Creating a process for change

This process is to be adapted to your environment. It is not meant as a list to be followed step by step, but rather as a check, to make sure that you have all the necessary ingredients to allow the opportunities to be realised.

For every problem there is an opportunity and with every opportunity there is a chance to shape change!

The **first step** is to take an **appraisal** or close look at the problem. At this stage it pays to take as wide a view as possible, looking at all the parts of the problem and all of the people involved in it.

- What are the major changes in your area?
- What problems are caused by these changes?
- What are the opportunities that arise from them?
- Who benefits and loses from them?
- Who are the people currently involved in these problems? Who else could be involved in developing opportunities?

The **second step** is **engagement.** Once the problems have been looked at carefully it is time to work out the best ways to bring about opportunity and change. The following are needed to create a common vision and action plan:

- Consensus building. Work out the priorities with everyone concerned.
- Each individual has a part to play and a contribution to make.
- Attempt to create new partnerships between different actors.
- Responsibilities must be set out and the role of each person must be identified. Look at the possibilities of using those who helped create the problem. Look for the benefits that the opportunities will bring them.

The **third step** is about **action and implementation** – deciding what needs to be done and doing it.

- Action takes place when everyone is agreed on a common purpose.
- Once an action plan has been agreed, it is important to let people take on responsibilities that complement the skills, knowledge, commitment and finances that they bring into the process.
- Each member has their own unique part to play within the system.

The **fourth step** is to examine what you have done and **assess the progress** you have made towards the vision of your objective. Remember the results will be the beginning of a process, not the end.

- Maintain people's commitment, stay aware of the long-term aims. Use the media, schools and workshops to explain to others what you want to achieve.
- Conduct frequent and regular monitoring, using indicators that clearly show impacts upon the livelihoods of the poor and the quality of the environment.
- Share your experiences and learn from others. What you have begun is part of a process of change, constantly looking to find new people and new directions to move forward.
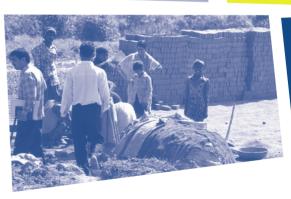
Living between urban and rural areas

Shaping change for improved livelihoods and a better environment

Guidelines for strategic environmental planning and management of the peri-urban interface

dpu

The Development Planning Unit
University College London

Your environment

The living environment between rural and urban areas is a patchwork of:

urban land uses
housing for rich and poor, as well as industry

natural land uses
lakes and forests

rural land uses
farming, fishing and mining

It is also a diverse area, where households work, live and socialise. An area that offers people access to work in the city or on farms. Caught between the worlds of urban and rural living, this area is often used as the gateway from one to the other. Does this sound like the area in which you live?

Different institutions, types of custom, law and practice affect the decisions and actions taken within the area. Unlike urban or rural areas, the patchwork is a difficult area to organise, allowing some important issues and people to pass completely unrepresented. They include the **environment** and the **poorer people** of the area!

Are they represented in your area?

What makes this area so important?

Often located within this area are resources, such as waterways for drinking water, forests for firewood and mines for building materials, metals and fuel. These resources keep both city and countryside in motion.

If they are destroyed or degraded, alternative sources may have to be found a great distance away. This means time and money are lost travelling to and transporting back the necessary resource.

As environmental change occurs we need to be aware of its effects on the area we live in and the livelihoods of those within it.

What creates environmental change?

Environmental change often occurs without people realising it is happening. A reason for this is the fragmentation and overlap of institutional organisations working in the area. Regulations, policies and planning mechanisms are usually designed to deal with either rural or urban areas, not with the interaction between the two.

When changes occur:
- The environment is damaged.
- The poorer people of the area tend to suffer the most, because,
  - *they rely heavily upon depleting resources such as water, firewood and local produce.*
  - *their health and living standards often suffer because they live close to the sources of pollution.*

Most environmental change occurs in three ways.

- **Changes in land use:** for example, from agricultural to industrial or residential land uses.
- **Changes in the use of natural resources:** for example, de-forestation, water depletion and soil erosion.
- **Changes in the generation of waste:** for example, increased solid and liquid waste resulting in water and soil pollution.

These changes create:

Problems
i.e., soil erosion, water pollution, ill health

Opportunities
i.e., diversified livelihoods, better transport and access to education and urban markets

Are these changes occurring in your area?

Who is affected by these *problems* and *opportunities* and how?

Changes driven by urban and rural areas affect people's life and livelihoods in different ways, depending of their gender, age and ethnicity. These effects can be measured in five ways, each one effected differently by reducing or increasing people's access to different assets.

Natural assets: such as land, water and environmental resources

Social assets: such as membership of groups and access to wider institutions within society

Financial assets: such as savings and access to credit

Human assets: such as skills, knowledge and health

Physical assets: such as transport, shelter and energy

Turning *problems* into *opportunities*

It is not easy to find opportunities for change. But a starting point is to consider how the problems occurred and who was involved in their creation. Consider three elements to the process and shape your actions around them:

Strategic
Choose areas where there are possibilities for change. You cannot tackle all environmental problems at once.

The bad effects of change affect some people more than others, yet eventually the effects will concern everyone. In the same way, positive opportunities may begin by benefiting some people more than others. However these opportunities grow. Like a stone thrown in a stream, they cause ripples that stretch further and further outwards.

Incremental
Opportunities must be taken step by step. Problems must be worked at systematically, moving gradually to turn them into opportunities. The benefits may be small at first, but they will multiply and lead to others.

Participative
In the end environmental changes affect everyone living in the area. This means everyone benefits when a situation improves.

A community needs to work together, using the strengths that different people and organisations can bring. For example the problem of solid waste affects:

- **Those with practical knowledge:** waste collectors and waste disposal companies.
- **Those with institutional knowledge:** municipalities, universities and NGOs.
- **Those with financial assets:** regional and state governments, land fill contractors.
- **Those with commitment:** farmers whose land is at risk, people living close to waste sites, NGOs.
- **Others involved:** people who generate the waste.