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Advocacy for change:

Lessons from Guatemala,
Brazil, and USA



Chapter 1

SYSTEMATIZATION: BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

by Esteban Tapella





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Lessons from Guatemala,
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Abstract

This pack presents the results of the Systematization of Advocacy and Campaign Experience in ActionAid Americas (2007 – 2008) carried out by IASL and ActionAid Americas. The aim of the systematization project was to provide an opportunity for countries in the Americas to critically examine, together with other actors, their advocacy experiences. Through a methodology called systematization which has its origins in Latin America different actors involved in advocacy or campaigns critically recalled what the experience was about, analyzed the rationale for the choices made, how and why different factors intervened to shape or change the intervention over time, and what processes of change emerged from the experience.

Learning from our advocacy work and disseminating the various advocacy and campaign experiences that took place in the last two years in the work of ActionAid Americas were two of the central objectives of the Systematization of Advocacy and Campaign Experience in ActionAid Americas. Learning, as stated in the ActionAid Shared Learning: A Working Guide (2007), is a social process because it happens through relationships between people and the ongoing dialogues that they have with others. ActionAid Americas through its close interaction, discussion and exchange with partners, communities, poor and excluded people and other stakeholders in the work for rights has learned in various areas but particularly in a specific area, which is advocacy, as advocacy is core work in the region. The way we work with other actors through organised and coordinated actions for change in policy, public attitudes and socio-political practices has generated lessons and learning that need to be shared and disseminated.

The pack 'Advocacy for Change' includes a CD and two DVDs. The CD includes an introduction and three chapters. Rosario Leon provides an introduction to the systematization project and highlights some of the key moments of the experience. In Chapter 1 Esteban Tapella (Consultant on Systematization) presents the theoretical framework adopted for this systematization, the basic concepts and methodological considerations. Chapter 2 is about the experience of Advocacy on Comprehensive Youth Development Law in Guatemala, systematized by ActionAid Guatemala in coordination with the local partners SODEJU-FUNDAJU. This experience is also synthesized in a video in one of the DVDs of the pack. Chapter 3 includes the experience of work of ActionAid USA with a coalition of NGOs around the Farm Bill in the United States of America. Finally, the experience on the National Education Campaign, systematised by ActionAid Brazil in coordination with Ação Educativa, a local partner, is presented as a video in the other DVD of the pack.



Presentation

“Sistematizacion! What’s that?” This was my response, a few years back, on hearing this strange sounding term for a Latin American methodology for critical reflection and learning. At the time, we were finalising AAI’s approach to shared learning, and were identifying existing and new learning methods and processes we could implement to support our concept of learning.

ActionAid’s concept of learning is based on four core elements: learning is a social and collective process; learning should be focused on practice; learning involves questioning what we know and building new critical knowledge for change; and learning flourishes best in supportive learning environments.

Systematisation as a methodology has all these core elements. Translated into English, systematisation, which has its origins in Latin America in the 60s, loosely means ‘the act of organizing something according to a system or a rationale’.

Through systematisation practitioners and activists critically reflect on and make sense of an experience, turning the lessons we derive from that reflection into new knowledge, that is explicit, which can inform the new round of practice, and be communicated to others who may also benefit (Morgan, 2009). Importantly it is a new form of knowledge production that turns the traditional relationship between practice and theory on its head: instead of applying theory to practice, we build theoretical or conceptual understanding about an issue from the systematisation of experience or practice (Jara, 2006).

As IASL, we believe that systematisation is a powerful methodology that can support AAI and its allies critically reflect on our practice for change and construct new forms of knowing. This knowledge will assist us to deepen and transform our work, and support new ways of working and struggling towards a change in this world of ours.

Our Latino colleagues, and especially Rosario Leon (at the time the IASL Advisor for LAC), have in the past two years greatly supported AAI’s orientation to and uptake of the systematisation methodology. We now have a small collection of existing written materials in English; we have some core documents translated into English; we have trained over 35 colleagues in the Africa Region in the basics of systematisation; and we have a simple English guide to systematisation (available at the end of June 2009).

Most importantly, we have piloted the methodology through the systematisation of three advocacy and campaigns experiences in the LAC region, which are now presented here and which we hope you, the reader, will benefit from reading.

Samantha Hargreaves
Shared Learning Coordinator
Impact Assessment and Shared Learning



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Chapter 1

SYSTEMATIZATION: BASIC CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

by Esteban Tapella¹.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the development field there are a wide range of experiences that are insufficiently known and/or not properly valued and documented. Although technical staff and teams from NGOs, public or private institutions and cooperation agencies usually reflect and discuss implementation, positive results and mistakes of their intervention, and also discuss how their actions and advocacy work could be improved in the future, this reflection and knowledge are rarely documented and systematically communicated.

