

Establishing Biosphere Reserves as **LEARNING LABS FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

School of Integrative Systems



THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND
AUSTRALIA



The Sustainability Challenge

Sustainability is impacted by many stakeholders and has multiple drivers and interconnected dimensions: social, economic, environmental, behavioural, governance and leadership. These challenges require systemic and collaborative multi-stakeholder responses. Traditional linear, single-dimension, event-

driven solutions are insufficient to deliver sustainable outcomes. To create resilience, systemic, integrated and collaborative approaches are required.

What is a Learning Lab (LLab)?

LLab is a process and methodology for integrated cross-sectoral decision making, planning and collaborations in dealing with complex multi-

stakeholder problems. LLab is a specialised program offered by The University of Queensland, School of Integrative Systems, Australia.

A Learning Lab is used by all decision makers and stakeholders in the biosphere to create deep understanding, shared vision and skills for systemic strategies.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Man and
the Biosphere
Programme

*Photo: "Floating Land", Noosa Biosphere, Australia
Photograph: Raoul Slater
(courtesy of Sunshine Coast Regional Council)*



4 Systems Planning Workshop

Purpose: to develop a systemic master plan including priorities, funding and resources provisions. The master plan will integrate with and extend existing biosphere plans.

Participants: relevant decision makers including selected biosphere officials, policy people, scientists and donor organisations.

5 Projects Workshop

Purpose: to identify key projects based on leverage areas, and to design implementation plans.

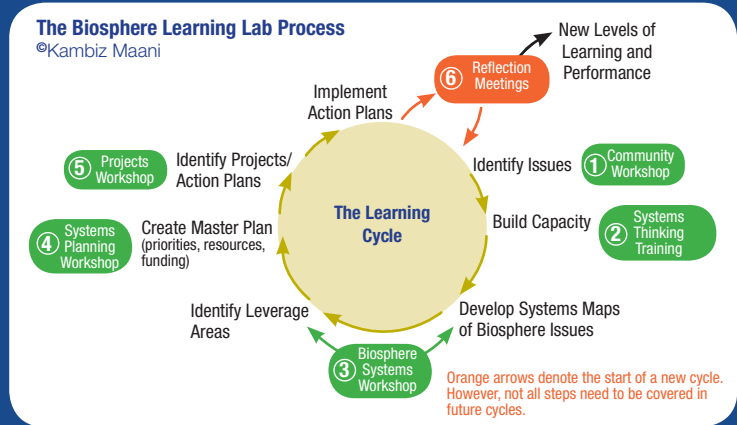
Participants: selected biosphere officials, technical officers, scientists, and affected stakeholders.

6 Reflection Meetings

Purpose: to monitor progress, identify drivers/causes of success and failure, identify emerging issues and learnings. It is recommended that Reflection Meetings are held every 3–4 months as this step represents the core of the learning cycle.

Participants: representatives from key decision makers & stakeholder groups including the local community.

The Learning Lab Process (LLab)



Biosphere is a living enterprise – at different stages of its life there will be new people involved in the “learning Lab” – hence it may be necessary to repeat the full cycle (e.g. capacity building). This will steadily enhance the scope and quality of collaboration and collective learning to the point where learning is institutionalised in the life of the biosphere.

The LLab outcomes are: shared vision, understanding of complexity, enhanced capacity and cross-sectoral collaboration leading to higher levels of learning and sustainability.





Testimonials

“For environmentally sustainable and responsible tourism development in the context of Cambodia – the systems thinking approach is a magnificently responsive and excellent tool. This approach can be applied in various fields and sectors scientifically, logically and practically.”

H.E. Dr THONG Khon, Minister of Tourism (Cambodia)

“A systems approach is an elegant way to address multiple dimensions of sustainable development planning and practice in biosphere reserves. The learning laboratory initiative in Cat Ba (Vietnam) isolated capacity for integrated planning as the major “missing link” to meet the multiple use objectives of that biosphere reserve and have given better focus to planning follow-up projects.”

Dr Ishwaran Natajara, Director of the Division of Ecological and Earth Sciences, General Secretary of the Man and the Biosphere Programme (UNESCO Paris)

“The learning laboratory being built in Nen River Basin, Northern East of China is of great importance to the sustainable utilisation of water resources, environmental protection, as well as improving livelihood of people in this region.”

Dr Hong Wang, Deputy Director of Songliao Bureau of Water Resources Protection, Songliao Commission of Water Resources, Ministry of Water Resources (PR China)

“The learning laboratory for sustainability initiative and its Systems Thinking approach are of significant importance for the sustainable development of Cat Ba Biosphere Reserve, Hai Phong City, Vietnam.”

Dr Nguyen Van Thanh, Chairman of the People's Committee of Hai Phong City and Chairman of Hai Phong City's Sustainable Development Council (Vietnam)



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