.,	e.g.,	e.g.,	e.g.,
Inshore line fishermen	They are direct resource users and are being affected by degraded coastal and marine ecosystems	Fishermen feel that breeding grounds need to be protected as from here they would repopulate other areas	Develop understanding of benefits of protection	Help them to explore the potential of closed areas	Hold meetings with them to discuss status of coastal and marine ecosystems
		Feel that most of the changes are due to migrant communities in neighbouring villages	Recognise the impacts that their own operations have and potential of collaboration	Demonstrate their potential to move away from fisheries	Demonstrate impacts of change to them
			Recognise opportunities away from fishing	Demonstrate areas where collaboration with neighbours has worked	Talk to their representatives about the SLED process

1.3.3. Implementing strategies to build consensus for change

In response to the consensus-building strategy the teams should initiate a series of activities that can assist the community in developing an understanding about their relationships with coastal ecosystems and in forming a consensus that change is required. Examples of such initiatives include:

- Children's and youth clubs, which provide a key group of stakeholders with activities to build their connection with the environment;

- Household monitoring books, provided to households to record the changes that they experience and the impacts on their livelihoods;

- Awareness-raising by engaging groups in activities designed to develop understanding and discussion about coastal and marine ecosystems;

- Engaging stakeholders (community members) in basic coastal and marine ecosystems monitoring tasks that can help them to identify changes as they occur in these ecosystems.

1.4. Building visions for livelihood development

Helping people to think about the situation in which they would like to be, in the future, should be the starting point of any process for livelihood development. Through developing, presenting and celebrating people's visions we are giving voice to their aspirations and hopes. People's visions for their livelihoods in the future will reflect not just their own personal aspirations for income enhancement or diversification, but also their wider livelihood priorities. This requires facilitation to encourage people to develop visions that are challenging, and based on people's strengths and past successes rather than on their problems and weaknesses, both for people and for the community as a whole.

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

Appreciating strengths through visioning

Within the community the visioning process has brought people together around their common visions. People belonging to different groups and even the poorest of the poor participated in the process with total involvement, sharing their vision, strengths they have and the support they require to make the vision a reality. It brings lot of energy into the people as many were feeling happy to share their visions in such a manner.

- PAD, SLED field level implementer, Gulf of Mannar, India

Photo: Puttalam lagoon, Sri Lanka (© J Tamelander/IUCN)

The process for visioning is based on three stages that are designed to give people the space and time to uncover their strengths, celebrate their successes and explore their visions for better livelihoods. This is a process that seeks to include the diversity that inevitably exists within communities by first working with individuals and households, then with smaller, "common-interest" groups and finally at the community level (figure 7). Each of the stages is briefly described in the subsections below.
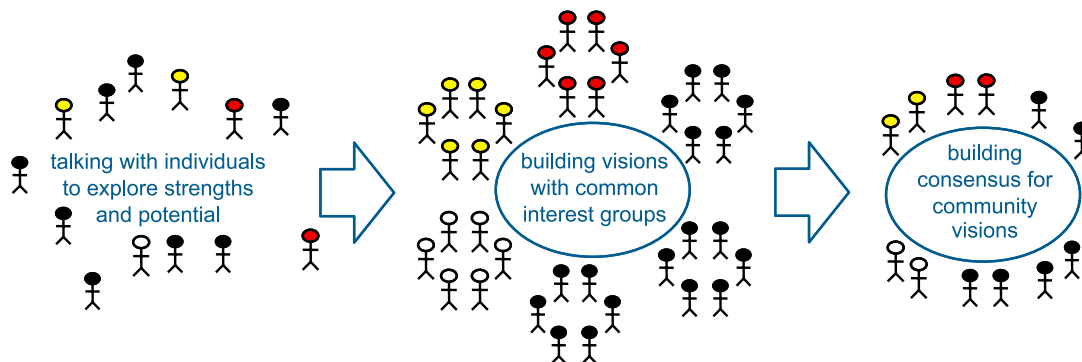
Figure 7. The SLED visioning process

Objectives:

- Work with the community to identify past successes, their strengths and potential;
- Build visions for livelihood development;
- Develop awareness and understanding across the community about livelihood diversity and different visions.

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

- Appreciative Inquiry
- Facilitation skills
- Use of Vision Trees to articulate visions (see figure 8).

Process overview
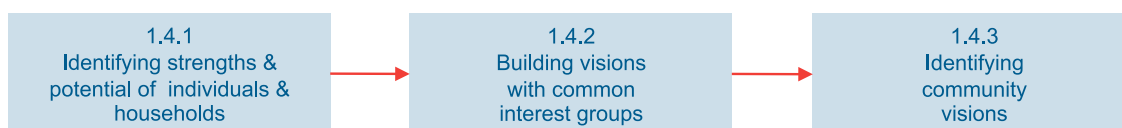
Process guidance

1.4.1. Identifying the strengths and potential of individuals and households

As part of the activities in steps 1.2. and 1.3. of SLED (learning about livelihoods, and building consensus for change), local people and outside facilitators undertake a process of "joint learning". The SLED team should explore with people how their livelihoods have evolved, their relationships with coastal ecosystems, and the diversity of livelihoods in their community. Through this process, the field team will help individuals and households to explore their own strengths and potential, and to appreciate what they already do and where they can get to.

From the process of learning about livelihood diversity within the community the field teams will be able to identify different groups of people who share common interests, and who should be represented in the initial visioning process.

1.4.2. Building visions with common interest groups

The SLED teams should work first with small "common interest groups" to help them to analyse their own strengths and past successes, and to develop visions of their own potential and aspirations that they can then present at the community level. There is no fixed number of groups that should be engaged in the SLED process. The field teams should determine this, with the community, to ensure that the diversity of people within the community is represented.

The common interest group visioning process should be based on the following three stages:

1. Uncovering strengths and potential

   • Facilitators encourage participants to recount a time in their life where they experienced success (e.g., a new job, business started, received an award etc), or a time where they felt particularly happy (birth of a child, marriage, festival etc.) At this stage it is important to give participants time to think (this is probably not a usual question to be asked).

   • As participants recount their stories, the facilitators (using their experience with SLA) should elicit:

      (i)   The individual strengths that have been shown;

      (ii) Friends' and neighbours' strengths;

      (iii) The conditions/factors that helped bring about their success.

   • As the strengths and supporting conditions are uncovered, the facilitators should clearly record them for all to see.

2. Identifying visions

   • Facilitators introduce the Vision Tree (figure 8) and describe how this represents what the participants have and how they would like to grow. Mention that:

      (i)   The roots are not only the strengths of the groups as well as the individuals within the groups, but also of the community around them (give an example);

      (ii) The trunk shows the conditions that can enable success;

      (iii) The fruit of the trees represent the visions that the groups have had – some of them are specific to their groups, and some require action by the whole community (give an example);

      (iv) The leaves on the tree are the contributions.
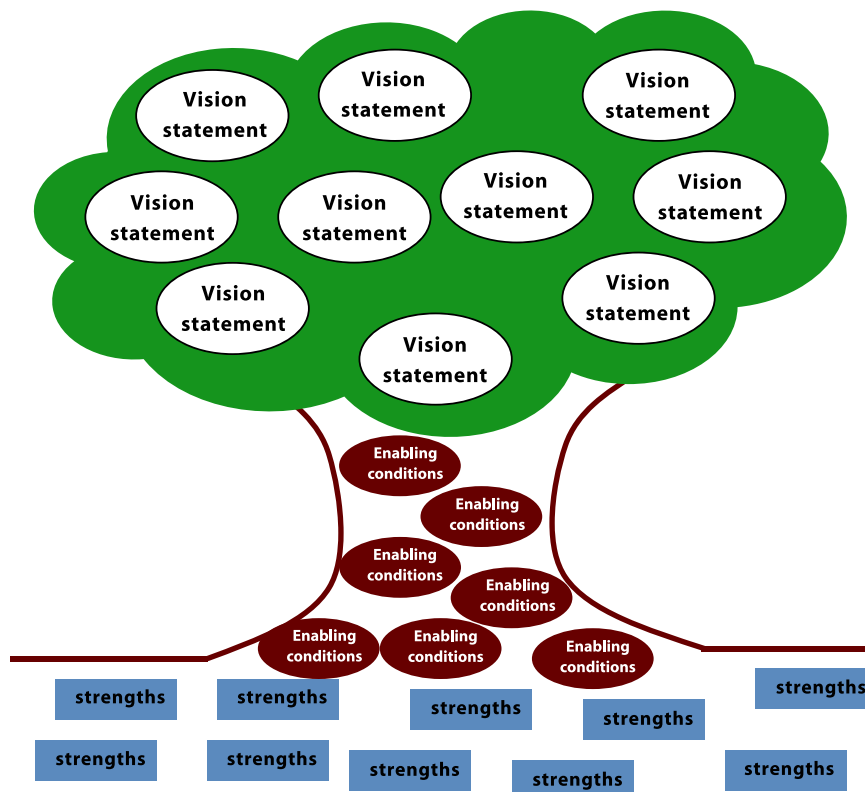
Figure 8. Illustration of a Vision Tree

   • Place the strengths that the group has demonstrated in the first stage on the roots of the Vision Tree. Highlight these strengths for the participants.

- Place the enabling conditions on the trunk of the tree and help the participants to reflect on their stories from the first stage.

- Ask the participants to think individually about their own or their group's best situation in the future (a good question to help people with this may be: "When you imagine yourself in the future, what is the best thing you see yourself doing?).

    (i)   Give participants time to think;

    (ii) Encourage the participants to think holistically about their livelihoods.

- Ask the participants to present their vision to the group either collectively or individually. The facilitator can help participants to think by:

    (i)   Prompting;

    (ii) Giving examples of yourself;

    (iii) As participants recount their visions put them on the tree.

- Once completed, the facilitator should help the participants to review the trees that they have created.

3. Identifying contributions towards visions

- Facilitators ask participants to identify how the individuals and the group could contribute to the visions. It may help to:

    (i)   Show people how their strengths and experience could contribute with examples;

    (ii) Give people time to discuss;

    (iii) Review their strengths and the conditions that lead to that success.

- Record the participants suggested contributions in a way that is accessible to them.

    Attach the participants' contributions to the Group Vision Tree (as leaves) as they suggest them. This can help them to visualise the leaves growing on the tree.

- To conclude the meeting stage, facilitators should ask the participants if they see any activities that they could do together to contribute to the visions with immediate effect. When groups identify actions (e.g., school yard clear-ups, beach clear-ups etc.) the facilitators should help where possible. This type of response can be a very effective way of building the confidence and enthusiasm required for the coming stages of SLED.

1.4.3. Identifying community visions

When the SLED facilitation team has undertaken visioning exercises with all of the common-interest groups, a meeting should be arranged for the groups to come together to identify "community visions". At the community vision meeting, the common interest groups will be able to participate with confidence and present to the wider community who they are, what they have (strengths and capacity), where they want to go and how they can contribute to this effort. This provides a much more positive and constructive position for identifying and building consensus around those elements of the visions that are common, and which either affect, or require action by, the community as a whole. These may include actions such as health care, access to education, sanitation facilities or local infrastructure, which is fundamental to creating the conditions for effective livelihood enhancement and diversification. Developing and sharing a vision of where a community wants to go as a whole will also stimulate community cohesion and momentum for positive change.

The SLED team should help the common interest groups to nominate representatives to present their vision at the community meeting. It may be necessary for the field teams to work with the group representatives to help them to prepare for the community level meeting. The structure and process for the meeting is outlined below.

1. Presenting the group visions

- After a brief introduction and a recap of the process so far, the facilitators should invite the group representatives in turn to explain their Vision Trees to the meeting. The group representatives should:

    (i) Introduce themselves;

    (ii) Explain the background of their group, including **why** they are a group and what they have in common;

    (iii) Perhaps tell one "story" from their discovery phase.

- Group representatives should then explain their Vision Tree by:

    (i) Talking about the strengths that the group has identified;

    (ii) Show how they are linked to different visions;

    (iv) Explain the visions, and make clear which ones are specific to the group and which they think are "community" visions;

    (v) Explain the contributions that the group feels it can make to achieving those visions

- Once the group representatives have finished explaining their Vision Trees, ask all the participants to take time to walk around and look at each other's Vision Trees and discuss them.

2. Building a community Vision Tree

- Explain that there is no question of community visions being "more important" than group- specific ones, but simply that they involve the community and cannot be achieved by groups alone. Reassure participants that their group-specific visions are as important as the "community" visions.

- Transfer the "community" visions identified by groups onto the community Vision Tree and consolidate those visions that are similar or the same.

- To start the process of planning the people at the meeting should be asked to reflect on the common visions and their strengths and identify ways that they can contribute to the achievement of those visions.

3. Identifying planning groups

- Facilitate agreement from representatives to participate in these planning groups during the next stage of the activity. Those who participate in the planning groups may or may not have participated in the common interest groups' visioning process. However, all should be aware of the visioning process and in agreement with the particular visions for which they are being asked to plan.

- Facilitators identify the process for engaging with groups to undertake the Direction Phase.

4. Identifying immediate action

- Facilitators should ask the people in the meeting if there is anything that they can do immediately. Where activities are suggested, the facilitators should get agreement as well as assist where required.

1.4.4. The next step

Beyond the visioning meetings the next step for the SLED team and the community will be to think in greater detail about how to achieve both community and specific-group visions, by using the people's own resources and by mobilising resources from outside where required. The important thing is that the people will now be in a better position to seek out the most appropriate support and not just accept whatever is on offer from donors, projects etc.

The outputs of this process (individual, group and community visions) will directly influence:

- Scoping potential opportunities (SLED step 2.1.) by providing guidance over the types of opportunities to assess; and

- Developing strategies to meet the visions (SLED step 2.2.).

1.5. Discovery Phase checklist

SLED teams should utilise the following checklist in table 10 when planning SLED activities and reviewing the progress that they are making. The checklist includes the key SLED steps in this phase and the supporting processes.

Table 10. Discovery Phase checklist	
PREPARING FOR SLED	
Activities	**Checklist**
Preparing the SLED team (Step 1.1)	Team understand SLA framework and Appreciative Inquiry;
	Team understand SLED process and objectives;
	Team have appropriate skills and knowledge for facilitating SLED;
	Where additional skills and knowledge are required, appropriate partners have been identified;
	SLED team have understanding about how information is accessed and used within the community;
	SLED information / publicity materials developed and accessible for team and potential participants;
	Team have appropriate gender mix;
	Processes established to enable continued learning and doing for team.
Review and validation of secondary information (Step 1.2)	Secondary information reviewed and synthesised;
	Key informants in the community identified;
	Secondary information presented to and validated with the key informants;
	Secondary information presented to other householders and groups where appropriate.
Planning SLED work (Step 1.3)	Discovery Phase components objectives clearly articulated;
	Process shaped to suit local context;
	SLED supporting processes integrated into work programme;
	Skill requirements for the team defined;
	SLED plans developed and discussed with key informants;
	Verifiable indicators for progress defined.
Preparing partners (Step 1.4)	Potential SLED partners identified;
	Partners roles and responsibilities defined;
	Team has met with partners and discussed the process and potential roles;
	Strategy for engagement developed and initiated;
	Partners prepared to participate in SLED process.
LEARNING ABOUT LIVELIHOODS	
Activities	Checklist – for SLED team and participants
Understanding community context and resources (Step 1.2.1)	Community reference group established;
	Community profile developed with reference group;
	Team has promoted a wider appreciation of village resources, institutions and strengths across the community.
Understanding livelihoods and livelihood diversity (Step 1.2.2)	Team conducted a series of transect walks to explore community diversity;
	Household interviews conducted with representative range of people;
	SLED team and participants understand who the different groups are within the community, what assets they have and their key strengths;
	Livelihood diversity matrix developed with reference group and findings are disseminated within community;
	Groups within the community have learnt about the livelihoods of others within the community.

Identifying factors that help or inhibit change (Step 1.2.3)	Team have identified the key changes and the causes of these changes in the community;
	Factors that have been linked to changes in the community identified;
	Factors related to different livelihood components identified;
	Implications of factors on different households assessed;
	Actions to support positive influences and address negative forces identified;
	Information validated with key stakeholders.
Identifying common interest groups (step 1.2.4)	Groups with common interests identified and engaged to participate in group visioning;
	Team discusses groups with potential members the role of the groups, the SLED approach and implementation plan.
Identifying service providers and enablers (step 1.2.5)	Key service providers currently within the community identified;
	Relationships between SLED participants and service providers assessed;
	Potential service providers identified and informed;
	Key enablers currently within the community identified;
	Relationships between SLED participants and enablers assessed;
	Potential enablers/providers identified and engaged.