The decision to systematize an experience, whether a project, programme, an advocacy action, etc, lies in the idea that *experiences* must be used to generate understanding and that lessons learned can improve ongoing implementation and contribute to wider knowledge. As Gujit *et al* (2006) put it, learning from action does not happen by accident; it needs to be planned for in project design, in staff job requirements, in the cycle of meetings and reflections, in the general project culture, and so forth. Most development projects are not designed to be action-learning processes. The challenge, therefore, is how to promote, design and conduct learning processes for experiences that were not designed with that purpose in mind.

The process of systematization² encourages participation by implementing collective reflection on how a shared experience developed. It strengthens the abilities, skills and capacities of the main actors and other stakeholders to look at the evolution of the experience and identify lessons and insights for future interventions.

¹ For additional material on systematization, contact Esteban Tapella (etapella@gmail.com). He is a social worker specialized in development studies, from the Social Science Department at the National University of San Juan, Argentina.

² The term 'systematization' is often used in Latin America as *sistematización*. It refers to a process which seeks to organize information resulting from a given field project, in order to analyze it in detail and draw lessons from it. The main objective of this process is to generate new knowledge. In English, the most frequently used words referring to this process are the terms 'documentation' and 'documentation process'. However, in this document we used the term 'systematization', since 'documentation' could be interpreted as simply the action of recording information.

This chapter aims at conceptualising systematization and presents a description of its methodology. This was the basic framework that oriented the processes of systematization that ActionAid Guatemala, Brazil and the USA undertook in 2008 and that are part of the whole package. The chapter is made up of an introduction followed by section 2 that presents a conceptual framework for systematization and discusses the link between systematization and ActionAid *Accountability, Learning and Planning System (ALPS)*. This section also provides some guiding principles to systematize experiences and it highlights out the usefulness of systematization. Section 3 presents the six basic steps to consider in when systematizing an experience. Concluding remarks are presented in the final section.

2. BASIC CONCEPTS

2.1. What do we mean by systematization?

In general terms, systematization is the participatory and thoughtful process of reflecting about different aspects of a specific project or general intervention: its actors, actors' interaction, outcomes, results, impact, problems, process³. Systematization is a methodology that facilitates the on-going description, analysis and documentation of the processes and results of a development project in a participatory way (Selener, 1996). According to the Fondo Mink'a de Chorlavi (2002), systematization is the process of reconstitution and critical analysis of a development experience, carried out with the direct, active participation of the agents who developed the initiative to draw the lessons that may make it possible to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of that and other development processes.

According to Oscar Jara (1998), systematization involves a critical reconstruction and interpretation of an experience. It is aimed at explaining the logic of the project, the external and internal factors that influenced the experience, and why



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Training on systematization. In Guatemala, 2008.

3 In this paper the terms 'experience', 'project' or 'intervention' refer to what is being systematized and documented.

it had the results it did. For Morgan and Quiróz (1988) systematization attempts to identify lessons from the experience by describing, organising and analysing the development of an activity in respect of different aspects (such as the theory and methodology of the project, the institutional, social and historical context, the relationship between local and external social actors) and describing the organization process; including obstacles and facilitators as well as results and impact of the intervention.

In general terms, systematization intends to answer the following questions:

- What was the nature of the experience? What was the experience about? Who were the actors? How do they relate to each other?
- What was done, how, why, for what purpose and for whom?
- How did cultural, economic, geographic, institutional and political factors influence the experience?
- Which expected and unexpected processes and results occurred during the experience?
- What were the results and impacts of the experience or project and why did they happen?
- What were the problems the project had to face and how they were addressed?
- Which were the factors that facilitated or hindered the achievement of objectives?
- What lessons did the different actors involved in the experience come out with?
- Which lessons can be communicated or taken into account for future experiences?

It is important to recognize that in many cases different interventions do not happen as planned in the project proposal. The path to achieving project outcomes and impacts is not a straight road but a bumpy and turning one; or, as Long and van der Ploeg (1989) puts it, “[...] intervention never is a ‘project’ with sharp boundaries in time and space as defined by institutional apparatus of the state or implementing agency”. Thus, the systematization of our interventions is useful because it allows us to learn from the curves and the bumps on the project road (Schouten, 2007).

