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ElyCwp



Neighborhood

Multifunctional Center



VILLA
FOHRDE

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE TOOL

Funded by



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1. SUMMARY

Sustainability is more than separating waste.
Sustainability is complex.
Sustainability is about a good life for all.
Sustainability is about making it happen!

That is why we want to share some practical tools, methods and inspiration around sustainability and youth participation.

"Sustainable development means to us to think, live and act in a way that we humans, our children and other beings on earth can have a good life - now and in future."

HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND SUSTAINABILITY*?

Our understanding (see picture) is based on the Brundtland report, it refers to the idea of [planetary boundaries](#) and the [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) by the UN. Youth play an important role in the concept of sustainable development and they are a crucial driver. That's why we connect both topics.

Who are we?

We are a group of civil society activists and educators from Armenia, Georgia and Germany. Through projects, trainings and in our seminar houses we foster sustainable development. You can find more about us and this project on the next page.

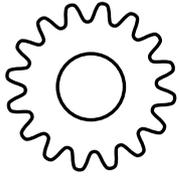
WHAT TO FIND HERE?

In this toolkit you can find 5 instruments to foster sustainable development and youth participation in (international) projects. Some of them we learned from partners, others we developed on our own. We tried all of them and think that they are worth to share with you:

- A collection of **project management tools** from food to travel and inner sustainability
- **Biomimicry** as an inspiring method for seminars or your work to learn from nature
- Some practical tips how to make **youth engagement in rural areas** meaningful and fun
- Recommendations from our practice for impactful **participatory processes**
- Some vivid examples of **youth projects on sustainable development** that make a difference

Enjoy reading, applying and making sustainable development happen!

* We prefer to use the term sustainable development instead of the shorter term sustainability, because it emphasizes that sustainability is nothing to be achieved at once, but it's a process.



2. ABOUT THE PROJECT & PARTNERS

This practice tool was developed by three civil society organizations and seminar houses: Eco Hub from Armenia, Neighborhood from Georgia and Villa Fohrde from Germany. Within the project “Sustainable and Participatory Communities” we connect youth and regional actors from the three countries to exchange about challenges in their regions, learn from another about sustainable development and implement actions. Our activities were funded by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany in the frame of the [Eastern Partnership Program](#).

ECO HUB FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

The EcoHub Foundation aims to foster active citizenship, democratic governance and sustainable development in Armenia by empowering youth who live in the regions of Armenia and have limited access to such opportunities.

EcoHub’s projects stimulate the capacity building among the youth to shape a shared vision of a democratic, peaceful and sustainable Armenian society where citizens, especially young people, generate collective potential to impact the decision-making processes. EcoHub’s staff believe in its mission and shared values of democratic principles, inclusion, gender mainstreaming, and diversity, and are proud to say that the foundation itself is an example of how teamwork, dedication, and youth participation in all levels can lead to success.

4/1 Aygedzor Str, 0019 Yerevan, Armenia, www.ecohub.am, info@ecohub.am

NEIGHBORHOOD - MULTIFUNCTIONAL CENTER

Neighborhood is a social enterprise and multifunctional seminar house. Founded in 2018, it contributes to vibrant rural communities in the Kakheti region. It empowers local people and young adults to learn, initiate social change, and thus strengthen diversity and pluralism. As a social enterprise, Neighborhood works closely with residents of Zemo Magharo village. It functions as a seminar house, community center, café, contact point for local products and for guided tours in the region.

Sighnaghi Municipality, Village Zemo Magharo, Georgia,

www.facebook.com/NeighborhoodKakheti; ltd.neighborhood@gmail.com; https://www.instagram.com/neighborhood_sighnaghi/

VILLA FOHRDE

Situated at the shore of the river Havel, Villa Fohrde is a sustainable seminar house and a civil society organization. Under the motto “Learn and Enjoy” the team runs projects and trainings on sustainable development, civic education, arts, culture, and health since 1991. Villa Fohrde is officially recognized by the government of Brandenburg as an educational center and certified as a place of education for sustainable development.

August-Bebel-Straße 42, 14798 Havelsee, Germany, www.villa-fohrde.de, info@villa-fohrde.de



3. TOOLS FOR SUSTAINABLE & PARTICIPATORY PROJECTS

On the next pages you can find five tools to make your projects more sustainable and participatory. We have been developing and testing these tools in our project.

3.1 SUSTAINABLE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Purpose of the tool: These tools are a sustainable and practical alternative to classical project management tools. They support you to manage your (international) projects. Most tools focus on ecological sustainability.