BUILDING CONSENSUS FOR CHANGE

Activities	Checklist for SLED team and participants
Understanding perceptions about coastal and marine ecosystem status and use (step 1.3.1)	SLED team and community involved in dialogue about changes in r coastal and marine ecosystem status and access to benefits;
	Community perceptions about coastal and marine ecosystem status and use identified;
	General perceptions presented validated with key groups.
Developing a strategy to build consensus (step 1.3.2)	Consensus building strategy developed and shared widely with community and with groups where issues have been identified;
	Strategy developed to address immediate issues and provide longer term assurance.
Implementing strategies to build consensus (step 1.3.3)	Strategies for building consensus implemented by the team:
	Key groups engaged in consensus building activities;
	Consensus for change is being strengthened across the community.

BUILDING VISIONS FOR SLED

Activities	Checklist for SLED team and participants
Identifying strengths & potential of individuals and households (step 1.4.1)	Meetings with individuals and households to explore strengths, potential and their visions for future development;
	Individual and household strengths celebrated and reinforced.
Building visions with common interest groups (step 1.4.2)	Group strengths and visions identified;
	Groups identified how they can contribute to their visions;
	Groups have taken immediate actions to work towards visions;
	Visions celebrated.
Identifying community visions (step 1.4.3)	Common interest groups have presented themselves and their visions at community meeting;
	Common visions for the whole community identified;
	Where appropriate immediate actions to work towards community visions taken.

2. DIRECTION

2.1 Scoping opportunities

2.2 Turning visions into reality

2.3 Detailed planning for SLED action

Once people have articulated their visions for the future through the activities carried out in the Discovery Phase, the Direction Phase aims to facilitate their decisions on how they can turn those visions into reality. It is called the "Direction Phase" because it is, above all, about helping people to determine in what direction they should move in order to achieve their visions for future positive change. In the guidelines, this "direction" is expressed as a "pathway" as this has been found to be a particularly useful term that helps people to understand relatively easily some of the key components in "planning" for their future.

Much of the terminology normally used by planning professionals – "strategies", "objectives", "indicators" etc. – is often not clearly understood even by professionals themselves, so an effort is made here to use simple language that will allow non-specialists to: (a) easily visualise the process of having a vision (i.e., a desired future condition); (b) decide what different "pathways" there are that might help them to reach that vision; (c) select a pathway that is appropriate for them; and then (d) decide what different resources they will need and what issues they will face in moving along their selected pathway.

The Direction Phase can therefore be regarded, in part, as a planning process. However, it also recognises that planning is a complex activity that may be quite new for

Perceptions from the field:

The ongoing role of Discovery and the process of building consensus around direction

Our activities moved between the two phases of Discovery and Direction from time to time while we came across interesting pieces of information. Direction entailed bringing people together, not just physically for meetings, but more on platforms of consensus on directions that we could move in alongside the community in testing the SLED methodology. As facilitators of this process we had explained our roles and reiterated the need to recognise us as facilitators and not agents of development. It was also reiterated that without a cooperative make up, these efforts would not yield much more than a database of information.

- ANET, SLED field level implementer, Andaman Islands, India

many of the participants in the SLED process. The Direction Phase therefore involves a step-by-step process that helps people to understand what the crucial elements in planning for livelihood change are, and which makes sure that these crucial elements are in place **before** people start to implement new activities.

This measured approach is important. Often, in the past, efforts to promote "alternative livelihoods" have focused almost exclusively on encouraging people to rapidly identify "new income-generating activities" and start "producing" or earning money as quickly as possible. As any entrepreneur knows, this is only one part of a complex process that involves (a) looking carefully at the opportunities available for change, (b) assessing the relative merits and demerits of different options, (c) comparing these to the comparative advantages and strengths of the groups or individuals involved, (d) selecting the most appropriate strategy for change, (e) identifying priorities and (f) only then deciding on what exactly should be done to bring change about.

While this description of the process seems long and perhaps complicated, exactly how long it takes and how complicated it becomes will depend very much on the individuals involved and how broad their vision for future change might be. Where SLED facilitators are working with very poor groups, the expectations expressed in their visions for the future may be relatively limited and the vision itself may be quite "short-term", as poor people often have little practice in planning very far ahead. Thus the process of looking at alternative opportunities and thinking through their strategies for change may actually be quite simple. By contrast, local business people or better-off groups in the community may have more ambitious visions that require more careful analysis and thought as well as actual study in the field to assess the feasibility of different alternatives. Clearly, this may take longer.

Just as in the Discovery Phase, it is critical in this Direction Phase that facilitators encourage people to do the thinking themselves. As the process becomes more complex, it will also become more tempting for SLED facilitators

to step in and "do the thinking themselves". This can easily undermine the entire basis for the SLED process, which is to empower people to make their own choices. Sometimes, the facilitators may not agree with those choices; therefore, they need to provide advice and new ideas wherever appropriate. However, in the end, it is the people who are at the centre of the SLED process who have to make their choices for themselves, and it is during the Direction Phase that they should come to fully appreciate this and begin to take greater responsibility for their own futures. The component sequence is described in figure 9.
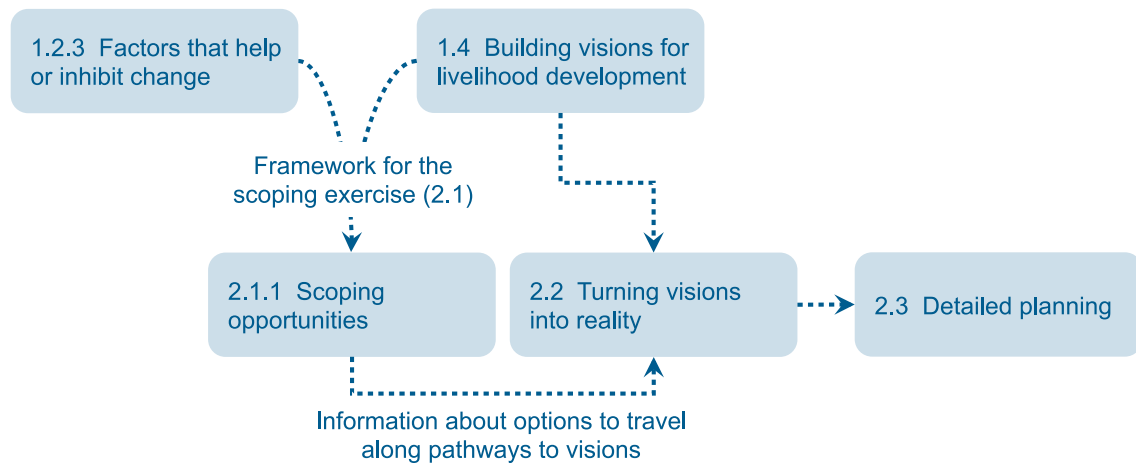
Figure 9. Sequencing of SLED steps with regard to developing strategies to achieve visions

Direction Phase outcomes

The desired outcomes of the Direction Phase can be broadly defined as individuals, groups and communities who have:

- Identified, and reflected on, available opportunities for achieving their visions of future change;

- The skills and capacity to identify new opportunities for livelihood change now and in the future;

- Analysed and selected appropriate pathways for reaching their visions based on their own strengths and the support that they know they can access;

- The skills and capacity to plan for livelihood change now and in the future;

- Initiated a process of more detailed planning of how they will pursue those strategies.

2.1. Scoping opportunities for livelihood development

For people to respond to an opportunity they must first recognise that it exists, and understand the potential impact and risks of that opportunity on their livelihoods. With this in mind, the first step in the Direction Phase is for the SLED facilitators, together with people in the communities and groups they are working with, to assess what range of opportunities are available that they might consider when they start thinking about how to achieve their visions. This is what planners would call a "scoping" exercise – a relatively rapid assessment of what is available and what the options might be. This will enable the SLED facilitation team to make informed suggestions when people start thinking through their pathways for future change. It will also provide the community as a whole with the knowledge they need to start making informed choices.

The SLED teams will need to consider opportunities both for livelihood enhancement and diversification, and for promoting the factors that help livelihood change and redressing the factors that inhibit livelihood change.

- Opportunities for livelihood enhancement and diversification:

  (i) Opportunities for enhancing existing livelihood strategies;

  (ii) Opportunities for new or improved employment;

  (iii) Opportunities for enterprise development.

- Opportunities for promoting the factors that help livelihood change, and redressing the factors that inhibit livelihood change, including:

  (i) Opportunities for improving influencing conditions (confidence, social norms, gender bias etc.)

  (ii) Opportunities for improving access to supporting services (education, health care, sanitation etc.)

The activities carried out as part of this "scoping" process should not be regarded as "one-off" exercises. People's livelihoods change with the world around them, so the opportunities that are open to them will also change; therefore, the people involved in SLED will need to be constantly reviewing the opportunities that are likely to be available to them in the future. This means that it is very important for this exercise to be carried out together with the individuals, groups and communities involved. SLED facilitation teams may want to do some preliminary scoping of their own, just to familiarise themselves with the overall context and help them to make more informed suggestions to the people with whom they are working. However, in the end, people in the communities, whether better-educated and more skilled or poor and with limited skills, will all need to be able to undertake similar scoping activities on their own account in the future. So they should be involved right from the start and, in most of the steps described below, it is suggested that SLED teams work together with "SLED groups", which might include individuals, common interest groups or communities as a whole.

Objectives:

- Work with the community to identify opportunities for addressing the factors that help or inhibit change;
- Work with the community to identify opportunities for livelihood enhancement and diversification;
- Share opportunities with the community;
- Build the capacity of the community to undertake this process on a long-term basis.

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

- Basic market analysis
- Informing and influencing.

Process overview

The flow chart below gives an overview the process for step 2.1.

2.1.1 Scoping opportunities	→	2.1.2 Validating opportunities	→	2.1.3 Publicising opportunities

Process guidance

2.1.1. Scoping opportunities

The SLED teams and groups should begin this process by reviewing and recording the following outputs from the Discovery Phase:

- The individual, group and community visions;

- The key factors that have helped or inhibited livelihood change.

With respect to the visions and factors that help or inhibit change they should assess:

- The different types of activities people already do in terms of:

  (i) Income generation;

  (ii) Non-income livelihood improvement.

- The different activities people do in similar communities nearby

- The changes that are happening with respect to the area as a whole and the wider economy (e.g., markets, industrial development, tourism development etc.).

As they identify potential opportunities, they should consider the basic characteristics of the opportunities and outline any possible areas of conflict (rules, regulations, social and cultural aspects).

They can use the following framework (which is illustrated with two working examples in tables 11a and 11b) to guide their systematic analysis of opportunities for direct income generation and enabling activities (i.e., those that will support livelihood change).

Table 11a. Framework systematic opportunity analysis – example 1				
VISION ELEMENT EXAMPLE 1: A COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE CAN READ AND WRITE				
The vision	**Factors that help or inhibit livelihood change**	**Potential opportunities**	**Description of opportunity**	**Considerations about suitability of opportunities**
A community which has the basic skills to enable them to take up new livelihood activities	Illiteracy	Education department offers adult literacy courses in a nearby college	The course operates in the evenings over the course of 3 months.	People unaware of the course
			The cost of the course is $——	Travel to nearby town takes a long time
				People not convinced of the benefits of literacy
				Funds exist but are difficult to access
				People lack confidence to re-enter education
				Women may be restricted
		People in a nearby community have set up and run their own literacy programme		They needed to have well educated and willing people within the community to train as teachers
				They need the facilities for the courses
				It is difficult to ensure the quality of the teaching

Table 11b. Framework systematic opportunity analysis – example 2				
VISION ELEMENT EXAMPLE 2: SCOPING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT				
The vision	Income generation	Potential opportunities	Description of opportunity	Considerations about suitability of opportunities
A village where we have access to employment all year round	Opportunities for year round small businesses is limited	Government has resources to provide small business grants	Grant programme existed for 5 years	People had bad experience with formal funding in the past
			There are examples of other successful applicants	Many people not members of formal associations
			Applicants need to be member of association	Many people lack administrative skills to complete applications
			People require banks accounts

Etc. | People lack confidence with formal credit schemes

Etc. |
		Increased demand for handicrafts in nearby town	Recent transport links to mainland have opened up market for handicrafts	Not sure how sustainable or extensive the demand is
			People in nearby villages have started to produce handicrafts	Unclear about the market chain
				People have skills that they could utilise but will need specific training
				People have had bad experiences with this type of scheme in the past

2.1.2. Validating opportunities

After developing these matrices and discussing the different opportunities in them, the SLED team and participants together should validate the information they have put into the matrices. This will often mean the agencies, institutions or businesses identified, and talking with key persons involved to make sure that the information is correct. The SLED facilitators and participants should then go through the different opportunities in order to identify any that may be in conflict with existing laws and regulations, social and cultural values, and sustainability of coastal and marine ecosystems. As an exercise in itself, this can help to disseminate the information on potential opportunities and may help the SLED participants to identify other opportunities that the SLED team has not yet recorded.

2.1.3. Publicising opportunities

The SLED team should undertake the development of an informing and influencing strategy to identify the best ways to inform the community about the different opportunities that are uncovered in this process. This may be done in many different ways, including:

- Community notice boards
- Village information centres
- Books
- Newsletters
- Newspaper reports
- Radio programmes – discussing opportunities
- Television programmes.

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

Bringing structure and support for putting ideas into action

"Ideas for development are many, but the practice of structuring them so as to bring about results has not been easy to come by. Planning and organisation by an outside agency does not always bring results, but if our ideas are given due consideration as realistic vision building into reality, an outside agency can do a good job given their exposure and resources."

- ANET, SLED field level implementer, Andaman Islands, India

2.2. Turning visions into reality

Where individuals, groups and communities have developed their visions, the process of identifying options for action to achieve those visions can be complex. The role of the SLED facilitators at this stage is to help the SLED participants to undertake a systematic process of assessing and selecting opportunities or options for action to achieve livelihood change. The options that are selected will later form the basis for more detailed planning (SLED step 2.3.). However, it is important that the facilitators encourage the participants not to think about the different options in too much detail. At this stage, the SLED facilitators will be helping SLED participants to think about strategies for achieving their visions, not the detailed activities that they will be carrying out.

Exactly what constitutes a strategy is difficult to define and will depend very much on what sort of vision different individuals, groups or communities have articulated. That is one the main reasons why the term "pathway" is used instead of "strategy". Strategy is often interpreted in very different ways and may not be understood by village-level participants. Wherever possible, the guidance below gives examples of different sorts of visions and the different pathways that could be identified to reach them.

Whatever the visions and the pathways that SLED participants are dealing with, it is very important at this stage to constantly remind participants to think about those areas of SLED that the community can drive themselves. Many, perhaps most, of the options that people identify will involve action by specific groups, or even individuals – this will be particularly so for the development of new economic or income-generating activities. However, when common interest groups identify group options for change, it does not necessarily mean that the options require action as a group. For example, most income-generating activities are better managed by individuals. The process of analysing and selecting opportunities will also identify those aspects where different service providers or external agencies may need to be involved in the detailed planning and delivery. Strong linkages and good relationships with the service providers will help this process.

In some cases, where visions are common across the community, the pathways to achieve them will require community action and may play an important part in creating the conditions that will allow livelihood change positively for everyone – for example, better access to education, health care and sanitation. In such cases, **community** strategies will need to be developed, and the engagement of key agencies, decision makers and service providers will be even more essential.

Objectives:

- To work with the individuals/groups/community and build their capacity to:
- Breakdown visions into component elements;
- Identify different pathways for achieving each of these elements in their visions;
- Identify the options that people have for moving along the pathways;
- Analyse and select options.

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

- Project appraisal
- Participatory planning
- Market analysis
- Environmental impact analysis
- Social impact analysis
- Facilitation.

Process overview

The flow chart below gives an overview the process for step 2.2.
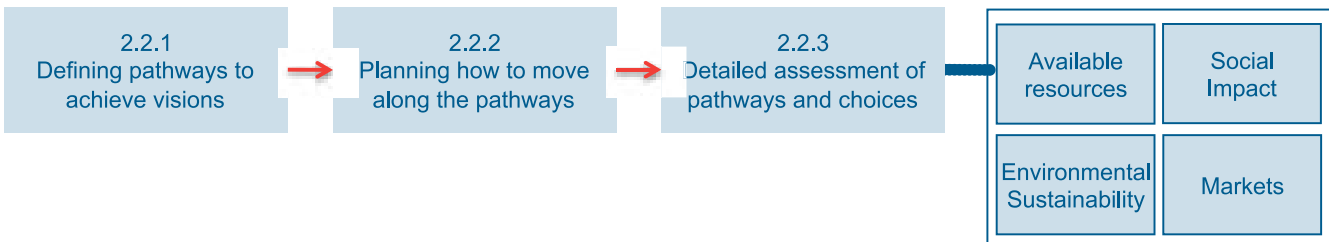
The process described below can be thought of as an accessible first stage in planning which is visualised as a journey to reach a vision. The questions asked aim to help the participants to think about what pathways they might take to reach their visions as well as how to analyse the relative advantages and disadvantages of different pathways. This should help the participants to think of the planning process as a series of challenges that they will be familiar with, and not as a new or unfamiliar task with a "difficult" name like "planning".