2.2. Systematization and ALPS

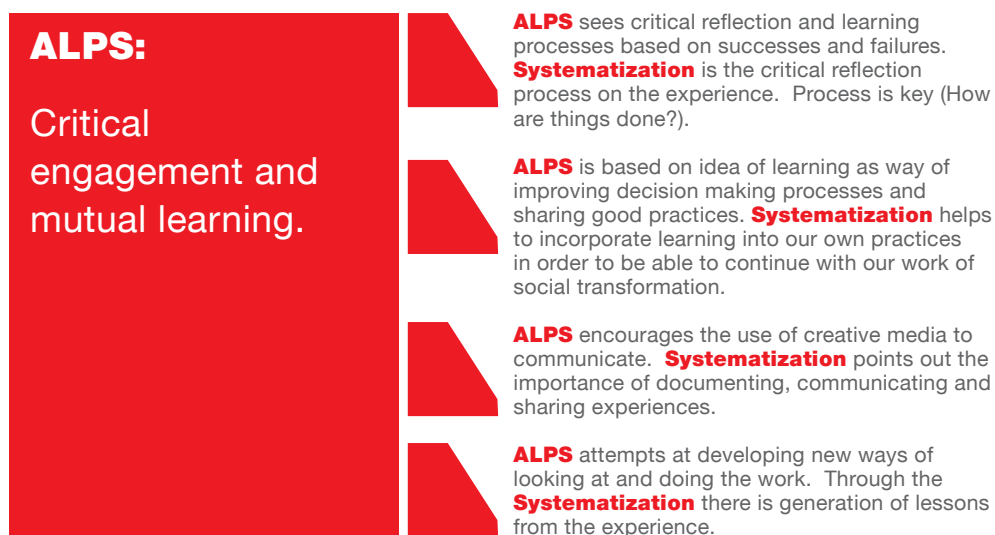
One of the main purposes of ALPS is the need to ensure that all ActionAid processes create the space for innovation, learning and critical reflection. Through its Strategy called Rights to End Poverty, ActionAid collaborates with partners, communities and other stakeholders to fight against poverty and exclusion. Those efforts, interactions and struggles make up the rich set of experiences, interventions, actions, initiatives, projects, etc, that take place in all the countries where ActionAid works through work in Development Areas (DA) and Development Initiatives (DI).

But, capturing the lessons from the practice, critically reflecting and generating knowledge and actual learning, needs more than good intentions and goodwill; it needs the allocation of space and time to actually reflect on what happened, how it happened and with whom. Space and opportunity are needed for critical reflection during reviews or key moments, for instance, when the experience moves to new phase or ends or evolves into a different project.

There is a need to take a look at what we are doing, how we are doing it and why, in order to be better equipped for the next steps of a project, programme, advocacy or campaign work. NGOs, networks, coalitions, communities, CBOs, etc, team up with ActionAid and combine efforts and resources towards a common objective; therefore a critical reflection and the identification of lessons can not be done in isolation by ActionAid. It needs to be done with partners and communities as they will bring new dimensions and interpretations to what we are learning; they will bring their stories of how they lived the experience which will be, in sum, the story of the project or experience. The story of a project or experience can not be told by one actor alone, but only by all actors involved. Through the interpretation and the telling of the project's story, we are putting the power of the story's reconstruction on the ones that were involved and that is one of the key contributions and the richness of systematization.

Systematization is a methodology that proposes shared and participatory group dynamics. This implies creating a space where people can share, confront, and discuss opinions based on mutual trust so we are talking here of analysis and reflection of a participatory nature. There is no single way learning but instead there is critical engagement in the interpretation of the experience and mutual and collective learning. ALPS require that staff learn with and from poor and excluded people, our partners and others and systematization encourages us to open the room for all actors be heard and fully represented in the construction of the story.

The graph shows some points of convergence between ALPS and systematization.