> Local and small:

- **Local shopping:** Choose a local market or small shop where you can buy vegetables, food and some stationery. You support locals and some products might be bio.
- **Choose wisely:** How do you choose a place for your events: price, quality? How about making sustainability of the place as one major criteria?!
- **Energy:** Get green electricity or gas for your office. If not possible: Every degree less heating saves 6% energy. No need to freeze, but no need for 24 degrees.

> Sustainable travel policy in 3 steps:

- **Let's meet differently:** you can meet online, hybrid or do several regional meetings with short travel distances, these meetings are connected online to a hybrid event.
- **Let's choose sustainable transport:** Traveling by bike, train, bus or sharing a car is much more sustainable than flying. Our rule: no flights, if the distance is up to 1.000 KM and takes less than 24 hours.
- **Let's offset:** If flying is necessary, you can offset the emitted CO2 either in an own project like [seeditforward](#) or on a platform like [atmosfair](#) or [myclimate](#).

> Digital & sustainable

- **Ecosia** is a good alternative to google: it plants trees, is transparent and respects privacy. You can integrate it in your browser as a search engine, try [here](#).
- **Project management:** [Wechange](#) is an online platform that enables easy online cooperation, project management including a cloud and online meetings.
- **Refurbished IT:** Used laptops, screens and other devices are cheaper and save resources. We tried these shops: [Afb social&green IT](#) (Germany), [Steef Computers](#) or buying second-hand gadgets at [List.am](#) (Armenia).

> Inner and Team Sustainability

- **Inner sustainability** is about you and how you treat yourself. At [Inner Pathways](#) you can find practices, tools, methods for facilitation and podcasts.
- **In your team** sustainability can be fostered as well. For us regular check-ins and check-outs during online-meetings were helpful, [here](#) is some inspiration.

We collected some more tools during a workshop. They include the ecologic, social, economic and cultural dimension of sustainability. You can find them [here](#).

3.2 BIOMIMICRY



PURPOSE OF THE TOOL

WHAT IS BIOMIMICRY?

Biomimicry is a rapidly evolving practice that learns from nature and mimics its biological components and functions, and translates these to solutions addressing societal challenges.

Biomimicry does not solely draw inspiration from nature, but the practice also incorporates its sustainable approach: in nature there is no waste, rather some species' waste is another one's treasure. Biomimicry at its core allows us to draw solutions from nature's long process of innovation and convert these to our contemporary challenges.

USING BIOMIMICRY FOR IDEATION

Biomimicry unleashes curiosity, creativity, collaboration, ideation and excitement among individuals and groups. Every single person has a relationship with nature—be it a memory, a sport, a smell... — and therefore biomimicry workshops offer a non-judgemental and experimental space: anyone can look at nature, draw inspiration and develop ideas to tackle local and global challenges.

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

The biomimicry workshop serves well those who seek to:

Instill roots-based learning: by focusing firstly allowing time for observation and deeper learning, instead of jumping into a solution-seeking process.

Teach a collective ideation-process based on equal terms: one must not be a biologist to draw lessons from nature and apply it in new contexts, and in this workshop everyone enters the process on equal terms as each skill matters in creating solutions based on nature's innovation.

Bring nature closer to the change-making process: by inviting participants to learn from nature and not only about nature, using the existing innovation and re-applying it to new challenges.

DURATION

Minimum: 4 hours, Maximum: 1 day

You can adjust the duration according to the time at hand. Proposed time outline for a 4-hour session:

1. Introduction and group division: 40 min
2. Phase 1 observing and understanding: 1 h
3. Phase 2 develop and design: 1,5 h
4. Phase 3 sharing session: 40 min

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

The larger group can be as big as wished, but each working group should be max 4 people.

PREPARATION

FOR TRAINER

Read through each step carefully, review all the hyperlinked documents and get a grasp of the overall topic. It is worthwhile for the trainer to watch all proposed videos (in review section) to have a better understanding of biomimicry, and transfer this during the introduction session.

FOR PARTICIPANTS

If the workshop has time constraints, please let the participant watch the introduction video ahead of the session. [This](#) is a complementary video to your (the trainers) brief introduction of biomimicry.

MATERIALS NEEDED

For group presentation:

- Biomimicry overview presentation

To print:

- 1 set of workshop guide card per group
- 1 set of biomimicry cards for per group

For working groups:

- 2-3 larger white papers per group (and access to more if needed)
- 1 set of colour pens per group
- Access to tape, scissors and other stationary if they wish to use it

DESCRIPTION

STEP 1: 5 MINUTES

INTRO

Explain briefly about biomimicry. Here is a template of a [5-min crash-course overview of biomimicry](#) (feel free to adjust and make it “your own”). You may also wish to review the provided extra resource material for a better understanding on the topic.