Process guidance

2.2.1. Defining the pathways to achieve the visions

Working with the individuals, groups or community representatives the first task in this step will be to restate the SLED vision – which, in terms of the vision tree, will be one of the leaves. This represents one element of the participants' livelihoods, so this is a process that will need to be undertaken for each of the visions on the tree.

The basic steps in selection options for action include:

1. Asking participants to describe "what they would see when they arrived in a community where their vision was a reality". This helps participants to break down their visions into more manageable components. Each component of the vision can be thought of as the **destination** of a pathway.

2. Asking the participants to consider the different pathways they could take to reach this destination. Encourage them to think about the opportunities that they have scoped (SLED step 2.1.), as these will inform them of the options for the different routes to reach a particular destination. For example, if a component of their vision is "the achievement of complete literacy in the village", they might identify the following pathways:

   - Setting up a literacy programme organised and run by people in the community;

   - Asking the Education Department to organise literacy classes at the local school;

   - Inviting an NGO to organise and set up a literacy programme for the community;

   - Making sure that all children in the community are literate and helping them to teach their parents.

2.2.2. Planning how to move along the pathways

For each of the pathways selected, the facilitator should ask the participants to think about the best way of travelling (facilitators can use the analogy of choosing to travel by foot, cycle or bus, to encourage participants to think of the advantages and disadvantages of different options). They need to decide:

- What steps they could take (not in too much detail at this stage);

- What obstacles they may face along the way;

- What strengths and capacity they have to utilise;

- What support from others they might need.

The facilitators could use a matrix such as the one shown in table 12 to help them list these elements for each pathway.

Table 12. Matrix of pathway elements				
VISION ELEMENT EXAMPLE: ACHIEVING COMPLETE LITERACY IN THE COMMUNITY				
Pathways	**Steps along the pathway**	**Potential obstacles**	**Use of own strengths & capacity**	**Possible support needed**
Literacy programme organised and run by people in the community	Identifying potential teachers / facilitators within community	Lack of commitment within community	Some educated people in the community	Training support for literacy teachers in community
	Getting them trained as literacy teachers	Training for literacy teaching not available or expensive	Strong leadership by local leaders and teachers	Provision of materials for literacy classes
	Getting people in community to commit to literacy classes	Availability of literacy materials for classes	Recognition of importance of literacy by most people	Building of a location for classes / classroom provided by Education Authority
	Organising classes at appropriate times	Poorer people (and their children) too busy working to take classes		
	Identifying appropriate locations for literacy classes	Appropriate location not available		
	Maintaining interest			
	Checking on standards			
	Celebrating achievement			
Asking education department to organise literacy classes at the local school	Get local teacher to talk to the head of the local education department	Lack of resources within the education department	Local resources to support programme	Political pressure from local politicians to encourage education department to act
	Arrange meeting with education department to discuss programme	Lack of interest of senior managers in education department	Contribution from participants	Teachers and materials from education department
	Identify local resources to make available	Low priority given to education by local policy makers		

Next, ask the participants to consider which pathways they think are most appropriate for them. To do this they should consider:

- Which pathways make best use of participants' own strengths, skills and capacity;
- How much outside support is required for different pathways;
- What obstacles the different pathways present and how they can be overcome;
- Whether different pathways will actually achieve the same result and the quality of those results;
- The amount of time and effort required to travel down the different pathways.

The SLED team will need to remind participants that pathways are not necessarily mutually exclusive – it may be possible to choose more than one pathway to achieve their visions.

Having undertaken this assessment, the SLED participants will need to make a preliminary decision on which pathway or pathways they feel are most appropriate, emphasising (a) that whichever pathway they choose, it will then need to be thought through in greater detail, and (b) that they may decide later to choose a different pathway if one proves impracticable or they discover obstacles that they have not thought of yet.

2.2.3. Detailed assessment of pathways and choices

Once the SLED participants have identified the pathways they want to travel along to achieve their visions, they need to undertake a more detailed analysis of each of the pathways they have chosen to make sure that it really is the "right" one – in other words, that it is viable, feasible, does not face unanticipated insurmountable obstacles or disadvantages, and that they can get the support the need to carry it out.

SLED facilitators also need to make it clear to participants that, as part of this process, they need to consider possible impacts and consequences of the different actions they will undertake, even if these are not necessarily impacts and consequences for the participants themselves.

The facilitators should then work through the framework shown in table 13 with the participants in order to assess the pathways that have been selected. SLED facilitators will need to utilise a range of analytical tools to make their conclusions on the ranking of each aspect. They may also find it necessary to call in appropriate specialists (on markets, environment, social impact etc.).

Note: This is a subjective process that is designed to provide a basic comparison of options and an indication of those that are most likely to succeed.

Table 13. Framework for assessing potential pathways			
Inputs	**POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES**		
	Activity 1	**Activity 2**	**Activity 3**
	e.g., Establish local literacy centre	**e.g., Provide funding for access to nearby literacy programme**	**e.g., Helping children to help their parents**
Available personal resources and support to meet required inputs: (human, natural, physical, social, financial)	3		
Access to government support	4		
Access to private support	3		
Access to community support	5		
Average (A)	3.75		

Market	3		
Demand	4		
Trends	4		
Competition	2		
Break-even point	3		
Average (B)	3.2		
Environmental	4		
Physical	5		
Biological	3		
Resource use	3		
Socioeconomic	2		
Average (C)	3.4		
Social Impacts	5		
Livelihood change	4		
Cultural Conflict	3		
Income	4		
Governance	4		
Well being	4		
Average (D)	4.0		
Aggregate Score (sum of 4 average figures A+B+C+D)	**14.35**		

(Ranking: 5 – highly favourable; 4 – favourable; 3 – neutral; 2 – unfavourable; 1 – highly unfavourable; X – unacceptable/ unavoidable)

By using the average scores in table 13, participants can identify those activities that are most likely to succeed. The activities that score high totals are likely to have had favourable conditions for most of the elements, while for those elements that have low scores the participants will need to consider how they may address them. Where negative impacts of activities are identified as unacceptable and unavoidable, the teams should discard that activity, in the short term at least.

2.3. Detailed plans for SLED action

At this stage in the SLED process the participants will have identified their visions for livelihood development (SLED step 1.4.), broken these visions down into pathways (SLED step 2.2.1.), and identified options to move along these pathways (SLED step 2.2.2.). The SLED participants have also developed relationships with agencies that may help them to travel along the pathways and considered specific activities. The challenge now is to set out the specific work that is required to move along the planning pathways. This work needs to be broken down into manageable tasks that can be assigned, scheduled, tracked and organised.

The process of developing detailed plans with SLED participants and relevant service providers should continue the process of building mutual respect and understanding, thus contributing to more effective relationships. This will help to ensure that the SLED participants have ownership over the implementation of the activities.

The structure of the detailed plan presented in this guidance is based on a logical framework. The plan will bring together much of the analysis that has been undertaken in the preceding SLED steps and use it to ensure that the activities, tasks and planned inputs have a clear relationship to the ultimate SLED visions.

- To work with individuals/groups/community to develop detailed plans for SLED.

- Report writing
- Participatory planning
- Market analysis.

Process guidance

A detailed plan should be developed for each planning pathway. The SLED facilitation teams should work with the participants to complete the plans. The plans are based on four components:

1. **Background and purpose** – this component provides a brief overview to the activity and sets the context and purpose of that activity by demonstrating the planning process (SLED step 2.2.) that has been undertaken.

2. **Project proposal** – this component sets out a planning framework for the project, demonstrating the outputs, activities, indicators of achievement and partners who will be involved.

3. **Project budget** – this component outlines the proposal budget.

4. **Project time frame** – this component shows when the project activities will be completed.

A framework for the detailed plan is provided in tables 14a-14d.

Table 14a. Background and purpose	
ELEMENT	**DESCRIPTION**
Pathway introduction	Give a brief introduction to the community and the SLED process that has been undertaken
	Give brief summary of the activities that are planned
	Specify the groups / partners who will be involved in this project
Vision that will be contributed to	Outline the specific vision that this proposal will contribute to
Pathways to achieving that vision	Outline the other pathways that were identified for achieving the specific vision - this will help the teams to recognise the role of the activity in the wider process of achieving the vision

Table 14b. Pathway plan – describe how the goals will be reached and verified			
INITIATIVE STRUCTURE	**OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS**	**MEANS OF VERIFICATION**	**ASSUMPTIONS**
GOAL: (Vision Statement). Specify the vision that this project will contribute to	How will you measure if it has been achieved?	How will you demonstrate that it has been achieved?	What are the things that you need to be in place for this to work?
Purpose: (Pathway) Identify the specific pathway that this will contribute to:			
Outputs: Outline the main output that the project will produce, which will contribute to moving along that pathway:			

Table 14c. Activity plan – describe activities and partnerships					
ACTIVITIES List the activities that are required to achieve the output:	ACTIVITY PARTNERS	CONTRIBUTION FROM SLED PARTICIPANTS	CONTRIBUTION FROM OTHER SOURCES	INDICATORS	BUDGET
Activity 1	Who would be involved in implementing the project?	Identify the specific things that the project will fund		How will you demonstrate that the activity has been undertaken?	Outline the cost of activity that will be funded by the project
Activity 2					
Activity 3					
Etc.					
Total Budget					amount

Table 14d. Time plan – outline the timeframe for the project activities			
	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3
e.g., Centre constructed			
e.g., Equipment for the centre provided			
e.g., Training for community to use the centre			
e.g., Centre manager installed and plan for sustainable financing established			

2.4. Direction Phase checklist

SLED teams should utilise the checklist given in table 15 when planning SLED activities and reviewing the progress that they are making. The checklist includes the key SLED steps in this phase and the supporting processes.

Table 15. Scoping opportunities	
ACTIVITIES	**CHECKLIST FOR SLED TEAM AND PARTICIPANTS**
Scoping opportunities (step 2.1.1)	Framework for scoping opportunities developed with relevant SLED participants;
	Activities undertaken within community to scope:
	Income generating activities and opportunities;
	Opportunities for addressing the factors that help or inhibit change
	Activities undertaken in similar communities to scope:
	Income generating activities and opportunities;
	Opportunities for addressing the factors that help or inhibit change.
	Changes in wider economy and society identified.
Validating opportunities (step 2.1.2)	Opportunities have been validated with SLED participants:
	Conflicts with existing laws and regulations identified;
	Conflicts with local social and cultural values identified.
	Additional opportunities identified.
	SLED team and participants developed the skills and capacity to identify new opportunities for change now and in the future.
Publicising opportunities to the community (step 2.1.3)	Locations and media identified for publicising opportunities to community;
	Opportunities made accessible to community by the team through outreach activities.
Turning visions into reality	
ACTIVITIES	**CHECKLIST FOR SLED TEAM AND PARTICIPANTS**
Defining the Planning Pathways (step 2.2.1)	Working with individuals, groups or community representatives team have identified:
	Pathways for reaching visions
	Indicators of progress identified
	Linkages developed with potential supporting agencies.
	Participants building an appreciation for the challenge of planning.
Assessing the opportunities for moving along pathways (step 2.2.2)	Participants and field teams have assessed the opportunities for the moving along pathways;
	Participant building linkages with supporting agencies through this process;
	Participants progressively taking the lead in the process;
	Opportunities for moving along pathways assessed.
Finalising options (step 2.2.3)	Options for SLED finalised with participants;
	SLED team and participants have the skills and capacity to plan for livelihood change now and in the future.
Detailed planning for SLED	
ACTIVITIES	**CHECKLIST FOR SLED TEAM AND PARTICIPANTS**
Detailed plan (step 2.3)	Where appropriate, supporting agencies involved in detailed plan development;
	Participants involved in the process of drafting detailed plans;
	Detailed plans developed.

3. DOING

3.1 Supporting the poor

↳ | 3.2 Capacity building |

↳ | 3.3 Building an enabling environment |

↳ | 3.4 Improving market access |
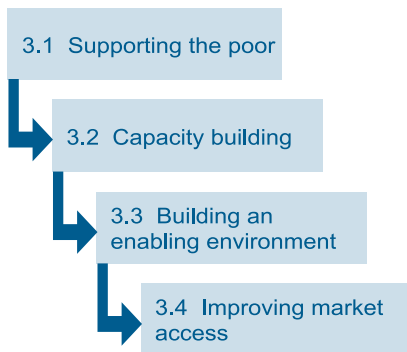
After the Direction Phase, people in the community will have a clear picture of where they want to go (their visions) and how they are going to get there (turning visions into reality). They will have identified the different "pathways" they can take to achieve their visions and they will have made choices about which pathways they think are most appropriate for them. They will have planned in detail the different activities that are required for them to start achieving their visions and how they can be implemented. These planned activities will be implemented in the Doing Phase.

Outcomes of the Doing Phase

- Participants have the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to implement livelihood changes.

- Participants are equipped to make more informed choices regarding future changes.

- Participants have the capacity to understand and respond to changes in the market, and to take advantage of new opportunities.

- Participants are able to identify and access appropriate market channels where they can make best use of their comparative advantage.

- The poorest people continue to be engaged in the SLED process and are making positive progress.

- Service providers' institutions and the legal and regulatory context are more supportive of livelihood change.

- Enablers are more responsive, adaptable and flexible to the needs and priorities of people at the grassroots level, particularly the poor.

The roles of SLED facilitators in the Doing Phase

Once the Doing Phase begins, the role of the SLED facilitation team will change. During the Discovery and Direction Phases, the SLED facilitators would have taken a leading role in catalysing people, encouraging them and guiding them. While they should have operated in a fully participatory way, many of the activities undertaken so far will have required considerable intervention by the facilitators to ensure that different stakeholders have participated, that the momentum has been maintained and that the desired outcomes have been achieved.

If they have facilitated these initial processes effectively, during the Doing Phase they should be able to take less of a leading role and become "advisors" and "brokers".

This change of role is very important. Once the Doing Phase begins, there will be many different groups involved in a wide range of different activities in the community, often taking place simultaneously and operating at different levels – individual, household, group and community. With such a complex range of activities, it is simply not possible for an outside facilitation team to be involved directly in supporting all of them. It is not even desirable that the facilitators get involved in the details of implementation – if the people involved cannot manage those activities themselves it is indicative that these activities may not be sustainable in the long term.

Of course, people will need support – technical information and training, financial support etc. – and, as part of the planning carried out in the Direction Phase, people should have identified the agencies, institutions and service providers that they need to support them in order to achieve their visions. The facilitation team may help people to make first contacts with these supporting agencies, but it must be left up to the individuals and groups involved to take the initiative in implementing their activities.

The SLED facilitators will still have very important roles to play during the Doing Phase, and they will need to concentrate on those roles and not be "trapped" into helping with the micro-management of individual projects or activities. The key roles for the SLED facilitators during this phase will be:

- Supporting the poor;
- Building an enabling environment;

- Facilitating capacity-building;
- Improving market access.

3.1. Supporting the poor

The importance of the SLED facilitators taking a more "back-seat" role during the Doing Phase has been described above. However, while this may be regarded as the general rule for the Doing Phase, there will be exceptions. SLED facilitation teams will find that some groups in the community or area where they are working will have acquired sufficient momentum, confidence and enthusiasm from the preceding phases to be able to proceed with limited support and intervention from the team. But for some, and particularly poor, marginal and vulnerable groups, the process of taking action will be more of a challenge.

Much of the process in the Discovery and Direction Phases is aimed at ensuring that these groups are able to participate as effectively as everyone else in the community. However, poverty and its long-term effects on people's confidence, belief in themselves and capacity to take positive action cannot be overcome quickly.

The poorest groups, such as older people, those suffering from disabilities of one type or another, widows or marginal tribal or migrant groups, are liable to need particular attention and support when putting their plans into action; SLED facilitators need to be aware that there are no shortcuts when dealing with the poor. They will often require patience and continual support in order to make the changes they have identified, and facilitators will often need to spend a disproportionate amount of time with these groups during the Doing Phase to encourage them and help them to keep on track. This will often mean going back over territory already covered during the Discovery and Direction Phases, and using this process to reaffirm their capacities and strengths and help them to gain the confidence they need.