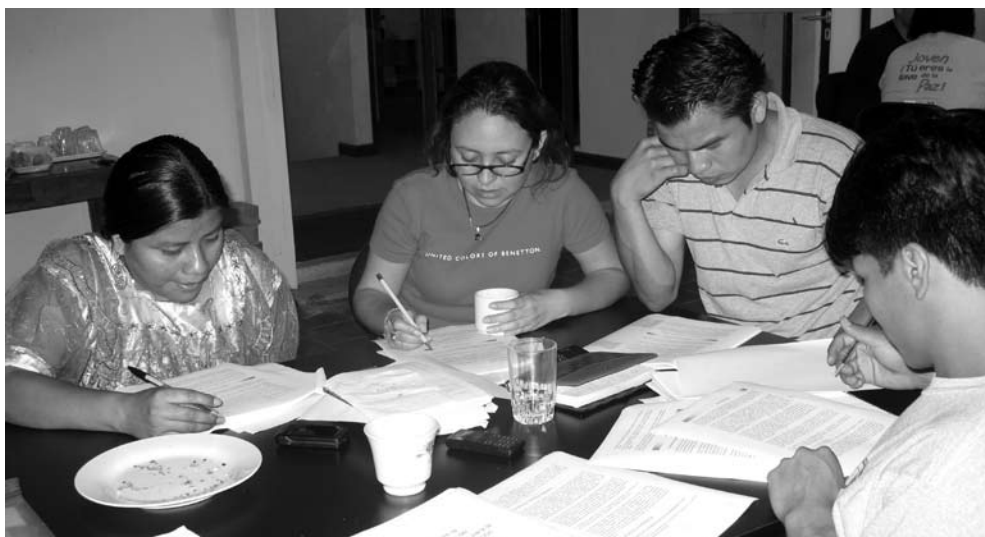


Systematization is a methodology that helps project staff and stakeholders to carefully track meaningful moments and events in the project's life or experience. It enables reflection and analysis of key moments and events. Systematization is a tool to practise the ALPS principle of critical engagement and mutual learning by stimulating and encouraging the reconstruction of the experience and production of new knowledge built on practice and reality.

2.3. Basic guiding principles of systematization

Based on the conceptual framework presented above and other contributions⁴, the following set of basic principles can be used to guide a systematization process:

- It is a process of **analytical thinking and critical reflection** on experience. It focuses on what was done, why it was done, why it was done in this specific way, what were the results and impacts, why these results were useful or not, how sustainable the results are and the likelihood of the experience being replicated.
- The purpose is to **learn from the successes and failures** of the project. The conclusions drawn from the experience should contribute to generating new knowledge that could be useful for other interventions.
- Emphasis is given to the **process**. Systematization is a structured and focused way of capturing the process of change that a project aims to bring about, the activities and interactions between stakeholders, the issues and contextual factors. Results and impacts are important, and their analysis is part of the systematization, but they are not the central focus of the analysis. Rather, it is more important to explain 'why' we obtained the results. Systematization tracks the process of an intervention: what happened, how it happened and why it happened.
- As a systematic and analytical process, systematization involves organizing information in such a way that different stakeholders have an opportunity to **reflect and learn** about the process. The whole experience has to be organized by identifying different elements



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 Reviewing Systematization Final Report in Guatemala, 2008.

⁴ See for example, Berdegué et al (2000), Cadena (1987) y CIDE-FLACSO (1988).

connected with the experience. Not only does the project have to be explored but, for instance, the context, project objectives and results, activities, etc. Systematization is a systematic way to reflect, analyze and discover patterns that help or hinder change.

- The more **pluralist and participatory** the process, the better the result. It should involve as many stakeholders as possible, not only to get different points of view but also to widen the angle of analysis and bring in various dimensions (political, economic, cultural social, etc). Knowing that different people have been involved in the experience and that each one of them will have different viewpoints and interests, it should be expected that there will be different opinions regarding what was done and achieved. As Chavez-Tafur *et al* (2007) state, rather than aiming to achieve a consensus, it will be easier to identify lessons learnt, and generate knowledge if that diversity of opinions is taken into account and it is fully represented.
- Systematization **distinguishes between conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned**. A 'conclusion' is a synthesis of confirmed facts that relate to a certain situation (e.g. project 'A' did not fulfil its objectives). A 'recommendation' is a specific idea about how to deal with concrete problems or take advantage of concrete opportunities in a given situation (e.g. to improve the quality of water supply, technological innovations should be adopted). Finally, a 'lesson learned' is a generalized statement of what is likely to work and/or what has to happen to achieve (or prevent) a certain result (e.g. collective guarantee systems based on group credit have been shown to be an effective instrument to improve repayment rates with poor rural communities in Central America). Systematization focuses on lessons learned.

2.4. Why do we systematize?

Systematization serves:

- **To improve the quality and impact of our interventions.** The lessons learned allow stakeholders, and in particular those closely involved in a project or experience, to step back far enough to reflect on trends, patterns, opportunities and warning signs. This learning contributes to improving future interventions.
- **To generate new knowledge and test the assumptions behind the experience.** It contributes to deepening our understanding of crucial factors that influence the project's life by reflecting on the experience and testing our beliefs about the nature of the problem and the assumptions about our interventions. We cannot expect different results if we keep doing the same thing.
- **To strengthen all stakeholders' capacity,** ActionAid included. The more participatory the process is, the more likely it is that the systematization can contribute to encouraging stakeholders to adopt systematization as a methodology for learning, reflect on their own practice and improve it.
- **To share and disseminate lessons learned.** Sharing recommendations and lessons with a broader audience and not only with those directly involved brings new insights and new ways to see and do things. Disseminating systematization outputs to a wider audience than the project context facilitates new knowledge and new approaches.

