

# Synthesis Report

## NCCKMC Action Learning Group

Prepared by Carl Jackson (Westhill Knowledge Group) and Chiranjibi Rijal (Development Inn Pvt. Ltd)  
21 June 2012

### Introduction

The purpose of the NCCKMC Action Learning Group is the Strengthening project, rather than the more general issue of climate change and development in Nepal. Clearly the two are closely related but for climate change and development to succeed it is important that the NCCKMC becomes stronger. The Action Learning Groups are an opportunity for NCCKMC Staff and Partners to learn together during the project how to overcome challenges, explore questions and take advantage of opportunities to improve delivery and ultimately impact on climate change and development. To this end the concept of Action Learning was introduced to participants in an Inaugural ALG meeting at the NCCKMC Technical Workshop on 4<sup>th</sup> August 2011 (see Annex for details on the model process and agenda for ALG):

- Action Learning Groups offer opportunities for reflection on experience for staff and partners of NCCKMC so that learning can be quickly acted upon to enhance the Strengthening project
- Through membership of a group that meets at NAST every month to share ideas and give each other helpful feedback
- Supported by a convener who ensures that everyone is heard and the group remains motivated
- Following the eleven essential values of Action Learning<sup>1</sup>
  - Membership must be voluntary – forced participation undermines trust
  - Individuals take responsibility for action to bring about positive change
  - Reflection on past experience is central to new learning
  - Each person is the expert on their own experience
  - The group offers support but also a challenge to individuals' reflection
  - The group practices empathy to stand in the other person's shoes
  - The experience should be personally empowering
  - Members pay attention to each other by actively listening and sharing time
  - The detail of discussions within the group remains confidential
  - Commitment over time is essential to build confidence and see change
  - The process values the whole person in all their complexity

Having introduced the concept of Action Learning and explored in practice how groups might function, participants were asked to say if they would be interested in joining the group formally. We were looking for between 6-8 participants and 17 people put their names forward. Everyone was contacted after the workshop to hear more about their expectations and commitments and to confirm the group's membership and start dates.

### ALG Meetings

The NCCKMC ALG has so far met five times in August and December 2011 and January, February, and May 2012. Eleven members formed the group with most attending 4 or five times. Seven members were research staff at NAST, two members were knowledge management staff at NCCKMC and one member was a university lecturer.

**Learning topics explored** through the group's meeting covered 19 topics. This list shows that most members of the ALG raised shared 2 learning topics over the five meetings. On average each topic was discussed in two meetings:

- Perception of climate change towards Knowledge Management
- Activities of NCCKMC

---

<sup>1</sup> Essential values taken from "Action Learning" (1992) McGill & Beaty, Kogan Page

- Climate Change Research Grant of NCKMC
- Climate Change Knowledge Management and its Challenges
- Ways of Climate Change Knowledge Dissemination for Local People
- Collection of the CC knowledge in the material from quantitative and reliability of data
- UNFCCC Durban COP17 and Nepal SWOT Analysis
- Communication strategy - Climate change portal: NAST's press release and television programme; Nepal climate change update
- Research on Fluorinated compounds incorporated in higher plants
- Soil biodiversity on high Himalayas for vegetation shifting
- Bio briquettes from Pines
- An article on fastest growing tree and carbon sequestration
- Women involvement in biodiversity issues like using of forest product and agriculture
- Tree line dynamics with climate change
- Popularization and translation
- Himalayan seed bank
- Digital Elevation Modeling (DEM)
- Regional policy dialogue and mobile library
- Plant species conservation plan in Nepal for rare endangered threatened plants

**Learning points that emerged** from the five ALG meetings can be grouped in three areas and included:

*Knowledge management on climate change and development*

- Suggestions from ALG and experience from works helps to guide work on popularisation and translation of knowledge such as adding missing content, planning, using published materials and filtering information
- The Mobile Library activity of NCKMC would be better with pre-distribution of CC quiz book and CC materials would be better with input from the ALG
- Hearing about the experience of the policy dialogue and mobile library campaign gave good ideas for research information dissemination
- Help in organising work and multiple ideas will help to bring better work
- The need to communicate efficiently in interactions with climate change practitioners and experts
- Need to transfer knowledge to the grassroots level, making the findings of research more communicative and understandable to common people
- Language barrier seems to hindering data collection from the field
- Climate change knowledge management is also a social issue
- A suitable means for sharing climate change knowledge may be school programs, developing IEC materials, coordination with CBOs, VDCs and DDCs through outreach activities (networking and co-operation). Need for capacity building of these organisations to enable them to use the knowledge shared
- Information is scattered due to lack of effective and efficient institutional set up for access to information and quality of information
- Knowledge integration is hard because of different disciplinary perspectives, mandates of institutions and bureaucratic challenges. This suggests a need for horizontal translation of knowledge between disciplines and synthesis
- Different cultural / ethnic framings of knowledge also call for different knowledge sharing mechanisms