STEP 2: 20 MINUTES

INTRO

Show [this video](#) (this video can also be shared ahead of the workshop, just assure that each participant has seen it). This video introduces biomimicry through the lens of its founder and offers a stellar overview of its application and impact.

STEP 3: 5 MINUTES

GROUP DIVISION

Create smaller groups of max 4 people per group, if possible create groups with diverse expertise, e.g. a social scientist, an engineer, an artist, an economist, etc. You can divide these groups ahead of the session (if you are aware of each participants' background) and share the division on a screen or paper.

Note:

Print ahead of session and give each group:

- 1.1 [workshop guide card](#) (this guides their process and timeline)
- 2.1 set of [biomimicry cards](#) (used during phase 1 of the workshop)

Each group should have:

- 2-3 larger white (recycled) papers (and access to more if needed)
- 1 set of colour pens
- Access to tape, scissors and other stationary if they wish to use it

STEP 4: MINIMUM 60 MINUTES

PHASE 1: OBSERVING AND UNDERSTANDING

Objective: to (a) collectively identify an animal/bacteria/plant/fungi or any other species or matter in nature, and (b) to deep-dive into the characteristics of the selected animal/bacteria/plant/fungi/other species through research and observation.

1. Explain the 3-phase process (you may use the workshop guide card for this) and the objectives of each phase
2. Provide a timeframe of each phase, go through the workshop card guide and explain the objectives and steps of each phase (each group should also have 1 card with them to re-read when needed)
3. Inform what material will be shared with each group, and that this session is “analogue” so each group should bring their posters back for the final sharing session
4. Let each group begin!

Note: Encourage the group to be outdoors, if possible, the natural environment supports the phase 1 learning process.

STEP 5: MINIMUM 90 MINUTES

PHASE 2: DEVELOP & DESIGN

Objective: to (a) apply the conducted research into a specific challenge, identify the challenge and extract characteristics from nature to a solution (metaphorical or literal), and (b) visualize the proposed solution and its mimic from nature, prepare for the sharing session.

1. The group decides how they wish to apply what they learned from the selected biomimicry card into a challenge solution
2. Brainstorm together on how this solution plays a role and visualise the outcome on white paper sheets

Note: the specific steps are outlined in the workshop guide card so the groups can follow the process.

STEP 6: MINIMUM 40 MINUTES

PHASE 3: SHARING SESSION

1. All working groups gather together to share their process and ideas. Divide the presentation time according to the available time, but try to have at least 5-10 min per group.
2. The group presentation should be analogue, where the group shares the developed ideas on the white papers. After each presentation, give a few minutes for Q&A from the other groups.
3. As a facilitator you may ask questions such as: why did you decide on this animal/bacteria/etc? How was the process of developing the idea? What aha-moments did you have while learning about this animal/bacteria/etc? How do you see biomimicry adding value in your own work?

VIDEOS

- [Biomimicry](#) short documentary introducing biomimicry
- [Biomimicry's surprising lessons from nature's engineers](#) a TED talk by Janine Benyus
- [Fantastic Fungi](#) documentary from 2019 on the complexities, healing power and importance of fungus

WEBSITES

- Biomimicry Institute: <https://biomimicry.org/>
- Ask Nature search engine: <https://asknature.org/>
- Biomimicry 3.8: <https://biomimicry.net/>

OTHER WORKSHOP AND IMMERSION MATERIAL

- [Introduction to Biomimicry course](#): Free online course that offers certification, catered on individual level.
- [30 Days of Reconnection Method](#) that promotes resilience, innovation and critical thinking.

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3.3 RURAL YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



PURPOSE OF THE TOOL

Showcasing best practices of youth engagement in sustainable development at community level.

MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE TOOL

- know-how and lessons learned from the Neighborhood under the project
- Methodology and tools for supporting youth engagement

Young people in rural areas are often less exposed to development opportunities or fun activities than youth in big cities. Sometimes, they lack access to primary public services, neither the existing infrastructure satisfies the crucial needs. Thus, leaving the community and moving for better living conditions sometimes seems the only solution for a better life. However, not everyone is willing to leave home or can do so. Accordingly, a feeling of apathy is observed. Here, you can find some recommendations based on experience gained in the frameworks of the program on raising the motivation and interest of young people in rural areas to strengthen and sustain their own communities, as well as on sustainable development and sustainable community living.