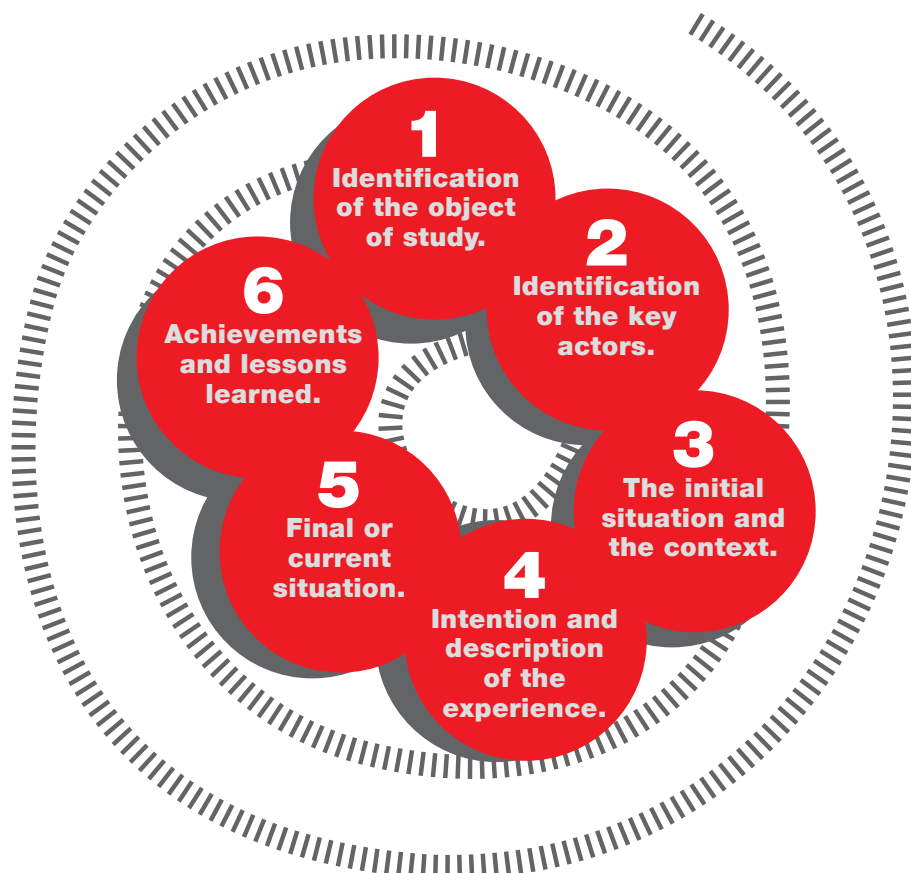
3. HOW TO SYSTEMATIZE AN EXPERIENCE?

There are various methodological approaches to systematize experiences. We present here a basic 'method' that has been applied in different projects and it is based on the personal experience and the work of several authors like Chain (1987), Morgan and Quiróz (1988) and Berdegué *et al.* (2000).

The starting point is the selection of a project or experience carried out by a team or group. This step is called *identifying the object of study* and its main aim is to set the boundaries of the experience to be systematized.

The second step involves the *identification of key social actors* involved in the experience. In the third step the *initial situation* of the experience and the *context* are described. Step four has to do with the identification of the main objectives and the description of the experience (*intention and description of the experience*). Step five relates to analysis of the *final or current situation*. Finally, step six refers to analysis of the *achievements* and *learned lessons*.

Basics steps of systematization process



These six steps include different aspects that should be documented and analyzed during the systematization process by using tools for gathering of data (for instance, interviews with the people directly involved and other stakeholders); participatory observation; analysis of secondary information; focus group meetings and workshops, and other. Further explanation of each step is provided in the next paragraphs.

3.1. Identification of the object of study

Since systematization is a process for producing knowledge, it is necessary to define the 'object' of knowledge, that is to say, to determine what is going to be systematized.

This step helps us to set the boundaries of the experience. It is usually not possible to systematize the whole experience, so there is a need to define the problem or aspects of the experience that we want to analyze highlighting out the most significant aspects for our systematization. The idea is to select an experience; it could be a campaign, a moment of a campaign, a fundraising initiative, a project (on sensitization, awareness raising, training, etc) and define the main items or aspects or parts of that experience that we will be looking at.