*Knowledge of Climate Change and Development*

- Gaining real knowledge on climate change issue
- I was able to learn about different news related to CC research and events, different perspectives, and policies of different countries working in the area of climate change
- Strengths of national initiatives on CC include National Policy 2011, NAPA and LAPA. But lack of institutional coordination is a weakness

- The effect of neighbouring countries (India and China) on the climate of Nepal
- United Nations Environment Program study has shown, the mainly voluntary commitments to reduce GHGs due to take effect before 2020 are simply not enough to do the job
- The involvement of women in biodiversity and conservation requires that we gather more literature on women's role in climate change
- There is a lack of critical feedback in environmental policy making processes
- There is a problem of selecting between alternatives due to lack of intellectual thinking being incorporated into policy processes
- People from remote area thinking how to be climate resilient but institutional development is challenge

#### *Research Issues in Climate Change and Development*

- Computer modelling for species distribution and plant conservation is a new concept in the context of Nepal and could generate the base line information that is needed in CC studies
- Sharing at the ALG helps to get the Pros and Cons of the research conducted
- Modelling of species for the whole of Nepal using GS and RS roof is very new for me so that it will definitely help my learning
- The Digital Evaluation Tool for research is expensive for the researcher and the free downloaded version has so many errors
- There may be positive effects of climate change for different groups in different contexts but there is a lack of baseline data and this makes targeting of information difficult (will it be benefits or costs for this group in this context?). Maybe it will be possible to use proxy indicators for baselines
- Other areas of research need covering away from conventional research on climate change

**Reflections on members experience of participating in the group** were sought at the fifth planned meeting of the NCCKMC Action Learning Group. Five key questions were explored:

#### *1. Since August 2011 what is the most significant change you have made in how you manage knowledge on climate change and development?*

- I was helped in finding the real picture of climate change
- I understood that collection, review and editing of information helps in filtering knowledge
- I read new articles about climate change and vegetation response
- I developed the habit of sharing knowledge
- I gathered information about NCCKMC activities and shared it with members
- I came to know effective ways of knowledge management (KM), knowledge documentation (KD), knowledge accessibility (KA) and knowledge learning encouragement (KLE)
- I got to know how climate change and development could be managed though not fully but somehow
- I found how to manage knowledge and share it to others by collecting it through various experts, researchers, journals and books
- I realized the role of effective communication in climate change issues, that we still lack
- I became more active regarding current issues in climate change and environment through this team learning approach
- I understood about transferring knowledge to local people / friends and to my community
- I got the habit of sharing research experience in a group and getting involved in broad discussions
- It helped in conducting a workshop and training program on Biomass Briquetting and Climate Change
- It helped in sharing my experience to students and local level people
- I gained experience in voluntary knowledge sharing

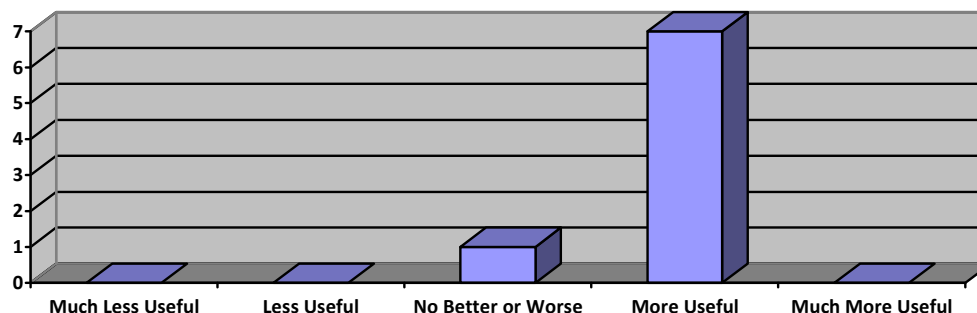
2. *What was the most useful feedback you received in the ALG meetings?*

- Support for NCCKMC publishing information materials in Nepali language and working on the ground level on climate change
- To broaden the concept of my research, for example in the direction of policy
- To focus my research information gathering on national and local issues more than on initial international level scenarios
- I was told that my presentations were informative
- To use training needs assessment before so that the expectations of trainees were met more effectively
- To correlate my knowledge on biotechnology and genetics with climate change perspectives
- To give more scientific reasoning for the news items shared in the NCCKMC e-Bulletin by collecting studies and research related to the articles