Rural community as a place of opportunities: Rethinking the rural communities as a place of opportunities is an essential first step in motivating young people to find self-development passes locally; to discover solutions that will lead to a better life for individuals and sustainable communities.

Analysing Community strengths: Despite the diversity and various sub-groups within, most rural communities tend to have a strong bond connected not only to a geographical location but also to established norms, attitudes, shared traditions and socio-economic difficulties. However, mostly, young people don't perceive inhabitants around them and the joint activities as community living. Analysing one's own village/settlement in a new way - as something unique with distinguishing living elements that can have a unifying power - is know-how in rural areas.

Challenge status quo and encourage creativity: Bring the idea to young people that they can develop their way. Together with them, critically reflect on existing norms to determine the propensity behaviors that hinder sustainable development. The new generation has a broader range of opportunities to solve problems in innovative, creative ways. Sometimes, young people face a „we have tried, not much can be changed“ attitude. It is significant to note and challenge such status quo with the youth and encourage them to find novel ways to solve old problems. Sometimes, the new way is the only way to sustainable development!

Study the community needs with young people: Starting the community development planning process with finding out the community's real needs is the way to show the right approach of community work to young people. The needs assessment study can be a small-scale simulation with actual results that young people can analyse and use as a base for their projects.

Exploring success stories by meeting real „heroes“: Organize a meeting with a local community worker, who would share personal path of improving own surroundings or contributing to the development of a local community with its difficulties and highlights. Select the right community worker(s) to find a common language with young people. Discovering a proof that success in community work is possible, even if starting from zero, is motivating and inspiring. Sharing the feeling of fulfillment that helping others brings has a contagious effect.

Keep it authentic to heart: Let young people find their „heart issue“ – something that bothers them truly, even if they choose not a major burning issue of the society. Developing a project on, e.g. board-game club at first glance, seems far from the main aims of the local community. However, aspiration should come from within; only then does a true feeling of fulfilment come, creating a desire to continue.

Make sustainability issues relevant and consistent: introduce the sustainability issues and the global framework of the sustainability development goals adapting it to the rural context. Finding links between the SDGs and the youth's everyday matters will make it more understandable, relevant and exciting to follow. Finding the simplifying patterns in theory (e.g. SDG Wedding Cake) will also help the information being perceived consistently.

The stage is yours! When asking what the primary motivation for young people to act and be involved in community development is, many of them would answer – fellow peers and improved conditions for the younger generation. Helping others seems to be one of the main triggering factors while observing the motivation of young people to act. Supporting young people in understanding that the power for change and the ability to help others is in their hands is a strong motivator. This attitude is a base that can be built up with further steps such as self-reflection on lacking skills and information for development or encouraging the rural communities to involve youth as partners in decision-making.

Show the importance of sustainability issues by feeling them: Activities like role plays, simulation games or the approach of Betzavta (see link below) impact young people in understanding that their everyday actions in tackling sustainability issues are as necessary as anyone else's. From one glance, it may seem that these issues need to be taken care of somewhere else by someone else; they seem not relevant compared to problems around us. However, feeling and noticing their own experiences of these issues (e.g. inequality), makes young people more open to further exploration.

VIDEOS

- Short video about SDG cake model <https://youtu.be/Wu8xvzIPRhM>

WEBSITES

- Informative article about SDG Wedding Cake model: <https://www.greenmatters.com/copy-of-resources>
- Informative article about "Betzavta" model: <http://www.mellemeducation.org/betzavta-method/>

3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES



PURPOSE OF THE TOOL

These suggestions help you to design good participatory processes with your local community.

Involvement of the local municipality and key public institutions: Identify allies working in the municipality, who are willing to participate in the process. Establishing communication and exchange between civil society and local authorities is key for increasing the involvement of active citizens and communities in co-designing public space and services, and can lead to a more inclusive local government model.

Learning from interesting practices: We're not re-inventing the wheel! Have a look at what other groups have done in various places in the world. Identify projects with similar characteristics, and critically learn from successes and failures and 'borrow' tried and tested tools and methods.

Collectively mapping the context and available community resources: A joint mapping helps to build a more collective understanding of who outside the group can contribute and in what way. You can also identify community resources crucial to the development of the project.

Creating a feedback loop with the wider community: Present both the outcomes and the process to the wider community after the completion of your project or a milestone. It is good to celebrate successes and helps to understand what community based, participatory decision making on public space can be. This can lead to broadening the circle of people willing to be engaged in future projects. A diverse spectrum of projects means that more people are keen to participate.