The importance of maintaining this awareness of the poor and their particular needs cannot be over-emphasised. Once implementation of activities begins, it is very easy for facilitators, and the agencies that they have helped to bring into the community to provide services and support, to focus on the "winners" – the groups and individuals who will obviously be able to achieve quick results. Often, this is at the expense of those who genuinely need support in order to bring about change. The role of the facilitators should be to ensure that the groups that are moving more slowly, and are having greater difficulty, receive the support they need to keep moving, even if they move at a much slower pace than other groups in the community.

Photo: Reef gleaning, Lakshadweep Islands, India (© V. Hoon)

3.2. Capacity-building

Before starting to implement planned activities, people need to be sure that they have the skills and knowledge they require to make those activities work and remain sustainable.

During the Discovery and Direction Phases of SLED, the team would have encouraged people to identify their strengths and capacities and use these as a basis for developing visions for the future that are achievable and realistic, and which build on those strengths and capacities. However, in order to do something new, people will often need new skills and new knowledge.

While many groups and individuals involved in the SLED process may have already identified areas of capacity-building as part of their detailed planning of activities during the Direction Phase, others may have had more difficulty in thinking through the types of support they need. This is likely to be particularly true of the poorer, more marginal and vulnerable groups involved in the process.

These groups are liable to need particular support in identifying and accessing new skills and knowledge which they do not have but may need in the future. The process of facilitating capacity-building by the SLED team should be concentrated on those groups.

The role of the SLED facilitation team in supporting people to identify their capacity-building requirements should be similar to the role they will have already played in scoping potential for livelihood change during the Direction Phase. Because the facilitators have gained different experiences with people in the communities with which they are working, they will often be able to identify important and helpful types of capacity and knowledge that local people may not be familiar with, or even aware of.

When considering the skills, knowledge and capacity that individuals and groups may need to carry out their activities, consider the following key areas of capacity:

- Management capacity;
- Technical skills;
- Market knowledge;
- Accessing and using information;
- Organisational capacity (especially for groups undertaking activities together);
- Informing and influencing capacity (to influence the enabling environment – see below).

Objectives:

- To develop the skills, knowledge and attitude required to implement livelihood change;
- To enable people to make more informed choices regarding future change.

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

- Needs analysis
- Skills and capacity analysis
- Gap analysis – identifying where skills and capacity are lacking
- Training needs assessment.

Process guidance

The following list suggests some of the activities that SLED facilitators might carry out in order to support the communities, groups and individuals that they work with to develop their capacity:

1. Draw up an inventory of all the activities that different individuals and groups have planned.

2. Brainstorm the different skills, knowledge and capacities that each of these activities is likely to require, paying particular attention to the activities planned by poorer and more vulnerable groups.

3. Based on the experience of the facilitation team, review the strengths and skills of the different groups and individuals planning each activity.

4. Compare the skills available among groups and individuals with those required for the activities, and identify where there are gaps.

5. Consider how these gaps can be addressed. Identify possible service providers, sources of training and skills provision that could play a role. Remember to consider the option of getting private service providers to carry out functions that individuals and groups are unable to do themselves, and consider what resources could be used to pay for such services.

6. Organise meetings with the individuals and groups concerned, and repeat the process with them, get them to identify skills and knowledge that they are likely to require, encourage them to consider the points identified by the facilitation team, and compare them with the strengths and skills which they have identified for themselves.

7. Focus on the gaps between the two sets of capacities, and discuss how and where those gaps can be addressed. Make suggestions based on the experience and knowledge of the facilitation team.

8. Encourage SLED individuals and groups to incorporate capacity-building in their activity plans, and seek out the means of implementing capacity-building activities.

3.3. Building an enabling environment

A key part of the role of the SLED facilitation team during the Doing Phase will be to create an "enabling environment" that is supportive of the livelihood changes being undertaken by people in the communities where they work. The extent to which that support is actually available to, and accessible by, those groups when they need it depends on what we can call the Enabling Environment.

The enabling environment is complex and can be interpreted in many different ways. However, in practical terms, there are two key elements in the enabling environment that are of central importance to SLED facilitators and people who are trying to undertake changes in their livelihoods. These are **enabling agencies** (see box 8) and **service providers** (see box 9).

Box 8. Enabling agencies

Enabling agencies are the people, institutions, or sets of rules, customs and laws, which set out how society works, and how service providers deliver their services.

Some enabling agencies are quite easy to identify. They include: the politicians and political leaders who set out policies for the country; political representatives who vote for new laws and who decide how state resources are distributed; and the judiciary and law enforcement agencies who enforce the laws. They can also include more local level decision-makers: local administrators who decide whether or not to implement certain programmes.

However, some enabling agencies are more difficult to identify. They are the "powers-that-be" or people with influence that determine the "rules of the game" (which are often very different from the laws and regulations that are formally in force). They may be the political and economic elite, religious or cultural leaders, or local elites that exercise influence and power in their areas or communities.

Shaping this environment for SLED participants, and transforming **disabling** influences into **enabling** and **supportive** factors, is extremely challenging for coastal managers and SLED facilitators. Failure to address these issues will limit the effectiveness of SLED activities (and, as a result, will often limit the effectiveness of conservation measures such as MCPAs). SLED practitioners must realise that dealing with the enabling environment is an integral part of the SLED process.

One of the key reasons for the failure of many "alternative livelihood schemes" in the past has been the unwillingness of projects or programmes to take this "enabling environment" into account – it is often regarded as being too "political" or outside the responsibility of a specific agency. Unfortunately, failure to work at this level as well as at the local and community levels will almost always severely restrict the effectiveness of measures to develop SLED.

The role of outside facilitators can be crucial in dealing with this enabling environment or institutional context, as they can often create the momentum and leverage for positive change where insiders would have little chance of success. So, throughout the SLED process and particularly during the Doing Phase of SLED and beyond, the role of the facilitation team in working to create an enabling environment is a key factor.

Box 9. Service providers

Anyone who delivers a service of any kind to other people can be called a "service provider".

Repairing roads, curing an illness, providing legal advice, selling food or petrol or soap, repairing engines or fishing nets, providing credit and loans, marketing other people's produce – all of these are "services" that are provided by different people in different situations. Many people will be providers of services in some situations and users of services in other situations.

Services are provided either by the state (government extension services, health services, different departments, etc.) or by private service providers (business people, shopkeepers, traders, moneylenders, etc.). In most places in the world, whether in rural or in urban areas, most services are provided by private service providers. This should be remembered as it is easy to assume that new services should be provided by the government, but government institutions often have limited resources and their incentives for providing good services are not always very high. Private service providers have very clear incentives as they get paid directly for their services.

Objectives:

The objectives for SLED facilitators in engaging with the enabling environment will clearly vary considerably depending on the circumstances. It is, however, important that SLED facilitators as well as the communities with which they are working think carefully about **what their objectives are** when they attempt to address issues regarding the environment. However, there are some general objectives that will almost always be relevant. These can be defined as:

- Making service providers/institutions and the legal and regulatory context more supportive of livelihood change;

- Making them more responsive, adaptable and flexible to the needs and priorities of people at the grassroots, particularly the poor;

Key skills and knowledge requirements:

- Institutional analysis

- Informing and influencing strategies

- Negotiation skills

- Communication skills.

Process guidance

What can SLED facilitators do to create an enabling environment for SLED? Much of what they do has to respond to the specific context in which they are working and cannot easily be described in generic guidance such as this manual. However, based on experiences in livelihood development, some key areas that facilitators can work on when dealing with the two key elements of the enabling environment – service providers and enabling agencies – can be identified.

Building better relationships between people and service providers

Ways in which the SLED facilitators can build better relationships between people and service providers include:

- Identifying potential service providers (state and private);

- Helping SLED groups or individuals to identify the advantages and disadvantages of different service providers;

- Helping SLED groups or individuals to develop and disseminate information materials about the goods that they produce (or want to produce);

- Helping to make sure that this information reaches potential service providers;

- Facilitating contacts and negotiations between SLED groups or individuals and service providers;

- Promoting the development of clear and concise contracts with service providers that make the roles and responsibilities of each side clear and transparent, and which promote accountability.

Building better relationships between people and enabling agencies

Influencing the enabling environment will often be a more long-term process, but some of the key sorts of activities that SLED facilitators can undertake to initiate and maintain the process include:

- Acting as knowledge and information brokers, making sure that people in positions of influence are aware of what is going on at the community level and making sure that people at the community level know who the people are in positions of influence;

- Informing SLED groups and individuals of their rights and the channels open for them to seek action by authorities to address the obstacles they face;

- Identifying and lobbying "champions of change", or key decision makers who are potential allies and supporters of changes required in legislation, regulations or resource distribution in order to support livelihood change;

- Facilitating reviews by SLED groups and individuals of their "informing and influencing strategies" (see "Building consensus for change" – subsection 1.3.) in order to: (a) identify key people and institutions that need to change in order to create a more supportive environment; (b) how they need to change; (c) the incentives that will encourage them to change; and (d) the precise activities required in order to bring about that change;

- Forming strategic alliances and associations in order to bring pressure for change – particularly where laws and regulations represent obstacles to positive livelihood change. Communities and groups involved in SLED may need to seek out other communities and groups with similar interests, and work together with them to bring pressure for change on legislators and law enforcers.

3.4. Improving market access

Many of the plans for new activities or undertakings that individuals and groups involved in the SLED process generate will involve some type of new commercial activity. Groups of producers may decide to organise their production better so that they can buy inputs and sell more effectively and at better prices; individuals may decide to take up a new income-generating activity, perhaps related to the establishment of an MCPA (such as ecotourism or working as a guide) or perhaps completely unrelated, such as growing new crops or marketing existing production in new ways. For many people in the communities where SLED facilitators are likely to work, market access for these new activities will often be a key issue.

In the past, many efforts to promote alternative livelihoods or income-generating activities have failed because of they have not properly addressed the issues involved in finding markets for the goods they produce. This is partly because thinking through these market issues involves a set of skills in business and entrepreneurship that are frequently lacking in communities, and which the people working as facilitators of local development (like SLED facilitators) do not necessarily possess.

Objectives:

Markets are inherently dynamic and SLED facilitators should not regard it as their responsibility to **find** markets for their SLED groups and individuals. Their role should be to support people to develop the capacity to understand markets, and to identify where new opportunities exist and how to access them. Bearing this in mind, key objectives for SLED facilitators when they are facilitating improved market access should be:

- Building the capacity of their SLED groups and individuals to understand and respond to changes in the market, and to take advantage of new opportunities;

- Supporting SLED groups and individuals to access appropriate market channels where they can make best use of their comparative advantage.

- Market analysis

- Business planning

- Value chain analysis.

Process guidance

Some of the steps that SLED facilitators can undertake include:

- Encouraging SLED groups and individuals to think through their comparative advantage. This means continually asking themselves:

  (a) Why should people buy the products that they plan to produce?

  (b) Who do they currently buy them from?

  (c) Why should they change?

  (d) What can they, as producers, offer that others do not?

  (e) What advantages can they offer in terms of price, quality and convenience?

- Encouraging SLED groups to build their entrepreneurial and business skills, facilitating capacity-building by professionals and experienced business persons whenever possible.

- Facilitating SLED groups in undertaking their own investigation of markets – analysing market chains, understanding where value is added and identifying potential customers – guided by experienced people wherever possible.

- Encouraging them to seek out alliances with other producers that can produce economies of scale and greater market volume and presence.

- Encouraging them to look carefully at the role of middlepersons, not necessarily to by-pass them but in order to understand their role, what they can offer to producers and what incentives they are likely to respond to in order to be more supportive of producers.

- Seeking out innovative marketing arrangements that can give access to new, high-value markets, such as "Fair Trade" organisations, labelling arrangements, large-scale retail and distribution networks, and international buyers, taking care to identify what qualities in production they are interested in and whether or not local producers can satisfy their demands.

- Looking into social and ecological labelling and certification arrangements, and assisting producers in deciding what advantages they might offer.

4. SLED SUPPORTING PROCESSES

The SLED supporting processes are elements that should underpin the work that SLED teams carry out as they move through all of the three SLED phases. They are processes that SLED facilitators need to be thinking about from the beginning of their work, and which will continue throughout their involvement and need to be carried on into the future. They closely reflect some of the key guiding "principles" of the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach and can be regarded as processes that put these principles into practice.

All are critical, and SLED teams need to be constantly asking themselves whether they are incorporating these processes into every stage of their work in the community and whether there are ways in which they can implement these processes more effectively. For example, when they are helping SLED participants to plan how to achieve their visions and are guiding participants through the discussion of different "pathways" they can take, SLED facilitators should be constantly asking themselves: Am I doing enough to support different groups to have "voice"? Am I doing enough to build their confidence and appreciate their strengths?

These supporting processes (figure 10) should become a yardstick against which SLED facilitators measure the quality of their work as facilitators.
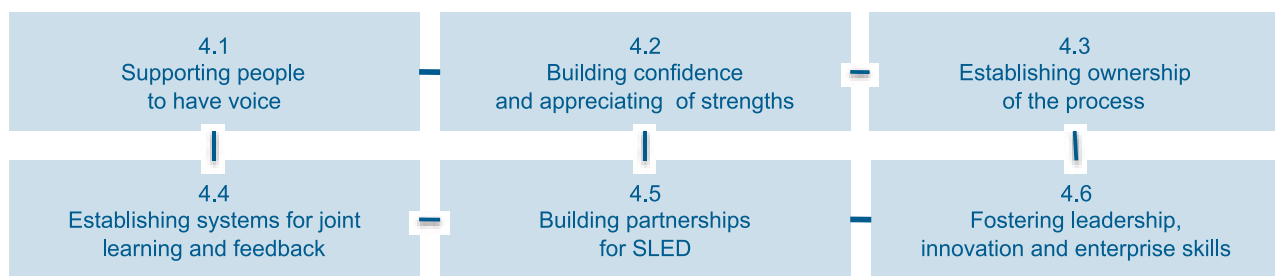
4.1 Supporting people to have voice	4.2 Building confidence and appreciating of strengths	4.3 Establishing ownership of the process
4.4 Establishing systems for joint learning and feedback	4.5 Building partnerships for SLED	4.6 Fostering leadership, innovation and enterprise skills

Figure 10. SLED supporting processes

4.1. Supporting people to have voice

Throughout the guidance to the SLED approach, emphasis has been placed on the importance of getting the people who are the subjects of the process (local resource users and community members) to make their own choices. The role of the SLED facilitation team is to "facilitate" their capacity to make those choices (and not to make choices for them). A key part of supporting people to make choices is to give them "voice" – the capacity and confidence to realise that their views, ideas and experiences are important, and to express those views to others as well as to the agencies and organisations that should be supporting them. This is particularly important for the poorer members of communities where SLED is being implemented.

A key feature of poverty, particularly in coastal communities in Asia, is the lack of voice experienced by the poor. The poor have little access to forums or institutions where their voice might be heard and, even if they do, they often think that they have nothing to say or that no one is interested in hearing their opinions. Therefore the process of giving voice involves working on several levels.

Building people's confidence and self-esteem

Where coastal and marine ecosystem users are not used to being consulted or to participating in decision-making, building their confidence and awareness that (a) they have a right to express their opinions, and (b) their experience and knowledge has value and needs to be heard is a critical first step. During the Discovery Phase of SLED the emphasis on working in a participatory way, and talking with people in their own households and small groups, aims to build this confidence. This phase offers local people the opportunity to explore what they themselves know and recognise has value, first of all for themselves and then for outsiders seeking to provide support to them in order to bring about positive livelihood change.

One of the major risks during the Discovery Phase is that this process of "self" discovery takes second place to a process of generating information for the SLED facilitation team, and it is very important that SLED facilitators allow time at this stage for people to acquire the confidence they need **at their own pace**. Poorer groups, in particular,

will need more time to appreciate the value of their knowledge and experience and to understand that this is critical to bringing about positive change in the future. One of the principle failings of many "participatory" approaches to local level planning and livelihood change in the past has been to assume that, if consultative mechanisms are put in place where everyone in a community is present, this will automatically lead to "participation" by all groups in decision-making processes. In reality, groups who are poor and less articulate will often attend without making any meaningful contribution as they presume that what they have to say is "not important". Therefore, their confidence and capacity to make contributions to local consultative and decision-making processes has to be developed **before** they are asked to participate in such mechanisms. This is an important output of the Discovery Phase.