3. *What one advice would you give to others managing knowledge on climate change and development?*

- Form an open knowledge sharing platform that could be an Action Learning Group e-Discussion / Forum
- Dissemination should be shared to ground level too
- Organise frequent Action Learning Groups
- Run a research group alongside an Action Learning Group where people can share their knowledge and experience of a shared field of enquiry
- Relate the impact and opportunities of climate change to the livelihoods of people
- Share knowledge because it broadens your knowledge and confidence
- Lets develop your knowledge sharing habit
- Don't hesitate to share your work and the knowledge you gain
- Participate in workshops and training that give thorough knowledge on climate change and development
- Learn lessons from friends and colleagues on your climate change and development topic and share it with others because sharing is knowledge management itself
- In a multi-linguistic country like Nepal focus on knowledge dissemination in different mother tongues through peoples' participation and discussion

4. *How useful is an Action Learning Group compared to normal meetings?*



5. *Should the NCCKMC Action Learning Group continue as a self-organised group?*

- All members said yes it should continue

- it is our own responsibility
- it should be well structured to achieve its objective
- it should be organised around common research topics
- do we have the experience to conduct effective meetings
- Two members, Pawan Neupane and Manju Sapkota of NAST volunteered to be co-facilitators for the first six months (other volunteers should be sought after another five months)
  - one person would lead facilitation of calling and running a ALG every other month and the other person would support as necessary
  - the next ALG meeting will be held on 29 June 2012
  - Pawan and Manju to send out invitations
  - NAST has offered NCCKMC as an ongoing venue for ALG meetings

### **Recommendations for the Future of Action Learning**

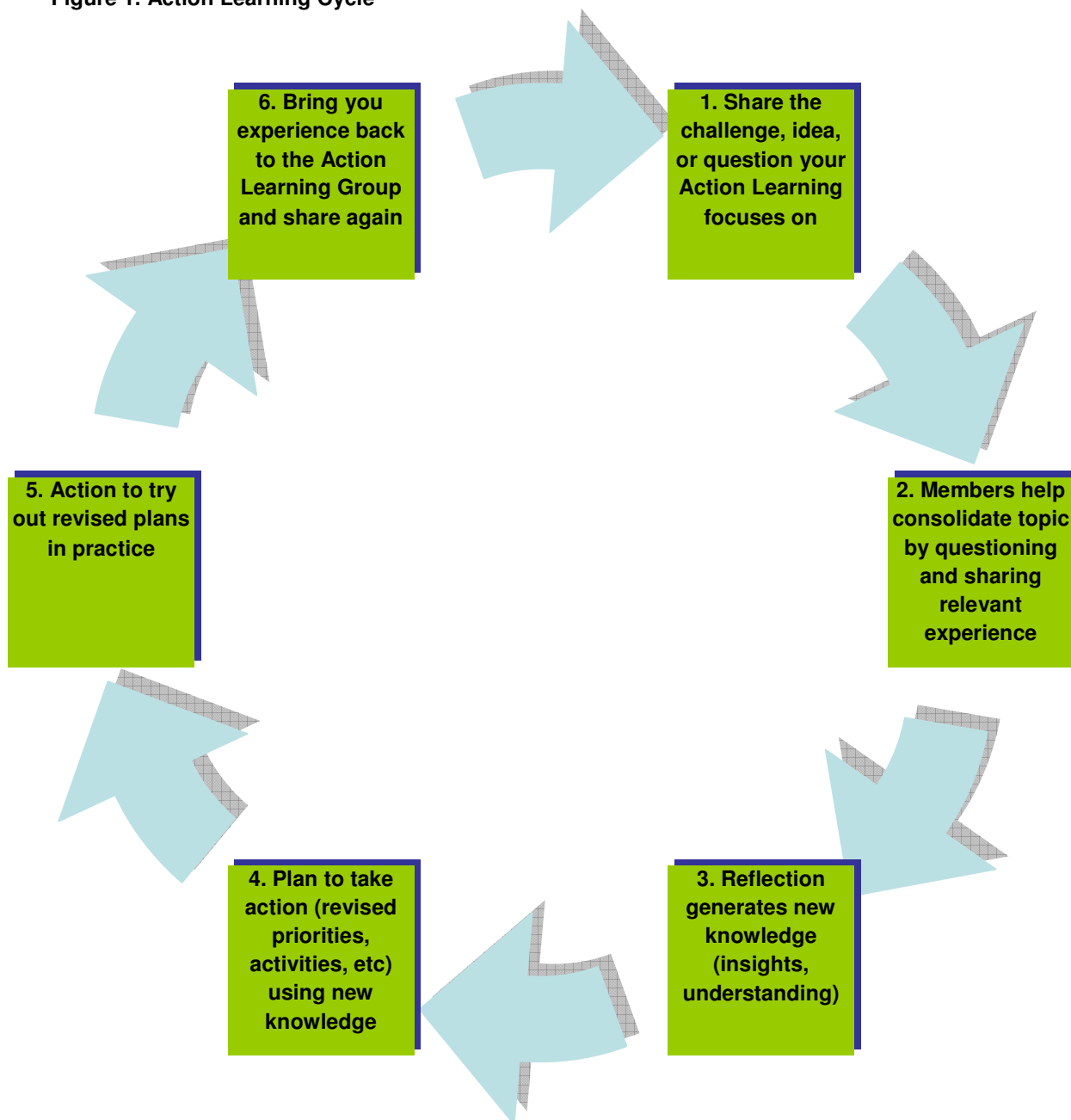
Based on feedback captured during the Action Learning Group and the reflection session recorded above the following recommendations are made for the future of Action Learning on Climate Change and Development:

