Simulation Games – A Creative Tool for Capacity Building

Experience from the *Learning for Sustainability* Approach

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Games that simulate complex realities to be dealt with in teams are an effective tool for fostering interactive learning processes. They link different levels of decision-making in the household, community and societal contexts. Negotiation and harmonisation of different perceptions and interests, be it within or between different households, form the basis of a common strategy for sustainable development.

The Centre for Development and Environment, in collaboration with its partners, develops simulation games for capacity building in the context of development cooperation.

Debriefing - reflecting on and evaluating the course of the game - is an integral component and a key to successful transfer of learning.

The 'Sustainable Livelihood Strategies and Community Development' simulation game

Simulation games…

- … are not a stand-alone tool but an **integral element in training modules;**
- … are particularly suitable for developing **social and communicative skills,** as well as problem-solving and decision-making capacity;
- … make **different perspectives** on systemic interrelations and dynamics tangible in the problem context;
- … trigger **decision-making and negotiation processes** within one's own team and between different teams. Participants learn to develop strategies jointly, plan short- and long-term measures, seek a balance between individual and collective interests, and find strategies for adapting to changing conditions;
- … stimulate **lively and interesting discussions,** as players find themselves confronted with different types of decision-making and action related to the reality of their daily lives.

Target group:
stakeholders in community development (farmers, local authorities, local NGOs, etc.)
Number of players:
6 to 15, subdivided into 3 households
Duration:
2 to 3 hours, plus a debriefing session
Moderation: by a game supervisor

The objective of the game is to develop sustainable livelihood strategies at the household level and to create favourable conditions at the community level in order to improve wellbeing and deal with events as they occur.

The game links different levels of decision-making and action, i.e. the household and community levels. A coherent and diversified household strategy is needed to deal with events that occur in the social, economic and ecological realms, and to improve a household's wellbeing. A successful livelihood strategy combines productive and income-generating activities with investments in social security, education, and strategic activities such as searching for synergies and innovations.

With a concerted strategy for community investment, and cooperation among households, communal and individual wellbeing can be positively enhanced.

When integrated in capacity building, games are used …

- … **to introduce a new topic,** as they convey an initial overview of relations, links, and dynamics, and make complexity easier to grasp.
- … **to identify key aspects for training,** as the course of the game and the debriefing reveal already acquired knowledge as well as gaps in knowledge.
- … **to create a common reference framework** (the shared game experience) for subsequent discussions.
- … **to test knowledge newly acquired** in a training course.

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