3.2. Identification of the key actors

People's participation in experiences and projects is not the same; some have a more direct participation than others; some participate more at the beginning than in the end, etc. Systematization seeks the opinion and points of view of a large number of the actors as all have different visions, opinions, perceptions and interpretations of the experience. As there will not be time to interview all of them, we should try at least to involve the most important actors or those who we know have different points of view and can enrich the reflection.

Once actors have been identified we need to decide who will be most useful or relevant to involve in the process. Some of them may be mainly be a source of information for specific aspects, while others should participate in the whole process. It is also necessary to identify a coordinator, someone who will be responsible for coordinating a plan of work and ensuring that the different activities take place, meetings are called, and objectives are achieved.

Some questions for this step are:

- Who managed the project and who took the core decisions in respect of the experience?
- Who provided human, material, financial and technical resources?
- Who are the actors involved in the experience? How did they relate to the experience? In which moments?

3.3. The initial situation and the context

All experiences and projects have a starting point (initial situation), in which two aspects should be identified: (a) the *problem* to be addressed by the project and (b) an *opportunity*, that is the change that we want to achieve (more work, less poverty, women integration in decision making process, etc). In this step we need to describe the problem and the opportunity or change before the intervention.

There are also external factors that influence the project's life and are not controlled by the actors. Those are called the *context* and they are made up of the issues that surround the development of the project. According to Chavez Tafur *et al.* (2007), these factors can be economic, political, social, geographical, environmental or others (e.g. local election processes taking place in a particular moment, migration trends, drought or heavy rainfall conditions, etc.). For the purpose of the systematization, we should try to focus on the factors that limited local agency to address the problem and those that contributed to the success.

The following questions can guide this step:

- What were the historical, social, political and economic contexts in which the experience took place?
- How did the context influence the project and the participants? What particularities did the context have that need to be taken into account in the reflection? What was the situation at the beginning of the experience?
- What was the institutional context (institution, objectives, scope and organizational structure, human, technical and material resources)?
- What was the relationship between the stakeholders and the organization funding the project/experience? How was power exercised among the various stakeholders?
- What were the participants' expectations at the beginning of the experience?

3.4. Intention and description of the experience

In every systematization process it is necessary to analyze the main objective or intention of the project or experience to have a clear idea of what drove the project. It is also necessary to analyse the project, methodology and intervention's approach. Then we need to reconstruct and analyse the experience to get a general picture of the project, the dynamics of its process and implementation and the changes that occurred.

a. The intention.

The identification and analysis of the objectives of the project over the short, medium and long term is needed. The following questions can guide this step:

- What were the changes that the project expected to obtain?
- What were the beliefs about the nature of the problem and the assumptions that guided the project intervention?
- What were the problems prioritized by project participants and why?

Background information on the organization and a general framework of the project or experience will be useful (what the organisation is about, why it is working there, what is the project's team composition, what is the relationship of the organisation with other actors in the geographical area such as grassroots organisations and CBOs, government, other local authorities, etc.)

b. Nature and characteristics of the project

This level includes all those aspects that will help us to describe and analyze how the project was organized and formulated. Some key questions to consider are:

- What was the orientation, approach or strategy followed by the project?
- How did the idea of the project come out?
- What methodologies were used to design and formulate the project?
- How did people participate in the identification of the main problems and the formulation of the project?
- What types of activities and strategies were designed to assure the sustainability of the project?

c. Project implementation

The systematization of an experience is mainly based on the description of the project's cycle and life. The main aim here is to look at and reflect on the experience. This allows for a description and analysis of the project in order to learn from its dynamics and results.

In this stage we identify the activities and achievements during the selected period of time including unexpected results, difficulties faced, and unmet objectives. As suggested by Chavez Tafur et al. (2007), we can use the following chart in order to identify what information we need to collect and what is still missing.



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In small groups, reflecting on the experience to identify the most important activities and its results. In Guatemala, 2008.

This is an example from the Project ‘Organizing a seed bank in the rural community of Tudcum, San Juan, Argentina’.