Community engagement and working with trusted community partners: involve local activist groups, NGOs or institutions working directly with the community. This means that the process that follows builds on a foundation of a trusted community network. Often, it's beneficial to identify 'trusted community focal points', people that have experience and a history of working with the community. These could be community leaders, teachers or local artists that have engaged with audiences and have gained the trust of their fellow citizens.

Learning the alphabet together again: Take nothing for granted when working in groups with people with different life experiences. Going through concepts, tools, or knowledge together helps to build a common understanding of the context, objectives, and process of intervention. Projects with similar characteristics, and critically learn from successes and failures and 'borrow' tried and tested tools and methods.

Identifying and engaging with motivated citizens interested in collective processes: Identify and support individuals or groups willing to undertake coordination of a local participatory planning group, organizing regular meetings and maintaining communication with others. Ideally you find funds to support individuals taking on coordination roles that require regular, long term involvement.

The advice is based on our experience in these projects as well as an exchange with Panagiotis Tzannetakis.

3.5 INSPIRATION FOR YOUTH PROJECTS TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE



The small-scale initiatives carried out during our project by local youth, offer a host of valuable lessons. They can be applied when designing and implementing other projects on sustainable development, targeting young people in rural communities.

PURPOSE OF THE TOOL

This part of the practice tool examines 5 projects and derives main recommendations for improving design and effectiveness of projects dedicated to creating sustainable rural communities.

MAIN ELEMENTS OF THE TOOL

INTRODUCTION

During our project young people from rural areas in Armenia, Georgia and Germany implemented small-scale projects to support the sustainable development of their communities. In Georgia 5 youth initiatives were implemented in the villages of Sighnaghi, in Kakheti region. They reached 450 people.

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECTS

The topics and designs of the projects were diverse. They addressed gender norms, clean environment, availability and accessibility of educational services and spaces for youth at local levels. Instruments of the project implementation varied from trainings and public performances through to film screening and designing advocacy campaigns.

The outputs of these small-scale youth projects include:

- Over 75 young people from Sighnaghi municipality received information on sustainable development and their role for sustainable development of their communities.
- A course curricula was developed and free English language lessons are available for vulnerable youth at local level; an extra-curricular educational space for school students was arranged and completed with diverse literature and publications; Seedlings were planted for green and clean environment; Several polluted locations were cleaned; an advocacy campaign was conducted with the local municipality for adding additional recycle bins.
- Networking was established among young people throughout Sighnaghi municipality and a platform for designing and implementing joint initiatives was developed. Specifically, a group on social media for the alumni and direct beneficiary of the projects was created for discussing, sharing and elaborating ideas for sustainable development of Sighnaghi municipality.

ANALYSING PROJECT CASE STUDIES

Based on the analyze and evaluation of the implemented youth initiatives following recommendations can be shared:

- **Using site-specific approach:** while starting working with youth and sustainable development, consider local circumstances, specific challenges and constraints that the local community faces. Identify their local knowledge and capacity and develop intervention strategies based on evidence.
- **Encouraging networking and partnership with stakeholders:** incorporate different stakeholders in the design and implementation process of the projects. It increases the motivation of the youth, as well as impact of the project.
- **Creating networking among young people throughout the targeted geographical location:** establish linkages among people from different villages of the municipality to gather their capacity, energy and motivation for designing innovative ideas for sustainable development of communities.
- **Connect to existing structures:** Also in the villages there are often previous activities, groups or active people to connect to. Encourage youth to include these structures in their projects.





4. REFERENCES & LINKS

Here you can find some more links and references with regards to sustainable development and youth participation, which might be helpful for your work.

- [Civil Society Cooperation](#): Programme to strengthen the cooperation of civil society organisations from Germany, the Eastern Partnership countries and Russia.
- [Examples of Community Engagement from Moldova](#), presented by Valeria Svart, May 2021.
- [Green Toolbox](#), International Young Naturefriends, 2012: Tools, information and inspiration for NGOs for sustainable practices.
- [How to Engage Citizens with the Sustainable Development Goals](#), Finnish Development NGOs Fingo, 2020: Theoretical approaches and concrete cases from CSOs to work on the SDGs.
- [Inner Pathways to Sustainability](#): A handbook, tools and practices for inner sustainability.
- [The Biomimicry Institute](#): Background information, inspiration and good practices around biomimicry.
- [Transformative Learning Journeys](#), Bridge 47 - Building Global Citizenship, 2020: Example and guideline for transformative learning.
- [Training Kit "Sustainability and youth work"](#), Council of Europe, 2018: including background information, methods and checklists for seminars and organizations.



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Please refer to this information when using or sharing any content of the Sustainable Development Practice Tool.