Once this confidence and self-esteem has been built up, participation in the Direction Phase can be expected to be much more effective. Inevitably, some very marginalised groups (such as tribal groups, the old and infirm, or socially excluded groups such as widows) may still have difficulty in contributing effectively to larger community-level meetings or in interacting with outside agencies and institutions. SLED facilitators will need to be flexible in accommodating the special requirements of these groups, and to spend more time supporting them to develop their own voice and means of expressing it. This does **not** mean that SLED facilitators should "say it for them" but the extra time and resources required for such groups to acquire the confidence they need has to be made available.

To provide ongoing support to the process of developing the confidence of SLED participants during the Direction and Doing Phases, SLED facilitators need to encourage participants to continue to talk among themselves in their small common interest groups or at the household level. Facilitators should also help at larger meetings in the community or with outsiders to focus attention on the levels of participation by different groups present, making sure that space is created for everyone present to express their ideas.

Providing means of communicating people's voice

Particularly with poorer groups, or with marginal or isolated tribal groups, the forms of communication that people feel comfortable with will not necessarily correspond to the means of communication that local institutions, enabling agencies or service providers are used to. For these groups, the idea of standing up at a public meeting and making a "presentation" may be so alien that other forms of effective communication may need to be sought out in order to help them make their voices heard. SLED facilitators need to identify the forms of communication that these groups feel comfortable with, and to encourage them to use those forms if this approach is likely to make them more confident. This may mean identifying forms such as theatre, song or other cultural forms of communication, and supporting their use by groups that have difficulty communicating in other ways.

At the same time, SLED facilitators may have to work with enablers and service providers to make them more receptive of these alternative forms of communications.

Celebrating people's voice

A useful approach to building the confidence and self-esteem that people need in order to articulate their voice can be to encourage opportunities to "celebrate" the expression of that voice. The process of articulating visions at the group and community levels, described earlier in these guidelines, is one form of "celebration" where everyone's visions for the future are given equal importance and value.

Once again, to celebrate the people's voice, different forms of media and communications that local people are more used to may be appropriate as a means of presenting their ideas and interacting with the rest of the community.

Forming linkages with enablers and service providers

While developing people's capacity to articulate their aspirations for a better future is the key, translating this into sustainable positive change in their livelihoods also requires that these voices be **heard**. SLED facilitators therefore, must be dedicated to creating linkages between SLED participants and the enabling and service provision agencies that need to respond to the voices of the poor.
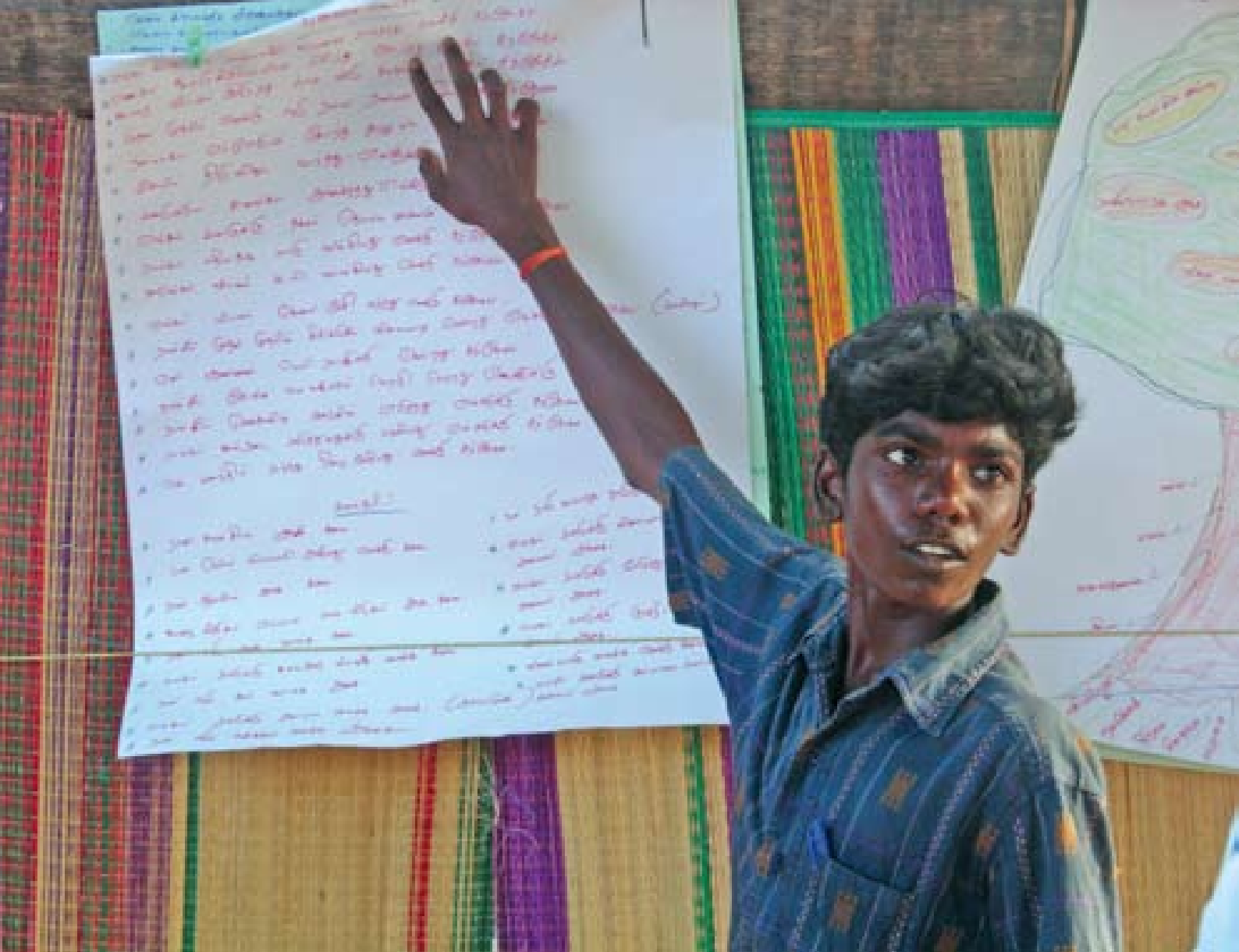
Photo: SLED process, Tamil Nadu, India (© G Sriskanthan)

This means supporting the development of effective mechanisms that allow people from the community level to communicate with agencies and influence them in the provision of effective support for livelihood change.

Such mechanisms might include:

- Existing forums for consultation, either at the community level or covering wider local areas such as districts. While these may already, at least theoretically, bring together administrators, service providers and local citizens to discuss development issues, participation is often limited and there may be little scope for poorer sections of the community to gain access. SLED facilitators can explore ways of reactivating these mechanisms and ensuring better participation by a wider cross-section of their SLED participants. Preparation of the administrators who organise such forums and the various agencies that participate may be required to ensure that they are ready to allow proper participation by SLED groups.

- Representative bodies. With the growing emphasis on political and administrative decentralisation as well as the devolution of decision-making and resources to local representative bodies, in many places these will represent important "targets" for the voice of SLED participants. Using the "consensus building strategy" developed during the Discovery Phase, SLED facilitators can help their participants to identify and communicate with their target audiences in order to engage with them.

- "Champions" of change. Often, local enablers and service providers will be reluctant to become more responsive to the voices of local community members. Often, they will not perceive any clear incentive for being more responsive, or will be entrenched in attitudes that regard the poorer sections of local communities as less important or difficult to work with. In such situations, identifying opinion leaders within local administrations

who are more sympathetic, and who recognise the importance of encouraging positive livelihood change, can become essential. If these potential "champions of change" can be engaged to act as initial audiences for the voices of the poor, others may follow suit in the future.

4.2. Building confidence and appreciating strengths

For people such as the poor who are used to seeing almost any change as a threat, helping them to recognise and mobilise their own strengths – such as adaptability, resilience, skills and knowledge – is often a key step in building their capacity to deal with, and take advantage of, change. What is widely called "empowerment" of the poor should consist of exactly this process.

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

Changing self perceptions and belief

Families belonging, to a traditional coconut collectors' caste (Raveri), considered as low caste, had very limited aspirations, based on a low level of self-esteem.

Following a SLED visioning session they took stock of their strengths. They discovered that their strengths lay within themselves. In particular while they had seen their status as coconut collectors as negative, they realised that in fact the coconut was a very important component of the diet of Lakshadweep islanders.

As a result of the SLED sessions four women have started a Bonda (sweetmeat) making unit in Kendiparty, Athiri Koluge. They now specialise in making, coconut jaggery, coconut sweets called maliku bondi and coconut vinegar. They have a turnover of around Rs 30,000-40,000/month and a profit of between Rs 10,000-15,000 a month.

– CARESS, SLED field level implementer, Lakshadweep Islands, India

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Coupled with this must be the process of building the confidence that people have in their own capacity, and in the capacity of others in their community, to participate in and drive the process of livelihood change. This process influences the very nature of the SLED approach and this is reflected by the emphasis on strengths, past success and potential throughout the steps in the Discovery and Direction Phases. However, there may be specific activities that the project team can undertake with the community that are designed to do just this. Examples are celebrating community culture, mobilising the community to undertake specific activities or celebrating success stories within the community.

Although initiated at the beginning of the SLED process, this focus on confidence and appreciation of strengths and potential will need to be continually reinforced, even as people begin to take steps towards livelihood change in the Doing Phase.

4.3. Establishing ownership of the process

Building a strong "internal engine" for change will provide an important impetus for SLED. This "internal engine" will be formed by the individuals, groups and community as a whole, who are empowered to take part in and ultimately lead the SLED process. This presents the project team with a significant challenge. Helping people to take ownership means that interventions should focus on people, as opposed to what they produce, the resources they exploit, or the tools and equipment they use. SLED teams therefore need to focus on promoting:

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

Community ownership of SLED

"It was obvious to us from the start with our first meeting that the community leadership was not looking for an NGO to pull them along a development path, but for a supportive partnership, based mutual respect and a shared vision for change."

– ANET, SLED field level implementer, Andaman Islands, India

- **Community empowerment.** Interventions that are empowering are likely to be implemented using participatory approaches, with their intended "beneficiaries" or "target groups" playing at least an equal role both in identifying what types of interventions are appropriate and in managing their implementation. This means that development agencies are more likely to adopt a more catalytic and facilitating role, sharing the responsibility for implementation with the people with whom they are working. Being participatory means valuing and making use of the contributions of the different people involved (not just our contributions) and supporting forms of organisation that will facilitate people's participation. Building consensus between different people and different sets of interests is also an important part of participation.

- **Being people-centred.** This means that the people who are normally thought of as the "targets" of development interventions have to become the subjects and the protagonists. Development should start from them, and should develop according to criteria that they have established and according to their priorities. While this is easily said, it is often extremely difficult to realise, especially with the poor who have little confidence in their own capabilities and are used to being treated as "victims". Genuinely putting poor people in the centre, with their characteristics, capacities, differences, priorities and concerns, should always be the priority of every intervention. Any action for change undertaken must focus on what matters to the people at the centre of the intervention, and should take into account the fact that different interventions are liable to be appropriate for different people.

4.4. Establishing systems for joint learning and feedback

A system for monitoring and feedback should benefit the community itself, the project managers and, more generally, policy and management decision makers. As the community participants plan and then take action to sustainably enhance and diversify their lives, their livelihoods will evolve and their outlooks are likely to change. When positive changes are understood and celebrated by the participants, this can contribute to building confidence in their potential and inform them of new opportunities for continued livelihood improvements.

The process of joint learning should influence every step of SLED. As the SLED process moves ahead, the project team should continually reassess the effectiveness of their interventions and use this information to evolve their role within the community.

At a higher level, understanding how people are adapting their livelihoods and their relationships to coastal ecosystems can help policy and management decision makers to create policies and strategies that are most likely to enable positive actions at the local level.

Qualities of a good joint learning and feedback mechanism

The qualities of a good joint learning and feedback mechanism include:

- Being accessible to the community as well as outsiders
- The provision of updated, reliable and relevant information
- Being simplified/easy to understand
- Transparency
- Should reflect and respond to culture, religion and social norms.

Perceptions of SLED from the field:

Implementing joint learning with the community

Since the community groups that we work with do not have wide exposure we took "the learning by doing" and "seeing is believing" approach. We took the term joint learning quite literally and felt it necessary to expose some of the community members to see how their products could be marketed. When the vision necessitated the start of an enterprise we took members of the community along to the service providers. There we learnt how to approach the officer, the various procedures adopted by different service providers, the steps to be covered before an application can be filled up and submitted, collecting and filling up application forms, and submitting them.

– CARESS, SLED field level implementer, Lakshadweep Islands, India

4.5. Building partnerships for SLED

Mutual understanding, confidence building and a shared vision will provide a very solid platform for forming partnerships within the community and between the community and supporting agencies. These partnerships will be an integral feature of long-term SLED. A key part of the work to achieve this platform will be helping both the community and supporting agencies to appreciate the benefits that such partnerships can bring to all concerned. This is likely to include a challenge to change the attitudes of the supporting agencies from **"us and them"** to **"we"**, and to demonstrate to them that people have the potential to lead development processes rather than just be passive recipients of them.

Managing expectations

It is unreasonable to expect people not to have expectations about the work that we are doing. Many communities have been exposed to a long history of development initiatives where they have been asked to state their needs and await delivery. People tend to develop expectations whenever development agencies enter a community and initiate work. Field teams need to recognise this and deal with it in a clear and transparent way by helping people to understand the SLED approach, and by being clear about whom they are, what they can bring to the community and what is expected from them.

Building capacity to participate

Together with presenting the process and aspirations, the field teams will also need to consider the capacity and confidence of different groups in the community to participate in the SLED process. Different groups may take more time and resources to get through the process, particularly where they have no real experience of constructively engaging with outside agencies. For example, working with very poor people will be difficult and will take time, so the field teams will need to develop flexible and innovative methods to engage with such groups.

Understanding roles

As an outside agency seeking to work with people on a long-term process that is designed to empower people to develop their own livelihoods, it is important that field teams are aware of the role they can play in this process and the relationship that they should have with the community as well as the different groups within the community. For example, at the beginning of the process, the field teams will take the role of facilitator in the community and will often be required to lead the process. However, as people become more engaged and progress through SLED, they will be better placed and more confident to make demands of the agency and lead the process of development.

> **Perceptions of SLED from the field:**
>
> *Maliku Hikimas Producer Society*
>
> Following the initiation of the Maliku Hikimas Producers Society, the village provided a building to house their packaging unit. However, the initiative was stalled when an electrical connection was not given to the unit due to the fact that it fell in a special area that only had a permit for limited development. The group proceeded to sink back into apathy, but another round of discussions made them understand that these are normal start up troubles and that for smooth functioning in the organised sector we need to get all our certifications in order. Today they are determinedly applying for the necessary certificates. One of the society members who participated in a scoping tour, has now the confidence to stand as a candidate for the Panchayath elections in December 2007.
>
> – CARESS, SLED field level implementer, Lakshadweep Islands, India

Where the field teams have the capacity to provide services to the community (e.g., training, small building work) it is important that this does not conflict with the neutral role that they should adopt as a facilitator, e.g., they should resist the temptation to manipulate the community into demanding the services that they have.

4.6. Fostering leadership, innovation and enterprise skills

Helping people to respond to a new livelihood opportunity may overcome a critical step in stimulating change but will not necessarily give them the capacity to innovate in order to face future challenges. Building skills to help individuals and communities to do this is a key to long-term survival and growth. The emphasis on joint leaning and community ownership of SLED will help people to develop the confidence and skills to initiate the process of livelihood development themselves. Likewise, benchmarking examples of success as well as scoping opportunities for development will also support the development of these skills. However, the project team will also need to identify the needs for specific skills for leadership, innovation and enterprise (such as presentation skills, project management, planning and accounting), and may provide training in key areas.

4.7. Supporting processes checklist

A supporting processes checklist for use by both the SLED team and participants is provided in table 16.

Table 16. Supporting processes checklist	
ACTIVITIES	**CHECKLIST FOR SLED TEAM AND PARTICIPANTS**
Supporting people to have voice (step 4.1)	SLED participants confident to articulate their own potential and desire for the future;
	SLED participants actively participating in community activities;
	SLED participants articulating their demands for support from SLED team and other service providers and enablers.
Building confidence and appreciating strengths (step 4.2)	SLED participants recognise their strengths;
	Team have initiated activities to build confidence within community for livelihood change implemented.
Establishing ownership of the process (step 4.3)	SLED participants involved in planning and implementation of the approach;
	SLED approach adapted to suit requirements of participants.
Establishing systems for joint learning and feedback (step 4.4)	SLED participants and SLED teams sharing information and learning together;
	SLED team meeting regularly to review and shape the process;
	Systems established for joint learning and feedback for the community, the SLED team, and supporting agencies.
Building partnerships (step 4.5)	SLED team established as facilitators within the community;
	Marginalised groups supported and building confidence and capacity to participate.
Fostering leadership and innovation skills (step 4.6)	Leadership skills and experience identified;
	Champions for change identified and engaged in SLED;
	Cases of success analysed and documented for SLED participants to see.

