THE LEARNING process

5. Tools for Phase 2: Interviews
People who work in organizations, whatever the mission and purpose of our work, are constantly learning ... but sometimes we ask ourselves:

How can we encourage the ownership of lessons learned by colleagues within the same organization or outside of it?

How can we ensure that the lesson learned is converted into knowledge?

Why would it be worth making the effort to convert an individual lesson learned into a group lesson learned?

How can we contribute our individual lessons learned to the culture of institutional learning?

Are the organizations learning at our pace?

An organization open to learning from its hits and misses is not only willing to improve its current work but also to reconsider its goals and strategies, and even reflect on the pertinence of its institutional mission and make the necessary adjustments. Through commitment to a culture of learning, organizations are also committing to strategies to maximize and scale the impacts of their work, ensure sustainability, inspire others and become weavers of communities of practice.
This material covers these questions and has been developed with the intention of supporting people or organizations interested in strengthening the culture of institutional learning. The "roadmap for a learning process focused on lessons learned", which is the basis for the contents of this material, is the result of almost 10 years of work by the WWF US Forest and Climate team in conjunction with the teams from WWF Colombia, WWF Guyana, WWF Indonesia, WWF Peru and WWF Democratic Republic of Congo. The conceptual and methodological foundations, as well as the various tools provided for consideration, have mainly been developed within the framework of the project From REDD + Agreements to REDD + Results: Generating Results to Secure Consensus, a program supported by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation and Norway's International Climate and Forest Initiative.
The ideas and tools set out here are intended to be a source of inspiration and not a recipe to be followed to the letter. The complete series includes 10 animations and 10 PDFs, one for each video:

1. Conceptual and methodological foundations of the roadmap for the learning process.

2. General introduction to the toolbox for the four phases of the roadmap.

3. Tools for phase 1: Set-up and Framing.

4. Introduction to the tools for phase 2: Implementation of the methodology.


8. Tools for phase 4: Communicating and creating ownership of the results of the learning process.

9. Tool to design mini-communication strategies.

10. Lessons learned and reflections on institutional learning processes.
TOOLS FOR PHASE 2: INTERVIEWS

Remember that during Phase 2, the tools are designed based on methods such as interviews and group exercises. We will now have a closer look at the interviews which, in the context of this learning process approach, are conversations guided by questions and are known as “semi-structured interviews.”

PHASE 2.

INTERVIEWS

The interview script includes an introduction section where the timeframe to conduct the interview is established and is adjusted according to the availability of the interviewee, the context of the experience to be analyzed is explained, and where permission to record the session or take notes is requested. Additionally, a confidentiality clause is presented where the
interviewees are asked whether they authorize including their name in the learning process report and under what conditions.

The questions in the script help guide the conversation and get the interviewee’s perception and knowledge about the key issues being analyzed. In a semi-structured interview, the questions are not read verbatim or in strict order; the interviewer can adjust the script in order to have the best conversation possible with his interviewee; they are free to paraphrase the questions to make them understandable for the interviewee; they can also decide during the conversation that some of the questions are unnecessary and may instead explore other aspects in greater depth.

It is particularly important that both the interviewer and the interviewee have enough context prior to the conversation.
The interviewer must be able to ask questions, request further details, and follow the thread of the conversation when an unforeseen topic arises that they consider relevant for the purposes of the learning process.

Finally, it is essential that the interviewee’s availability be consulted and respected, and that the confidentiality clause be recorded and maintained.
Two types of interviews can be conducted in this phase: a basic interview and an in-depth interview.

1. BASIC INTERVIEW

The basic interview is a short interview in which the script is structured based on some general guiding questions: successes, failures, gaps, perception of achievements, difficulties, challenges, enabling or limiting conditions for the development of the experience, lessons learned, and recommendations.
This type of interview is applied with people who, although they were connected to the experience, aren’t necessarily aware of the day-to-day details, yet their perception about the experience is of interest for the learning process. Normally, it doesn’t take more than 30 minutes, if conducted individually.

Because of its characteristics, the interview script can be applied individually or to a group of 2 to 3 people simultaneously, taking care to always record the different answers; it is not necessary to look for consensus, or a unified response. Simply capture the voices of the people being interviewed.
The in-depth interview script is structured based on the guiding questions for each key issue. Remember that the key issues, as well as the guiding questions, are determined during the framing phase: they are the issues or areas around which the group of key actors wishes to reflect and gather lessons learned and recommendations.

We recommend that a maximum of 10 in-depth interviews be conducted with people carefully selected. The criteria to select these people, and even the selection process itself, should be carried out during Phase I, setup and framing.
Several in-depth interview scripts can be designed, even one for each key issue, if necessary. It is also possible to design one script and decide which questions will be applied to which people and which can be left out. We have learned that due to the characteristics of this script it is better to always apply it in individual, not group, interviews.

To keep in mind...
There are in-depth interviews that can take up to two hours. It is important to warn the interviewee when setting up the appointment—face-to-face, virtual, or by phone—to determine if it can be done in one conversation, or in several moments. We recommend including in the in-dept interview scripts the same introductory section with reminder notes for the interviewer, the basic information sheet, and the confidentiality clause.
Important recommendation: the group exercises (workshops, focal groups, etc.) are often designed using the in-depth interview scripts as a guide. Given this, those people who participate in an in-depth interview should not participate in the group exercises as it would be repetitive for them.

To continue with our learning process ..................