1. The wish of members to continue as a self-organised Action Learning Group associated with NCCKMC should be supported
2. ALGs should seek to include people from other areas such as I/NGOs and government as well as NAST
3. There should be closer involvement of ALG members in NCCKMC activities
4. In future the NCCKCM ALG should focus around members with a more closely shared set of learning goals and recruit new members similarly interested and / or form into two more focused groups
5. Experience in facilitating Action Learning Groups should be shared so that groups can be set up by other organisations and at district level nationally

## Process

Action Learning happens when individuals voluntarily form a group that follows a six step process which begins with a regular learning meeting (in our case every six weeks) and follows through individual action on chosen topics in the time before the next meeting when the cycle starts again. The Action Learning Group stays together for six or more months and each individual works on their chosen topic over this time frame. The Figure 1. below sets out the steps. . Individuals go through steps 1-4 at the meeting and 5-6 in between meetings.

**Figure 1. Action Learning Cycle**



## Outline agenda

For a half-day Action Learning Group with seven members a typical meeting would have an agenda similar to that outlined below. In this outline the presentation slots are of two differing lengths to reflect that fact that not all members will want as much discussion time at each meeting. A meeting in the afternoon would follow a similar pattern from 14:00-18:00

Time	Activity
09:00-09:30	Opening and Agreement on Allocation of Time
09:30-10:00	Member 1 Discussion
10:00-10:15	Member 2 Discussion
10:15-10:30	Member 3 Discussion
10:30-11:00	Tea & Coffee Break
11:00-11:30	Member 4 Discussion
11:30-12:00	Member 5 Discussion
12:00-12:15	Member 6 Discussion
12:15-12:45	Member 7 Discussion
12:45-13:00	Review and Close

At the initial meeting of the group it would be appropriate for each member to have twenty minutes to share the challenge, idea or question they will be acting on and learning about and receive questions to help consolidate this and their first plan of action. This also means there is additional time for the convener to help the group agree their principles for discussion in opening the meeting and to reinforce messages on commitment to action and attendance at meetings in the closing. The principles for discussion should be agreed through consensus by the group and typically cover points like: confidentiality; one person speaking at a time; active listening; not making fun of or undermining each other; attending all meeting; individual responsibility for acting on our chosen topics.

At each subsequent half-day meeting the convener helps the group to agree how much time each individual needs to share their experience and receive support from the group. This could be as much as half an hour or less but all members always have an opportunity to be heard at every meeting. To help make this decision, members should bring a note stating: previous action plan; actions since last meeting; what I want to focus on this meeting; the time I think I need. The convener also helps to open and close the meeting, keep time and ensure that the group keeps to the principles for discussion.

In sharing their challenge, idea or question and experience from acting on their plan since the last meeting members can find it useful to have the following structure in mind to help organise their thoughts:

1. What I did
2. What happened
3. What was different from what I expected  
And / Or  
What I did not do – why – what I did instead
4. What I could or have learnt from this experience
5. What my still to do action points are

Having shared this other members are then invited to question (critically but constructively) and share their relevant experience. To conclude their individual discussion each member should verbally reflect on points like:

6. What is the challenge, idea, question now?
7. What actions could I take next?
8. What should be my priority for action by next meeting?

### Contact Information

For further information on Action Learning Groups please contact:

- Carl Jackson: [carl.jackson@wkg.uk.net](mailto:carl.jackson@wkg.uk.net)
- Chiranjibi Rijal: [csrijal@gmail.com](mailto:csrijal@gmail.com)