

FMD Profile

FMD is a development group. It acknowledges the importance of establishing networks for sharing models of "best practice" in all development sectors. It also seeks to establish networks by training professionals who, in turn, will share their insights on how to build landscape locally.

Training related activities are the major part of FMD's work. Nevertheless a prerequisite for the development of meaningful training is to give assistance to local organisations with the implementation of their rural development programmes.

Services

Training Module Development:

The different parts of the overall training approach can be developed as components or made-to-measure modules in existing courses of other institutions. Methodological advice is also offered. It varies from inputs into special short courses to substantial parts of Post-graduate or M.Sc. programmes.

Programmes:

Expertise is available for the execution of programmes and projects; the implementation of studies; manpower and institutional development; Consultancies related to Environment and Rural Development are offered.

Spiral model of learning process



FMD Consultants B.V.
Santpoorterstraat 17, 2023 DA Haarlem,
The Netherlands
Phone: (31)-23-5260375
Telefax: (31)-23-5257467
E-mail: fmd.nl@wxs.nl

Participatory Learning Approach to Enhance Development Initiatives



The Challenge

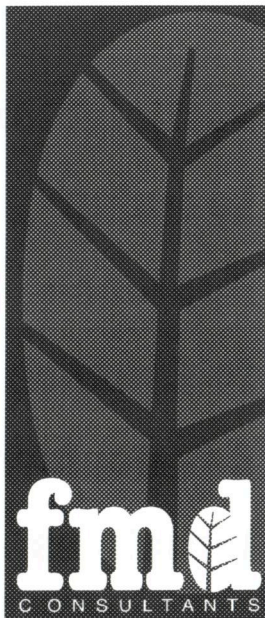
FMD aims at introducing a "new way of seeing" The challenge is to be able to value farmers initiatives in land use systems. This understanding leads to operations by local farmers with help from professional foresters, agriculturalists and others.

The challenge calls for a different way of dealing with development. It emphasises the need for a participatory model of development in which local people are not just involved in the identification, formulation, implementation and evaluation of rural development projects but where their knowledge and skills are the building blocks for development initiatives.

FMD has developed a learning approach that makes people aware of the importance of this new way of seeing farmers initiatives. More importantly, this learning approach focuses on the development of approaches that are needed to design and implement new production initiatives.

FMD considers individual administrators, planners, researchers, extension workers, foresters and agriculturalists to be receptive and well-intentioned. The major obstacles in implementing the new approaches are located both in organisational structures and technical parameters that drive development solutions away from local people. The major reason for failure, and thus for despair, is that institutional structures are rigid, sometimes repressive, and fail to acknowledge that local people are the key to development. They should not simply be the recipients. Technical definition of projects reinforces this rigidity.

FMD seeks to give participants confidence to apply a different way of designing and implementing rural development projects, but it also issues a challenge to the same participants. To avoid despair, administrative structures and technical parameters need substantial reform so that local people and local professionals can take the opportunity to work in new ways to build new landscapes. The challenge is thus capacity development and institution building, not merely a technical change.



Training Approach

FMD bases its training approach on how to train people to:
develop the art of seeing;
appreciate the indigenous knowledge of farmers;
incorporate local knowledge in existing work practices;
implement the new approach within their specific circumstances;
adapt the present working situation to new conditions;
strengthen relevant existing local, regional and/or national institutions.

FMD's starting point is the participant-centred approach, which is based on the principles of learning from experience. This means that the concrete social reality, the working context and experience of the participants are the starting point. The contradiction between what participants would like to develop and what they are actually doing is an essential input in the process of analyzing their experiences. Equally important is the investigation of specific social, economic and political conditions in their working context.

Both are essential parts of the first part of the training approach, the process of increasing awareness on the part of the participants. To facilitate this learning process, FMD trainers put emphasis on the development of an open atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.

The second part of FMD's approach consists of training in the art of seeing. This is based on an exchange, analysis and systematic reflection of specific past experiences of the participants.

FMD challenges the expression "seeing is believing" in a real sense by confronting participants with

past experiences so they become aware of other existing, but unconscious, ways of seeing. This process of increasing awareness provokes attitude changes and leads to seeing the landscape differently.

Essential in the art of seeing is the appreciation by development officers of the indigenous knowledge of farmers and the importance of this knowledge for intervention. The challenge is now to support farmers to improve their own farms and surroundings on the basis of this local knowledge.

The third part of the approach takes into account the indigenous knowledge of farmers and combines the already existing knowledge of participants with new or additional knowledge offered by FMD trainers. They form integral parts to initiate participatory development approaches adapted to the local environmental and social conditions. Within this process, learning goes from the complex to simple in the analysis and from simple to complex in the intervention.

Learning by seeing and doing is much more formative. An essential part of the FMD approach is to experiment under field conditions. Theory becomes related to practice improving the capacity for action. This is the fourth part. The fifth and final "action planning" part is where participants adapt the new approach to their existing working context.

To be able to design and implement rural development programs in a different way changes organisations. FMD takes into account the training of participants in the necessary skills for making changes and considers this as another essential element of the training. This means training people to share and disseminate the knowledge gained, the changes in attitude, the skills and awareness within their own organisations.