Now that we know more about the interviews, we will focus on the group exercises, which favor the development of collective thinking to capitalize on lessons learned, recommendations, and general reflections.
1. Basic general interview script

(for people who, although they were connected to the experience, do not have in-depth knowledge of the problems or process)

- Learning process for (name of the experience being analyzed)
- Month/year

Fill in the basic identification sheet for all interviews:

- Date and means/place of the interview ________________________________
- Start time: _________ End time: __________
- Interviewee's full name: __________________________________________
- Organization/institution and position __________________________________
- He/she accepted his/her name being included in the learning process report and associated with textual quotes from the interview: YES ___ NO: ___
- Person conducting the interview: _________________________________
NOTE FOR THE FACILITATION TEAM:

- The general basic interview may last 30 to 60 minutes. Check the interviewee's available time. And adjust accordingly.
- Remember that before starting the interview, the interviewee must be told that this conversation is part of the learning process exercise that in short consists of x, y and z.
- Authorization is requested to record or take notes.
- Authorization is requested to associate their name with the textual quote in the learning process report or, if they prefer it not to be mentioned, that will be done and reported before starting the interview.

1. What was your role in carrying out the experience (adjust with the name of the experience in question) and from when?
2. What have been the most important achievements to date?
3. What is the balance between what was expected and what was achieved?
4. What has worked well and why?
5. What has failed and why? What has been done to correct the failures?
6. Gaps: are there any actions that should have been performed that were not carried out? What were they? Do you know why they were not carried out?
7. Think of the answers you gave to the previous questions and in summary: what are the main recommendations you would give to the various stakeholders in the experience and other interested parties in similar processes?
8. Do you have anything you would like to add that you were not asked about?
1. Sample script for the in-depth interview

Example: Learning process for "Multi-stakeholder dialogue for conservation in conflict zones".  

NOTE for the facilitation team:
- The in-depth interview may take around 2 hours. Inform the interviewee in advance to decide whether to conduct the entire interview, adjust it or divide it into several occasions.
- Remember that before starting the interview, the interviewee must be told that this conversation is part of the learning process exercise that in short consists of x, y and z.
- Authorization is requested to record or take notes. Authorization is requested to associate their name with the textual quote in the learning process report or, if they prefer it not to be mentioned, that will be done and recorded at the start of the interview.

1 This is a fictitious case, constructed solely for educational purposes.
Fill in the basic identification sheet for all interviews:

- Date and place of the interview: ..............................................................
- Start time: _____ End time: _____
- Interviewee's full name: ...........................................................................
- Organization/institution and position: .................................................
- He/she accepted his/her name being included in the learning process report and associated with textual quotes from the interview: YES:___ NO:___
- Interviewer:.................................................................

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The in-depth interview script is designed taking into account the key issues of the analysis, defined by the key stakeholders. In this example, we assume that the key issues are as follows:

- The multi-stakeholder dialogue process within the context and the process context.
- The dialogue process management model: its organization, operation and governance.
- The process objectives and, in particular, the construction of public policy as a fundamental objective.
- The relationship between the stakeholders involved in the process and its implications for progress and achievement of objectives.
- Links between the national level of the dialogue process and regions and local areas.
Questions According to Key Issues

1) What was your role in carrying out the multistakeholder dialogue process and from when?

2) Do you consider that the people involved in the multi-stakeholder dialogue process are clear about/and share the process objectives and / the paths to achieving the objectives? (Why or why not?) Is there any path that should be taken that has not been included so far in the multi-stakeholder dialogue process?

3) From your point of view, what are the underlying causes of the social and environmental conflicts dealt with in the multi-stakeholder dialogue process? Do you consider it feasible to manage those conflicts without tackling the underlying causes? Why or why not? And, if so, how?

4) What is your perception of the possibility of transforming social and environmental conflicts based on public policy? (Explore: how should that policy be formulated? What elements should be taken into consideration?). NOTE for the interviewer: if the perception is that public policy plays an important role in transforming social and environmental conflicts, answer the question: is the multi-stakeholder dialogue process the appropriate scenario to construct that public policy, or does it have the potential to be? Why and how or why not? If the interviewee does not give much importance to policy ... ask the following question:
What is the multi-stakeholder dialogue process’s role in transforming the social and environmental conflicts considered in the problems stated in the previous question?

5) Regional and local levels: what role do or should they play in solving the social and environmental conflicts that the multi-stakeholder dialogue process concerns? How is the national level articulated, or how should it be articulated, with regional and local processes?

6) The decision-making models of institutions participating in the multistakeholder process and their relationship with the local-regional-national connection: what has worked well? What has failed? What gaps are there? And why?

7) The dynamics of social organizations at regional and local levels and their relationship with representation and decision-making at the national level: what has worked well? What has failed? What gaps are there? And why?

8) Which factors enable or limit the multi-stakeholder dialogue process in advancing towards its purpose?

9) The fact of having established an agreement to begin the dialogue process: what aspects has the process enabled and/or limited?

10) Do you think the multi-stakeholder dialogue process has contributed to or affected the relationship between institutions, the private sector and communities or their social organizations? Why? How?
11) What other stakeholders do you think should be part of the multi-stakeholder dialogue process? Why and with what role?
12) What has the multi-stakeholder dialogue process contributed to conservation? What evidence is there to support that those conservation advances may be attributed to the process?
13) Think of the answers you gave to the previous questions and in summary: what are the main recommendations you would give to the various parts of the multi-stakeholder dialogue process when taking the decision to resume the process? Or to other stakeholders that want to start similar processes?
14) Do you have any additional comments, anything you want to speak about that you have not been asked?
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