ANNEX: SLED CASE STUDIES

The process for developing and testing the SLED approach was designed to build on the wealth of experience with livelihood development initiatives that exists globally and within Asia. Its overall aim under the CORALI project was:

> *"To develop and test a globally appropriate approach to livelihood enhancement and diversification in association with coral reef management."*

To do this, an action research process was designed to take lessons from past experiences (global and regional) and use the local knowledge and field experiences of partners in the region to further develop and field-test the SLED approach. This process was implemented over the course of 17 months (January 2007-May 2008) with teams across South Asia and Indonesia.[2] The process is summarised below.

- **SLED development workshop 1** (completed Jan 2007) – The participants, representing the field teams, adapted the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Asia, built up the SLED approach and outlined the challenge for the pilot testing in communities.

- **Fieldwork phase 1** (completed June 2007) – The field teams worked in communities to implement the first phase of SLED, which included activities to raise awareness about the SLED approach, build relationships with the community, gain an understanding of livelihoods and livelihood diversity, and identify groups/service providers in communities.

- **Reviews of SLED experiences** (completed June 2007) – Two studies were undertaken to review experiences of facilitating livelihood change. The first study covered global experiences from a number of different sectors. The second study reviewed experiences of facilitating livelihood change specifically with rural communities in South Asia and Indonesia.

- **SLED development workshop 2** (completed June 2007) – The field teams adapted the SLED framework, using their field experiences and knowledge of the global review of SLED experiences. They then reflected on the process and outputs from their fieldwork and identified the areas where they still needed to work. Participants also reviewed some of the key skills that they required for SLED and designed a fieldwork challenge and guidance for the second phase of field-testing.

- **Field work phase 2** (completed October 2007) – The field teams worked to implement the second phase of the SLED Approach (Direction), which included: scoping opportunities; building visions with groups and communities; community mobilisation; identifying opportunities for supporting sustainable livelihood improvement activities; building linkages; and testing a framework for socio-economic monitoring.

- **SLED development workshop 3** (completed October 2007) – The final SLED development workshop allowed the field teams to reflect on the SLED approach as well as develop training and guidance materials for the first two phases and plan micro-projects aimed at facilitating livelihood change in the communities.

- **Implement SLED initiatives** (completed June 2008) – Field teams were funded to implement a series of micro-projects that have supported livelihood change in the communities where they are working.

- **SLED review workshop** (completed June 2008) – Following the implementation of the micro -projects and a self-evaluation exercise, the SLED teams met to assimilate the lessons learnt from the SLED pilot process. As a part of this process, the teams developed a strategy for promoting the wider uptake of SLED within South Asia.

- **Management and policy forum** (completed June 2008) – The SLED approach was presented to MCPA managers and policy makers from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in two contexts: (1) MCPA Management – details of the management challenges and the SLED approach were presented to managers; and (2) Environmental and Development Policies – evidence of the effectiveness of SLED and the role it can play in contributing to policies in the face of radical changes in the global environment (oil price rises, climate change, food shortages etc.).

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[2] For more information on the background documents from the SLED process see www.imm.uk.com.

- **Development of policy guidance and implementation support materials** (completed September 2008) – Based on the experiences of implementing SLED, a series of training and guidance materials were produced.

In the following sections of this annex, the work and experiences of five of the SLED teams from South Asia are documented in order to provide an overview of how SLED has been implemented, with success, in a diverse range of communities (Andaman Islands, Lakshadweep Islands and the Gulf of Mannar – India, Baa Atoll – Maldives, and Bar Reef – Sri Lanka).

Of particular note is the diverse range of activities that the teams have implemented as part of their work in the Doing Phase. This demonstrates how the effective the teams have been in supporting a "people-centred" approach. In other words, the teams facilitated and assisted people in developing their own ideas for livelihood change, built up people's confidence and capacity, and then supported those people in making the change themselves.

Photo: Children on Agatti Island, Lakshadweep, India (© J Tamelander/IUCN)

SLED in the Middle and North Andaman Islands, India

The community

The Karen community of the Middle and North Andaman Islands settled in the islands in 1925, from erstwhile Burma, now Myanmar. The Andaman Karen community primarily comprises an agricultural society that also subsists on resources from coastal, marine and forest ecosystems. The community, which largely belongs to the Sgaw Karen ethnic group, was brought to the islands by Christian missionaries of the former British Empire. Today, a population of approximately 2,221 is distributed in eight villages. Although a shy and peaceable people, there have been many instances when the work abilities and knowledge of the community in effectively utilising natural resources has been showcased. However, in the face of increasing demands in external markets and the need for cash income they are struggling to adapt.

The environment

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the largest archipelago system in the Bay of Bengal, covering a total area of some 8,249 km², and with a coastline of 1,962 km. Nearly 86 percent of the land area is covered with evergreen and tropical rainforests, now known to be a globally significant hotspot for biodiversity. The littoral and marine environments of the archipelago include nesting beaches for four species of marine turtles, and highly productive seagrass beds. The archipelago is fringed by spectacular and pristine coral reefs, and is one of India's largest mangrove ecosystems, inhabited by saltwater crocodiles and the giant water monitor lizard. Of the 306 islands, 94 are designated as Wildlife Sanctuaries, six as National Parks, and five as Tribal Reserves. Only two of the national parks give focused protection to the marine environment.

Despite their remoteness, these extraordinary islands were rapidly colonised by settlers. Indiscriminate deforestation destroyed natural habitats of numerous plants and animals, and led to large-scale degradation of freshwater sources. The fragile marine ecosystems are being jeopardised by siltation, contamination and short-sighted marine resource exploitation, including sand mining for construction. Employment opportunities are few and hard to come by, forcing many inhabitants towards opportunistic ventures and exploitive practices to ensure their livelihood, which further degrade natural resources.

SLED activities through the Discovery and Direction Phases

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Environmental Team (ANET) began working with the Karen community at a formal meeting, where the role of the field team in gathering information on the community was explained. Informal meetings were conducted with different residents to explore their livelihoods, generating "livelihood matrices" to demonstrate the diversity of livelihoods within the community. Families were involved in activities ranging from fishing for income, subsistence, specialised/target fishing, agriculture, opportunistic ventures and Government service.

The first two phases of SLED moved into each other beyond the first few exercises that were conducted exploring livelihood diversity, eliciting visions for change while focusing on people's strengths. This was a process that evolved over the many months from when the team began its work in May 2006, progressing toward October of the same year. While conducting this work, an ally was found among the local community-based organisations, the Karen Baptist Churches Association (KBCA). The team worked with members of the leadership and, where possible, with those who were otherwise unable to participate, by sharing information of the results of the survey, validating information, and in trying to understand how they functioned in the village and the local government administrative system.

Direction entailed bringing people together, not just physically for meetings, but more on platforms of consensus on the directions that the team could move alongside the community in testing the SLED methodology. As facilitators of this process, the team members explained their roles and reiterated the need to recognise them as facilitators and not agents of development. It was also reiterated that without a co-operative make-up, these efforts would not yield much more than a database of information. Accepting this, the leadership of the community, including the KBCA, used the opportunity to put together visions collected from members of their community in a meeting where the team was able to facilitate the decision-making process on which micro-projects would be useful in taking this process of engagement with the community forward. From there, the team wrote up the activity sheet for the proposal on micro-projects. On receiving the funds in installments, the team always made it a point to inform the

CBO and its focal contacts of the proposed course of action for their co-ordination at the village level as well as to keep them involved and informed of the process.


Photos: Construction of traditional canoe; community resource map, Andaman Islands, India (© M Chandi)

The SLED Doing Phase

Using the small grants made available for micro-projects, the team identified the following key activities that they felt would provide a start for some groups in the community to facilitate SLED activities:

- **Desktop computer and printer for the KBCA office:** A computer was purchased for the community as a resource for information management and for ensuring the co-ordination of information about the community (e.g., eligibility for government support and grants). Personnel from ANET and volunteers are providing training on the use of computers for office and administrative purposes. This is a new tool for many members in the community.

- **Mushroom cultivation:** This activity was selected because: (a) raw materials for housing the production centres are readily available; (b) technology is available with the Central Agricultural Research Institute (CARI) at Port Blair; and (c) markets for the products have been identified in the tourist resorts around Port Blair. Market links are being explored together with Government institutions such as CARI and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Co-operative (ANIIDCO).

- **Specialised carpentry tools for furniture and craft manufacture:** In addition to providing tools, the SLED team is helping the carpenters to become licensed. The tools and licences will help the group to move into the formal (regulated) forestry sector and away from their past unregulated activities.

- **Enhancing tailoring and embroidery skills:** Two sets of tailoring equipment (three sewing machines and two embroidery machines) were given to the members of a women's collective already functioning in the two larger villages of Karmatang and Web, and they received training in new embroidery skills to develop products that could be sold both within and outside the community. As a way of building confidence and promoting the work of the women, ANET also organised an exhibition of the new designs. The women are also reaching out to other women and a few men who are engaged in stitching and embroidery, in an attempt to show them the possibilities of working in a larger collective.

- **Starting a pig breeding unit:** Maintaining a piggery is a household activity that is commonly practiced by the Karen community. The lack of piglets due to high demand is a constraint to the development of this activity as an economic venture. The SLED team supported the building and stocking of a piggery to rear a breeding population of pigs that could supply piglets for sale and thus generate income for its continued presence and activities. The piglets are being reared by community members for festivals, their own consumption and sale.

- **Cultural photography display:** This display was to be used in the publication of a "coffee table" book on the team's travels with the Karen across the length and breadth of the Andaman Islands. Locations such as community halls, the KBCA office, the Karen Association rest house at Port Blair and church buildings in the villages have been chosen for housing permanent displays of these photographs. The community is also happy to own photographs (high-quality large-sized displays) which celebrate the rich history and strengths of the community, something that is very important for the younger generations.
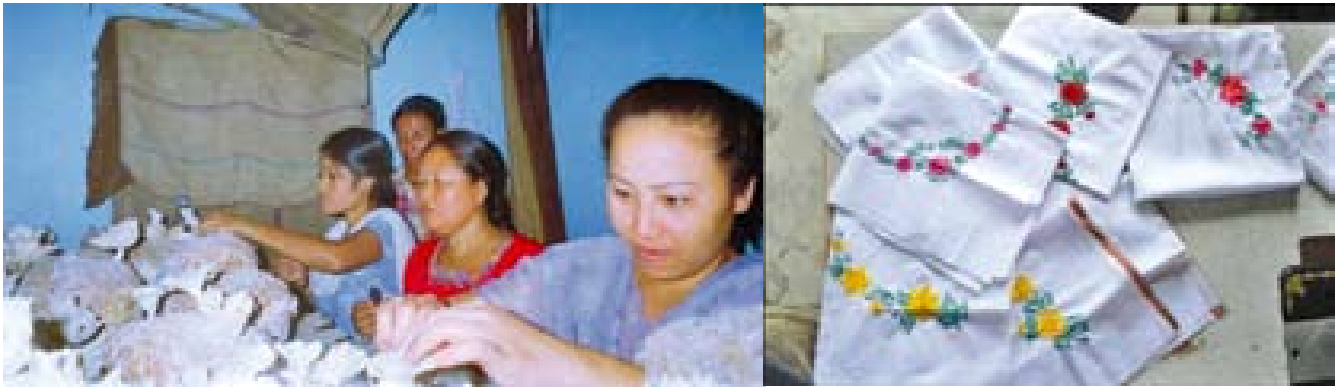
Photos: SLED Doing Phase - mushroom cultivation, embroidery, Andaman Islands, India (© M Chandi)

ANET reflections on the SLED approach

• Although there are many approaches to participatory learning and community development that have developed during many decades, these have too often focused on rigid methodologies and tools. The SLED approach did not force the team to use predetermined tools, instead providing a framework of objectives that enabled the team to direct its activities yet allow the flexibility of using approaches and tools that met with the social and cultural needs of the Karen community.

• Categorising SLED into three phases with different components resulted in the work taking on a new dimension by providing objectives and criteria to test the team's approach as well as allowing enough room for the community to take control. The process used by the team involved approaches in "appreciative learning"", the use of resources such as government records, the team's data sheet, visits to houses for a cup of tea and conversation. It was on issues of changes and people's response to change that had occurred that generated the most animated conversations, providing an insight into livelihood processes and their relationships within and outside of the community.

• The approach through SLED, with emphasis on taking a positive outlook, and the ways and means of searching for, and recognising inherent and potential strengths and capabilities, is a crucial step in the way the community is approached. This built confidence and enthusiasm in the community.

• Although small, by working as a community facilitator, the team has been able to bring members of the village leadership, private sector representatives, government agencies and church functionaries together on a single platform to plan and work towards improved livelihood outcomes for members of the community.

• During this process of learning, many ideas were developed. Together with this positive result, a change in attitude and confidence was seen within the community, and the team will continue its work to support implementation of SLED along with consensus from community members.

Potential for future activities

• As a facilitator, the team has built linkages between crucial government functionaries and community leadership, which has brought some positive outcomes. There is immense scope for continuing this work.

• It is hoped to bring to the village government services that could augment income sources such as agriculture, animal husbandry, small-scale industry and forestry departments.

• The team has documented a variety of aspirations among the community members and these have to be analysed for their content and feasibility. The team will work with the community to bring out their sense of ownership when it comes towards implementation;

• In response to the SLED work, the community has identified opportunities to capitalise on support from existing government welfare schemes that are designed to promote activities such as weaving and carpentry, improved prices for fish, fishing gear, agricultural possibilities in the "off-season", craft making and sales with the boom in tourism.

• As a facilitator, the team plans to continue its association with the community in the long term whenever opportunities arise, irrespective of projects.

About ANET

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Environmental Team (ANET), a division of the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, was established in 1990 after many field visits and surveys of fauna by personnel from the Madras Crocodile Bank Trust in the 1970s to 1980s. The vision for ANET is that it will continue to be a proactive conservation research and education organisation, and a main base for like-minded organisations. ANET has a five-hectare base station, boats, residential huts, an interpretation centre, kitchen and office at Wandoor, South Andaman Island.

Community story – SLED facilitation by a community member

Saw John has played the most active role, being a team member as well as a member of the community with which the team works. He was not involved in community development in the past although he had a deep interest, having seen many attempts by friends, family and elders to try to bring progress to the community as well as take their community forward to keep pace with developments around them. He has seen a change in the approach and how the team attempted visioning its work from the start to the present in terms of the shape it could take. The team recognised that it would only be able to be a small part of the development process, and that its role was to help the community to "learn how to feed themselves rather than to be fed".

Although this profile of Saw John is brief, the response he and community members expressed during the period of the SLED process is very encouraging, although it is also a reminder that a large amount of work remains to be done in terms of implementing processes toward visions for development. This is the challenge that lies ahead and it is not something that can be described in a few words before it is experienced. Inherent in the challenge to someone as fresh to this type of work as Saw John, is the value of attitudinal shifts as well as unplanned possibilities that come during the process of understanding and interacting with and within the community. Of course, for the people within the community, this shift has had much more meaning than it does to developmental or conservation workers who invariably are from the outside.

SLED in the Lakshadweep Islands, India

The community

The Union Territory (UT) of Lakshadweep consists of 36 coral islands of which 11 are inhabited. Since inhabiting the islands, the people have made use of the bio-resources available for their survival and economic livelihood.

The people of the Lakshadweep Islands are scheduled tribes and rely heavily on government subsidies. On Minicoy Island the households are grouped into villages called *avah*. Two *bodukaka* (headman) and *boduthata* (headwomen) administer each *avah* and ensure the smooth functioning of the villages. Every household contributes labour for village duties. Peer groups of girls and boys of the same age, called *vili*, are assigned specific functions. This communal sharing of duties is known as *baemedu*.

Despite the community structures, traditional values are eroding with access to higher education, salaried jobs, television and the Internet, and the matrilineal system is breaking down. The Panchayath Raj and politics have brought opportunities for leadership, and market forces now have a greater influence on livelihood choices. Eco-tourism/scuba diving is now seen as the path to development. Reef fisheries have been progressively commercialised and fishermen report changes in catch size, catch composition and fish size.