COMPONENTS	Activities	Main achievements	Difficulties faced	Unexpected results
(a) People's involvement and participation.	Getting agreement on the project idea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People that participated in workshops agreed on the idea and got involved in project. • The first proposal was strengthened by farmers' ideas and suggestions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all social actors participated in early stages of the process. • Local seed sellers did not support the project. • Local authorities showed a weak commitment to the idea. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People from other communities asked the NGO to replicate the same project in their region. • The National Institute of Agriculture (INA) offered technical and financial support.
(b) Training and organization.	Organizing a local committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A coordinating committee was organised. • More people got involved in the process by effective use of communication tools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval to use local government building were not confirmed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INA offered an alternative place to implement the bank of seed.
(c) Key actions.	Gathering and collecting seeds of...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 87 species of seed were collected. • Increased number of farmers are interested in participating by providing and accessing local seeds. • Alternative funding was identified. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial support for infrastructure to keep seed's safety was not enough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The farmer union offered to partially support the infrastructure. • INA offered technical assistance.

The *components* are the main areas around which the work was organized. It has to do with the definitions of the boundaries of the experience to be systematized (step 1). By dividing the project into components it is possible to see how the activities were organized according to subject, time or location.

In the column *activities* a list of what was done has to be identified, selecting the most important activities (each component may have more than one activity). It is also important to indicate the role played by the stakeholders during each step of the project. Whenever possible include amounts (number of events, number of participants involved) and location. It is essential to show what actually happened, and not what was planned to happen.

The main *achievements* are the results in relation to objectives of the project. It is important to gather people's different points of view, even if it is difficult to reach agreements among the participants.

In the *difficulties* column we identify all the problems or negative factors which affected the implementation of the project as a whole or some of its activities, or those aspects which prevented us from achieving more or better results. When describing difficulties we should also include any internal problems faced by the organization in charge of the project. Avoid presenting only positive outcomes; we must try to be as fair and open to constructive criticism as possible.

The *unexpected results* are those results (positive or negative) which were not aimed at the beginning but which later on proved to be relevant in the life of the experience.

Some questions that may help during this stage are:

- What was done (activities)? With what resources and at what cost?
- When was it done (organization in time)?
- Who did it (the actors)? How did the different actors participate in the process?
- What monitoring and evaluation was implemented, and to what extent did it help to improve the project and its results during implementation and in the long run?
- How was it done? What were the main methods and tools? Why were those methods and tools chosen and how well did they work? What were the expected and unexpected results? Which external factors influenced the project's outcomes and impact?
- What were the project's strengths and weaknesses? What were the team's strengths and weaknesses?
- What changes – if any – were introduced during the project's life in relation to objectives, methodologies, tools and resources? Why?

3.5. Final or current situation

The main aim of this step is to describe the results and impact of the experience. This can be done during the implementation or immediately after the end of the experience.

The results of the experience are presented comparing the initial situation with the current or final situation, or the situation 'with' and 'without' intervention. Positive and negative results should not only be considered in regard to project objectives but also in relation to the process. It is important to highlight both the achievements and the causes and conditions that contributed to them.

Some of the key questions to ask here are:

- What can we say about the current situation compared with the initial situation?
- What improved? What did not and why?
- What are the tangible and intangible results? For whom?
- How do people see or think of the results? What they will do now that the project is over?

3.6. Achievements and lessons learned

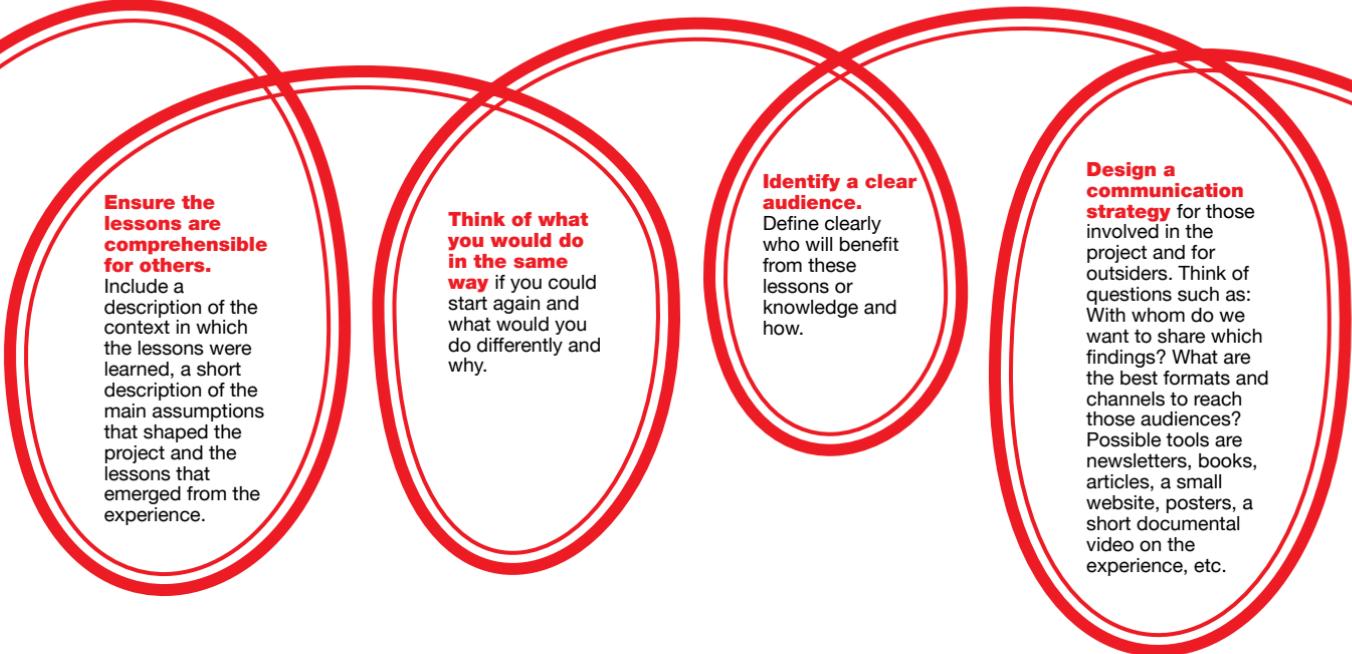
As mentioned, one of the main purposes of systematization is to produce knowledge based on actual experience. In this step we need to identify the new knowledge that came out of the experience. This knowledge is important for the team and the actors and stakeholders involved such as the target group, local