The environment

Coral reefs provide the basis of life in the Lakshadweep Islands, for the islands the communities live on is built up from corals. The island conditions have given rise to distinct types of flora, and the reef around the lagoon is critical in protecting the island from storm waves. The key changes that are affecting the environment are:

- Natural causes such as global warming and climate change;
- Increased pressure on reef fisheries by an influx of people from outside of Minicoy;
- Pollution from oil discharges and effluent seepage from septic tanks;
- Shoreline changes due to both erosion and erosion prevention measures;
- Salinisation of the groundwater.

SLED activities in the Discovery and Direction Phases

The SLED phases were sequential and built upon the learning of each phase. In each of these phases the team interacted with various representative interest groups and individuals on the Island including: gleaners; coconut climbers; fishermen (using different gear); women self-help groups; women of fisher families; boat owners; unemployed youths; carpenters; boat builders; government employees; and the *dweep panchayat* members.

During the SLED process, the team met around 500 people, both in a pre-arranged structured setting and informally when the team members spoke with any individual who would listen and who wanted to be heard. In that way, the team members touched many lives. On the basis of these discussions, it became possible to paint a picture of the fabric of their lives on the island.

During the Discovery Phase discussions in the context of the livelihood framework were held with different individuals and groups in the Lakshadweep Islands. The fact that the approach was people-centred appealed to everyone. The participants spent time thinking of their happiest moments and how change had affected their lives. This made them realise that they were not helpless, but were capable of taking charge of their own lives. One of the changes noted is that the groups, and some individuals, have become more assertive and are confident about approaching and even demanding services from the service providers. They are now more prepared for dealing with changes brought about, both by changes in policy and natural shocks.

While carrying out the SLED Direction Phase, the team emphasised recognising that everything was changing around us, how to cope with change, and carried out "visioning" exercises – developing group and individual visions. After carrying out the visioning exercises, the team was able to help the community as a whole in working towards the community vision and with individuals.

Photos: Visioning meeting, resource map, Lakshadweep Islands, India (© V Hoon)

SLED Doing Phase

Training as nature guides: The Centre for Action Research on Environment Science and Society (CARESS) and a local CBO, the Maliku Development Society (MDS), organised training for nature guides based on a youth vision articulated in the Direction Phase. At the end of the training, the guides were able to describe the various habitats such as mangroves, seagrass, salt-marshes, reefs, and rocky and sandy shores found on the island. Although the environmental warden who participated did not have a natural science background, he subsequently felt that he finally understood how ecosystems functioned, and said he would take more interest in protecting coral reef ecosystems.

Training in handicrafts and using special tools: S. K. Ali and D. M. Hussain, during the visioning process, expressed the need for some machines to improve their products and productivity. With the help of the Doing Phase micro-project they received training in using buffing machines for polishing coconut shells and have purchased a buffing machine and engraving machine. They have started reviving some of the age-old coconut shell-based crafts, activities that have yet to prove their financial viability.

Training in quality control: CARESS with the help of local experts provided 20 members of the Maliku Hikkimass Producers Society (MHPS) with training in quality control of their products including hygiene, packaging and weighing. The members have been trained and have become more diligent in weighing the quantity before sealing, thereby ensuring a better turnover in the number of packets produced or bottled. The MHPS has started diversifying its tuna products and has discovered an inter-island market for selling its products, and it has formed a partnership with the government tourism body and will sell products on ships and at tourist resorts.

Computer for building capacity of local CBO, MDS: The MDS is a local CBO that has been addressing local issues on Minicoy Island. They have started an English medium nursery school. They also help local seaman in administrative issues, such as filling out application forms. MDS members include government officers, fishermen, craftsmen and women. Through getting involved in the SLED process and supporting CARESS in organising local meetings, MDS is now more confident in its own facilitation skills. It understands its social responsibility and the value of building consensus and involving all groups. MDS has purchased a computer, which will enhance its capacity to document the communities' achievements and record field data.

Glass-bottom boat: One of the visions was to build a glass-bottom boat in order to access opportunities in the tourist industry. A local CBO started the business with the onset of the fair-weather season and tourist arrivals in October 2008. The boat will be used for lagoon and reef trips, both for education and enjoyment. It will be leased to the local unemployed youth club. The revenue earned will be ploughed back into maintaining the education unit.

Display of environmental education posters: The environment education posters promoting no-take zones have been translated by members of ACRMN and MDS, Minicoy- and Agatti-based CBOs. MDS has started an environment education unit with the help of Funhilol village. The unit will have a permanent exhibit of awareness materials promoting marine protected areas. They have received training in conducting coastal and marine education and awareness camps for children and other members of the public; they will try to hold a camp every month.

Photos: SLED learning and doing activities, Lakshadweep Islands, India (© V Hoon)

Potential for future activities

The Discovery Phase never ends, since once the Doing Phase is entered more things that need designing and doing will be discovered. In addition, the community is very dynamic and made up of several different groups, some of who are more articulate and vociferous than others. The team's role is to keep the joint learning mechanism alive and to help all the groups articulate their visions. The team sees its role as both facilitator and service provider in the doing phase as:

- Capacity-building of the CBOs;

- Facilitating the visioning process as well as helping them to walk down the pathway to achieving the vision and coping with change;

- Facilitating planning of a business/enterprise and supporting its establishment;

- Facilitating networking with other service providers;

- Providing relevant services such as credit, market study, scholarships and training;

- Carrying out environment awareness and education programmes;

- Facilitating the capacity to set up community-managed no-take zones;

- Establishing showcase projects.

Field team perceptions of SLED

- Initially CARESS used an Appreciative Inquiry approach (AI) and other participatory approaches in isolation. However, it found that the SLED approach provided a framework for bringing together participatory approaches such as AI, which was very pertinent to the situation in the islands. Both the local community and CARESS have found the tools and approaches very useful in the process of joint learning.

- The SLED approach helped to build trust with the community and within the community. The team spent quality time helping people think through their options and seeing the pathways that could lead to their visions more clearly. The ongoing process of joint learning and feedback ensured that this trust and the relationships were maintained.

- Throughout the project the team made it very clear to the islanders that while it was discussing and going into personal details of individuals, it did not have the resources to directly support change for everyone. The team played the part of a community counselor/facilitator and helped them to discover their strengths, see the way forward, and find the motivation and strength to move forward.

- Previously the team was unaware of the differences in livelihoods and aspirations across the community. SLED has helped in understanding the diversity of livelihoods and better engagement with the people. Learning was spontaneous and transparent. The team is now in a better position to address and support different groups of people from across the community such as women, youth and fishers.

- Following SLED, the community has greater confidence that their aspirations will be voiced and that they themselves can work towards achieving their visions.

Centre for Action Research on Environment Science and Society

CARESS is a non-profit organisation based in Chennai that is conducting outreach work in India, focusing on isolated communities associated with coral reef areas and the Trans-Himalaya. Activities include environmental education and awareness, community-based monitoring and socio-economic assessments. CARESS conducts exposure tours to identify viable livelihood options, and helps people to identify the options available to them for taking up environmentally sustainable livelihoods. To achieve its mission, CARESS networks with other research and development institutions, relevant government departments and the private sector. It also runs a small micro-credit project and provides small business loans to women's self-help groups.

Community story – working with people to help them achieve their potential

Mrs. Nafeesath ME was a silent partner in a family bakery business. After taking part in a SLED visioning session, her individual vision was to achieve personal financial independence. The team discussed the various paths that could be taken to achieve her dream by listing her strengths. She felt she could manage a sweet and snack-making unit because of her earlier experience with the bakery. She had noted that many families in Minicoy were purchasing these items from Kerala and bringing them home. She thought that there would be great demand for fresh products made in Minicoy.

During the SLED discussions, she learnt about the different service providers and the possibility of getting a loan from the local bank. Her family was supportive and helped her prepare a business plan for the bank. She took out a loan for Rs 200,000 and started the business. Her intuition proved right. The unit started in April 2007 and within a short period the products (*ladoo*, *burfeee*, chips and mixture) became popular all over the island. The snacks and sweets are sold through established shops on the island. She also targets events such as marriages and school functions for selling the products in bulk. She currently employs three people and has a current turnover of around Rs 300,000, providing a profit of Rs 30,000 per month. Forty percent of the loan was repaid within the first year of establishment.

SLED in Bar Reef, Sri Lanka

The community

Kudawa is a rural fishing village located near the Bar Reef Sanctuary in the Kalpitiya peninsula of the north-western coastal segment of Sri Lanka. Kudawa was established two generations previously by migrant fishermen from neighbouring villages, but following a land allotment scheme in 1960, where each household was allowed to lease 2 acres of land on a 99-year term, the village became permanently established with settlers. Today a mono-ethnic (Sinhalese) mono-religious (Roman Catholic) population of 716 resides in the area. Fishing in the Bar Reef area is the main livelihood for community members, with a limited number of people engaging in non-fishing activities such as small-scale enterprises, wage labourers, animal rearing and agriculture.

At the inception of the settlement (in the 1960s), fishermen engaged in subsistence-level fishing using traditional fishing craft and gear in the near-shore area. In the 1970s, the Fisheries Department introduced monofilament nets and thereafter the fishing effort shifted to the Bar Reef area. Following the introduction of lobster nets by a private company in 1973, fishing activities accelerated and the Bar Reef system began to degrade. The collection of sea cucumbers and ornamental fish started in 2000, posing an additional threat to the reef system.

The environment

The village environment contains a diversity of coastal habitats such as sandy beaches, lagoon areas, coral reefs, sand dunes, mangroves, seagrass beds and salt marshes. The diverse coral reef system is located between 2 km and 8 km from the shoreline, and extends for approximately 40 km^2. The community is highly dependent on the Bar Reef, an area of high biodiversity with more than 200 species of fish and 120 coral species recorded. In addition to the degradation caused by natural impacts such as the 1998 mass coral bleaching event, human activities place considerable pressure on the reef system and associated environments. A combination of unsustainable fishing methods, overfishing, a lack of enforcement, and awareness of the importance and ecology of the reefs and the other coastal habitats poses a constant threat to many species inhabiting this area. In response, in 1992 the Department of Wildlife Conservation (DWLC) declared 306.7 km^2 of the Bar Reef as a marine sanctuary. Despite the designation, no management efforts have been implemented by DWLC. However, arrangements are currently being made by the authorities to demarcate the core area of the Bar Reef Sanctuary with the agreement of the local community.

SLED activities in the Discovery and Direction Phases

To pilot-test the SLED approach, the Community Help Foundation (CHF) formed partnerships with a number of local-level organisations. These included the Coastal Resource Management Project (CRMP) of the Ministry of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, Semuthu Fisheries Co-operative Society at Kudawa village, Sea Star Diving Association – Kudawa, St. Sebastian Fisheries Co-operative Society and the women's organisations, which actively participated. During the first two phases of SLED, all the community workshops and fieldwork activities were organised by these local organisations.

Initially, the fieldwork focused on building effective relationships and partnerships with the relevant stakeholders, together with a better understanding of the existing livelihoods and dependency of the community on the coral reef resources. The field team explored people's livelihoods with them, attempting to identify their strengths and aspirations that could enable them to make changes.

During the fieldwork carried out for the first phase of SLED, the field team learnt from the community about their past experiences, the services available to the community, how they used information for decision-making and change, the evolution of the Kudawa settlement, the nature of livelihood activities in which the community was engaged, the current status of the coral reefs and the coastal habitats in the area, community views and attitudes on current livelihoods, household income and expenditure patterns, and other gender-specific issues. As a result of this joint learning process, the field team established a positive relationship with the community members, who were enthusiastic about continuing their participation in SLED activities.

In view of the restrictions imposed on fishing due to the current security situation in Sri Lanka, and the conservation and management efforts being tested in the Bar Reef area, the SLED process has assisted community members in realising the importance of diversifying their livelihood options. It has helped them to recognise their strengths and has given them the confidence to pursue their visions for better livelihoods.

During the Direction Phase, and in particular the work to scope opportunities, the field team undertook activities to develop confidence among the community on the opportunities other than fishing in the village. In this regard, emphasis was placed on opportunities that could be developed based on available resources within the community/ village and consistent with their cultural fabric. As a result of confidence building, the women's groups actively planned for home garden improvement and, in two instances, their male partners began the process of planning for commercial-scale farming activities by shifting from fishing and sea cucumber collection.

SLED Doing Phase

Seaweed farming: As part of the SLED process, the team funded two cages for pilot testing seaweed farming. Continuous monitoring has been undertaken. The testing has shown attractive results. The team also worked with the community to investigate the market potential, which has been found to be very positive. Building on these results, the team is planning to support the community in developing an additional 15 seaweed cages.

Sea bass culture: Based on the positive results shown in a pilot project implemented by CRMP, this activity was selected as a micro-project. In considering the skills and preference of the community to use its own resources, sea bass culture was proposed as an alternative livelihood.

Home garden improvement: During the field investigations and focused group discussions held with women's groups, it was found that most of the home gardens were uneconomically used. Thus, improving home gardens was proposed with the objective of reducing household expenditure on vegetables and fruit. Following the initial results, it was revealed that the home garden improvement programme had brought very positive results and the participants' confidence level had increased. In addition to the first five beneficiaries, arrangements have been made to provide necessary plants and materials for another five beneficiaries.

Facilitation in obtaining professional licences (PADI) for divers and creation of enabling conditions for alternative livelihoods: During the Discovery and Direction Phases, local divers who engaged in sea cucumber and ornamental fish collection expressed their interest in obtaining professional diving licences to enable them to find alternative employment in other sectors in the country or overseas. Following a successful training programme, the SLED team is now assisting the divers with the next steps in finding diving opportunities away from the reef.

Photos: SLED activities in Sri Lanka - fish cage culture and diver certification

Potential for future activities

As mentioned above, as a result of demonstration activities and the outcomes produced through the pilot interventions implemented in Kudawa Village, considerable demand has been created for the continuation and expansion of SLED in the area. In response to the community demand, individual proposals are being prepared by the Marine and Costal Resource Conservation Foundation (MCRCF) to expand the SLED process in the other villages.

To support the realisation of the visions developed within the community, CHF can play an important role in:

- Community mobilisation;

- Planning, implementation and monitoring;

- Identification and development of strategic partnerships and market linkages;

- Developing linkages between the community and government authorities;

- Providing technical support to people (for example, water management, organic fertiliser production and use, feed preparation);

- Supporting livelihood diversification activities such as seaweed and sea bass culture – a pilot test has already commenced at the site – and home garden improvement;

- A skills development programme to broaden community prospects.

SLED team perceptions

- Earlier projects focused more on outside resources, market and technology, and did not fully match the social environment. In contrast, SLED pioneered micro-projects that focused more on using local resources (sea, lagoon, land) without extracting natural resources and remaining consistent with the social environment.

- Many of the previous attempts made to support livelihoods and conservation were focused separately on either issue, but the SLED process integrated both issues.

- As a result of higher levels of confidence built among the team members, continuation of the process was endorsed and a new institution called MCRCF was established to apply the SLED approach to coastal livelihoods development.

Community Help Foundation

CHF was established with a goal of "ensuring sustainable social, economic, educational, cultural development, and establishing peace and co-existence among all communities living in the country". CHF works with underprivileged communities across Sri Lanka, promoting social and cultural values, developing income-generating activities, providing relief during natural disasters, and improving care and livelihood prospects of children.

Community story – changing outlooks for livelihood development

We were born and bred in this village and our lives are bounded by the sea and the lagoon. Always our parents directed us to fishing. According to their knowledge, that was the only available source of income. As the SLED process was in progress, we made an attempt to think differently. Unlike our parents, now we are in a position to direct our children away from the sea and the lagoon. They can see other opportunities available within the village, other than fishing.

"Now we understand that the resource base in the sea is rapidly diminishing, day by day. Earlier, we never thought about sustainability. Now we know the real meaning of sustainability and the importance of conserving the Bar Reef".

– Sugath diver/fisher from Kudawa Village

SLED in Baa Atoll, Maldives

The community

Baa Atoll, located to the northwest of Malé, has a total area of approximately 1,200 km². The atoll comprises 75 islands, 13 of which are inhabited with a combined population of approximately 12,000 while another 6 islands have been developed as resorts.

The community's reliance on corals reefs is significant, not least because they are the basis of the land on which the people live, but also as a key attraction for tourism and a source of building materials, coastal protection and fisheries. Although fishing activity has declined since the resorts opened, fishing remains an important activity for the coastal communities, with both tuna and reef fishing being carried out. The production of handicrafts and other materials for the tourist industry is also significant and Baa is well-known for its fine craftsmanship, especially in weaving and lacquer.

The environment

Baa Atoll is representative of the biodiversity found in the atolls of Maldives. Located on the west side of the Maldivian atoll chain, it is more strongly affected by the south-west monsoon. This drives seasonal currents and upwelling from the surrounding deep ocean that brings with them high concentrations of deep-water nutrients, which in turn draw significant concentrations of whale sharks and manta rays while also contributing to a unique diversity of benthic fauna. Species such as the rare pink hydrozoan corals, bryozoans and sea slugs are endemic to Baa Atoll. Baa has a particularly high density of the ring-shaped reef forms called faros, a peculiar reef structure unique to Maldives, as well as other unique reef forms.

Due to recent changes in demand and commercial exploitation, some of the marine species of Baa are on the brink of extinction. Extensive sand mining for home building is a major cause of sand erosion in most of the islands. Baa Atoll has one of the largest areas of mangroves in the central part of the Maldivian atoll chain. However, people's use of mangroves for firewood has all but removed mangroves in most of the inhabited islands, adding to the speed of beach erosion. Recently, the Government declared two protected sites in Baa: Dhigaliha, an area identified as having the richest marine ecosystem in Baa Atoll; and the island of Olhugiri's, whose unique native vegetation provides one of only two roosting sites in Maldives for the frigate bird.

SLED Activities – Discovery and Direction Phases

In preparation for the SLED process, the SLED field team undertook a process of training in sustainable livelihoods approaches and developed a clear understanding of the SLED approach. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, in particular, gave the field team a very good basis for learning about livelihoods in the Discovery Phase by enabling them to understand the rationale for the fieldwork, critically analyse the information collected and provided suggestions for improving their approach. This involved altering the process for visioning to make it more accessible to the community. In undertaking the visioning process with individuals, groups and the community, the team was able to engage with a wide range of stakeholders who would not normally participate in such approaches. For example, a poor widow had time to think through her visions and presented them at a community meeting. It was the first time she had spoken at such a level, and she drew a great deal of confidence and strength from doing so.

The limited resources allowed for the pilot testing meant that the team was unable to cover the community extensively. However, as the team worked through the Discovery and Direction Phases, other community members and people from neighbouring atolls expressed demands to be included. This was echoed by the representatives from the atoll office and local government who felt SLED could play a central role in initiating the process of community-based development. Indeed, they noted how they would like to include the approach in future Atoll Development Programme projects.

Importantly, as the team worked through the Discovery and Direction Phases, the community gained a better understanding of the various integral components affecting their livelihoods, of which they were previously unaware. They now also realise the importance of building good relationships with various service providers and in looking beyond their own neighbourhood for potential alternative livelihood activities.

Because the ideas of action that were developed in the Direction Phase started from people looking into their strengths and hopes, it made them more acceptable and effective.

Photos: Building a livelihoods framework and group visioning, Baa Atoll, Maldives (© A Rasheed)

Doing Phase

Business and marketing skills training: With special consideration to women enterprise development, traditional skills can be employed to develop livelihoods if crafts people have the skills to develop micro businesses effectively. Some people in the community already possess the traditional skills to make souvenirs and other household items. FEYLI provided training to these people in business and marketing skills, which will help them to develop small enterprises.

Vocational training: Especially aimed at youths in order to help them to diversify their livelihoods/become self-employed, vocational training was identified as one of the most important needs for the island communities. With many people leaving school during the secondary education stage, a lack of vocational skills is critical factor that will inhibit their chances of success. Under the vocational training programme, the following skills were supported: dress decoration, fabric painting and screen printing.

Photos: SLED Doing phase - embroidery and screen printing, Baa Atoll, Maldives (© A Rasheed)

In implementing projects in the Doing Phase, the SLED team was able to access resources from other funding sources. This enabled the team to undertake activities such as providing construction tools, training in short-eat production and home gardening.

Potential for future activities

To continue its role of assisting people through the SLED process, and extend this approach within the communities and on neighbouring islands, FEYLI will need continue:

- Helping people to discover potential opportunities for livelihood activities as the situation changes (continue visioning process);

- Developing the networks between people and other service providers such as transport, finance and marketing;

- Supporting the community in voicing their demands to government and service providers;

- Being there to support people through the process of livelihood change;

- Helping people to develop their skills in areas such as entrepreneurial training (especially for poor women), skills development training/vocational training, marketing experience etc;

- Providing access to information to enable the community to be better informed in their choices;

- Developing decision support services, giving people access to different decision-making tools.

Field team perceptions

- Previously, FEYLI carried out many livelihood projects including ongoing post-tsunami projects. However, very few of the projects' "beneficiaries" carried on the livelihood activity that was aimed them. Following training and participation in the SLED approach, the activities have taken a different approach. FEYLI now has a greater appreciation of the complex and dynamic nature of livelihoods in coastal communities.

- The SLED approach helps participants to see livelihoods in a more holistic way, identifying all the components of people's livelihoods and integrating external factors. It has helped to rectify past mistakes. Previously it was the team or the donor who determined the aid or livelihood activity that a target group should take on. Now the emphasis has shifted to ensuring that the team is guided by individuals, understanding their past, how it has changed, discovering their strengths and using the information to identify what they can do to meet their future aspirations.

- The SLED approach builds self-confidence in community members and helps them to discover their strengths and potential while also helping individuals and the community to develop their visions for the future.

- SLED has helped to initiate a change in a dependent culture where people expect everything to be delivered or provided for them, rather than them seeking what they can do to make their own livelihoods better. Now people see FEYLI as facilitators rather than providers.

- In helping people to assess the best ways to achieve their visions, an understanding has been gained of the various analytical decision-making tools that will reduce risk and make the decisions better. In addition, a new means of enabling continued learning has been developed for the community and for the team. Linkages have been established that will enable the continuing development of the approach based on best practice from other livelihood development projects within South Asia.

Foundation of Eydhafushi Youth Linkage

Established in 1979, and renamed in 2002, FEYLI works to "achieve sustainable socio-economic development, peace and justice for the community of Eydhafushi and Baa Atoll". The main focus areas are improvement of social awareness, livelihood and human resource development of Eydhafushi and Baa Atoll at large. Other areas include promotion of the environment, education and health.

FEYLI conducted a well-being survey of all households of Eydhafushi Island in 2005, and based on the well-being ranking, has provided training and material aid during the past two years to the poorest 50 households in order to enhance or diversify their livelihoods.

Community story – livelihood diversity

Khalid was a fisherman from a very young age. Apart from fishing, he was a construction helper. There he quickly learnt masonry skills and later became a mason, continuing his regular fishing occupation in his spare time. Later due to old age and physical inability, he distanced himself from fishing and masonry work, and learnt the skill of broom making from a family friend. Now it is his major livelihood activity. After the 2004 tsunami, his family received aid from a local NGO for home-shed farming. His wife leads the agriculture activity from which now they earn a decent living.

Khalid was involved in the SLED field work from the start. At first, he was very reserved and sceptical about the questions and it took sometime to break the ice. The team had to very clearly explain to him about its work and role in the project, and work to gain his trust. Eventually, he was very open and co-operative with the team. During the Doing Phase, the team learnt about his life history, the changes that had taken place in his livelihood and his aspirations for the future. During the Direction Phase, the team learnt about his strengths, developed his vision for the future, and found alternative means to enhance and diversify his livelihood activities.

Khalid's vision for the future is "to cultivate on a large-scale, on permanent or long-term leased farmland, with a proper electric irrigation facility established, having the means and know-how to control diseases and pests, having all required input materials (fertiliser, seed, chemicals etc.) locally available, being able to market to his own island, nearby islands and resorts as well as to Malé, with the establishment of a regular and reliable transport mechanism". This comprehensive vision is not something that Khalid had ever articulated before. The SLED approach was the key to him discovering his strengths and past successes, and in building his confidence and vision. He has now started the process of making that vision become a reality.

SLED in Gulf of Mannar, India

The community

The three villages that were selected for the SLED fieldwork are located in the Gulf of Mannar. The predominance of marine based activities and low education levels within the communities indicates the significance that the coral ecosystems have had in sustaining people's livelihoods.

The coral reefs provide a wide range of benefits, including shoreline protection, small-scale fisheries and resources that can be accessed with very limited inputs (e.g., male divers, who are specialised in chank shell, sea cucumber and ornamental fish collection, and women who harvest seagrass and shellfish).

The environment

The Tamil Nadu coast along the Gulf of Mannar is a distinct area where rich coral reef ecosystems are present. It has a chain of 21 islands along a stretch of 140 km between Thoothukudi and Rameswaran and currently encompasses the Gulf of Mannar National Marine Park (National Biosphere Reserve). Some 117 species of stony corals are estimated to inhabit the Gulf of Mannar, which shelter a variety of fauna and flora of economic value. The Gulf of Mannar occupies a prominent place in the cultural heritage and history of India.

A range of human activities are having an impact on the local environment, including the recent Sethusamudram Ship Canal Project, many polluting industries in Thoothukudi, the illegal garnet sand mining industry, trawlers that destroy the seabed by dragging nets, and the nuclear reactor at Koodenkulam, all of which pose a threat to the vulnerable coral reef ecosystem and the livelihoods of the many people who depend on it.

SLED activities – Discovery and Direction Phases

The Peoples Action for Development (PAD) field team has been working with the three coastal communities on applying the SLED approach. The SLED approach has changed the PAD team members' attitudes towards livelihood development, from providing to the community, to empowering the community to facilitate its own change. The team built its work on a robust understanding of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, giving the team members a more systematic understanding of the complexity of people's livelihoods, which they were able to relate to during the SLED activities.

The SLED approach has improved the work of the organisation, particularly with its systematic approach to dealing with livelihood diversity and its focus on people's strengths and potential. Previously, PAD's approach was focused on problems and needs. Many problem-focused processes do not retain the interest of the community since they require long periods in which people focus on what they do not have and the problems they face. That is disempowering, and often leads to a loss of time, energy and money. Additionally, the livelihoods of the community members and their priorities are diverse, and past processes have not enabled this diversity to be reflected, leading to many groups either missing out on development opportunities or being further marginalised by them.

The SLED process begins by helping individuals, peer groups and communities to identify their past achievements, strengths and the existing support systems. Building on this foundation, the visioning process helps individuals, groups and their communities to develop independent plans for achieving their visions and moving forward. As a people-centred and holistic approach, the SLED process empowers people to lead the process of development by giving them voice and choice.

During the vision-building process (individual to group level, and then group to community level), the poorest of the poor participated with total involvement. The inclusive process energised the people, and many were happy and keen to share their experiences. The team felt a sense of confidence among the individuals, groups and communities about the future. The process was internalised and the activities were carried out in a fun manner, which led to the co-operation of all the individuals and groups in developing their community vision as well as in analysing their strengths and support.

A community meeting, where almost all the community members were present, was held for individuals and groups to present their visions. Even the widows felt proud and confident to participate and share their visions. PAD facilitated

the organisation of the meeting to bring out the common/shared elements from each individual's presentation in order to develop a community vision. This process has not developed a dependency culture on outsiders, but instead has strengthened the self-confidence of the individuals and groups.

The individuals, groups and communities now have a broad understanding about past and present life conditions and many have started working towards making their vision a reality. A sense of ownership in the development process is emerging as a result of community participation in the SLED process.

Photos: Youth club coastal cleanup, SLED community visioning meeting, Gulf of Mannar, India (© PAD)

SLED activities – the 'Doing Phase'

PAD is a well-established NGO operating within the Gulf of Mannar, and it was able to use the SLED process to co-ordinate a series of initiatives that were being undertaken with the support of other partners. This allowed PAD to implement the following broad range of projects to respond to the visions developed in the Discovery and Direction Phases.

Mobile doctor's clinic: This activity was planned on the recognition of the importance to the poor of accessible medical treatment, and the implications of ill health in restricting the livelihood options of the poor. PAD has built partnerships with key service providers to bring a mobile doctor's clinic to the communities.

Ornamental fish culture training: Provides an alternative livelihood opportunity to five fishermen who have been banned from wild collection as a result of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve.

Crab and lobster fattening training: Provides a source of income for families reliant on marine resources.

Skill training – Palmyra leaf products: Helps seaweed collectors to find new skills and opportunities away from the marine environment.

Hygienic fish handling: Fishermen have been trained in post-harvest fisheries skills to enable them to get better prices for their catches.

Barefoot rearing training: Provides a basic vet service to the community, which has helped to lower the costs of veterinary services.

Mobile fishers' training: This service, available via mobile phones, provides weather forecasts, market details and fish location advice. This is helping the fishermen to exploit fish resources away from the coral reefs.

Tamil Nadu government welfare scheme: PAD has facilitated linkages between key government service providers and the community to increase the access that fishermen have to welfare schemes, which is opening up opportunities for livelihood change.

Microsoft Unlimited Potential Programme: In linking up with the Microsoft Unlimited Programme, PAD has recognised that computer skills are vitally important in opening up new livelihood opportunities for the community.

Photos: SLED Doing Phase - Mobile medical camp, making palm leaf products, Gulf of Mannar, India (© PAD)

Perceptions of the SLED approach

- Although livelihood thinking was not new to the team, it was felt that the SLED approach demanded integration into the thinking and approach of the organisation as well as the staff. Since the team was conditioned to thinking conventionally, the integration was not readily forthcoming. Although PAD's core strength is its participatory approach, the livelihood approach demanded more than faith in participation. More than generating information, it demanded an analytical as well as an intuitive ability to put everything in perspective

- Previously PAD was using Participatory Rural Appraisal for needs analysis, but the current framework brings out the vision of the community, group and individuals. As this is their vision, the participation level in this approach is greater when compared with previous work.

- Following the visioning exercises, both the staff and the community have gained a broad understanding about past and present life conditions, which they had not thought of before. Now most of them are thinking about their vision and some of them have started working towards making their vision a reality.

- The SLED visioning approach has helped to bring groups together for collective action. In one of the villages, Keelamunthal, after creating community vision the whole community sat together to talk about how to achieve their vision. In that process, 20 fisher groups discussed among the issue themselves and decided to purchase a vehicle to transport their catch to the nearby town. All the groups have provided contributions and, together with support from PAD, have purchased a vehicle.

- In the evaluation exercise, members of the community commented that "previously, the livelihood initiatives came from the outside, but now that we have our own visions, the livelihood initiatives are coming from us".

Potential for future activities

With further support, PAD will assist individuals and the community to move along the right pathways to realising their visions by:

- Strengthening the social linkages and support within the community;

- Strengthening the interface between different levels of government, and between the government and the community;

- Exposing individuals to activities/entrepreneurs within and outside the village;

- Providing skills training, and linkages to service providers and markets;

- Initiating fisher and Palmyra co-operative marketing;

- Sustaining the creative learning centres and 3 'S' (Sun, Sea, Sand) clubs for young children, adolescents and youths;

- Establishing a Village Resource Centre and Village Knowledge Centre to provide people with needs-based information, materials, training and linkages;

- Specific programmes for adolescents on life skills in order to improve their employability in non-fishing sectors;
- Reducing health expenditures by organising regular and periodical health camps through Government Primary Health Centres and NGOs.

Peoples Action for Development

Registered in 1985, PAD established its base in the Gulf of Mannar region in 2002 as a non-profit, non-political, non-religious society that is committed to nurturing interventions for strengthening food and livelihood security in the region through conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

Community story – Velammal

Velammal is a widow who hesitated to participate in the visioning process just like any other shy woman. At 40, Velammal is the head of her family and has four children, all of whom are studying at school. Her father-in-law is staying with her.

Velammal collects seaweed from the nearby island by Vallam, and has done so for the past 10 years. Through this, she earns about Rs 20 to 50 per day. The collection of seaweed is possible only for six months each year, so for the rest of the year she is involved in weaving mats with Palmyra leaves. She sells the mats in the nearby town (Ervadi Tharha) and the income she earns helps in meeting the daily expenditures for basic necessities.

Her most proud occasion was when her daughter completed school with good marks. As a widow, she takes pride in educating her daughter, although it was discouraged by her relatives. After some time, Velammal was happy to share and cherish her strengths with the field team, and identify the support she had mobilised to educate her daughter. This exercise helped to build her Vision Tree.

Velammal presented her vision at the community meeting, and was honoured when some of the common elements of her vision were accepted by the community and integrated into the community vision. It was the first time she had stood in front of the community in a common place and spoken about her achievements, strengths and future aspirations. Everybody praised her because she was educating all her children even though she did not have a stable income. She felt proud of herself and assured the community that her visions to build her own house, and to educate her children to higher standards so that they would be able to secure good jobs, would be realised.