authorities, government representatives, people from other institutions, etc. This knowledge is also important for other institutions who might eventually implement a similar project in another context or region.

Identifying lessons is basically the attempt to scale up the analysis from the immediate context of the project. Not only should the lessons be shared and communicated but also institutionalized.

Conclusions, lessons and recommendation should be analyzed with the organization that implemented and supported the project and the stakeholders. The findings of the systematization findings should also be communicated to those people external to the project. This will bring new insights to others as well as opening space for them to comment on the lessons learned which will enrich the systematization's outcomes.

To communicate and socialize the lessons consider the followings points.



Ensure the lessons are comprehensible for others.

Include a description of the context in which the lessons were learned, a short description of the main assumptions that shaped the project and the lessons that emerged from the experience.

Think of what you would do in the same way if you could start again and what would you do differently and why.

Identify a clear audience.

Define clearly who will benefit from these lessons or knowledge and how.

Design a communication strategy

for those involved in the project and for outsiders. Think of questions such as: With whom do we want to share which findings? What are the best formats and channels to reach those audiences? Possible tools are newsletters, books, articles, a small website, posters, a short documental video on the experience, etc.

As mentioned, the final stage of the systematization process is not just the action of drawing knowledge from the experience and communicating the lessons learned. This new knowledge needs to be institutionalized and integrated. It is important to disseminate and popularize the main results of the systematization and ask team members to analyze and suggest specific recommendations to improve future interventions.

In order to institutionalize lessons learned, or transform them into action points, it is important to analyze the lessons, eliminate whatever has already been taken into account or is no longer relevant, discuss the implications of the remaining recommendations, and write up a plan identifying the changes to introduce in this or other experiences.

4. FINAL REMARKS

This document has presented basic concepts and steps for systematization. The method described refers to the systematization process of project or development experiences, which basically aims to organise available information, analyse it in detail to understand what has happened, draw conclusions which will help generate new knowledge, and present the results in the chosen format.

Systematization can be used to document single, short activities, projects, or longer and more complex programmes or advocacy actions. It can be carried out by community-based groups or organisations, NGOs, networks or large institutions. It is a general framework for orientation rather than a manual or rigid guide. It can be adapted to various contexts and particular institutional interests.

Systematization of experience helps to improve future interventions. As Schouten (2007) states, it may enable projects to raise issues of general interest and stimulate reflection and debate in wider society. Systematization may be one of the main tools for making development experiences more relevant, effective, replicable and sustainable. ■

5. REFERENCES

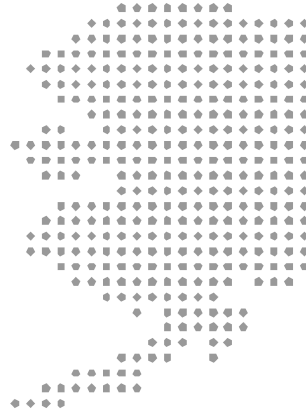
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“Powerful learning arises from ongoing sharing and critical reflection together with peers, colleagues and fellow activists on how we are working for change”

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