The key features of the LEADER approach

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Background:
ELARD president since 2011

International non-profit organization founded in 1999 by 5 European national informal LEADER networks:

1. *French LEADER Network* - **LEADER France**
2. *Greek LEADER Network* - **Ελληνικό Δίκτυο LEADER**
3. *Irish LEADER Network* - **Comhar LEADER na hEireann**
4. *Italian LEADER Network* - **AssoLEADER**
5. *Spanish LEADER Network* – **REDR**

Today, ELARD is representing more than 890 Local Action Groups through national and regional voluntary networks in:

- ***Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, North Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, Slovenia, Spain*.**
- In contact with Rural Networks in ***Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus*.**

ELARD aims
(see more at www.elard.eu)

One of the most important aims of ELARD is to:

"campaign to spread the philosophy, principles and reach of the LEADER method <u>grounded in the eight specific features</u> in order to achieve sustainable rural development across Europe".

The association aims also to:

"represent the interests and needs of its members in front of other international, European, and national institutions to liaise with other stakeholders and institutions working towards an integrated rural development and to influence EU policies in favour of rural development".

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

1. Bottom-up approach

”The valuation of local skills and knowledge does not only boost the self-awareness of local people and changes their perception of the area in which they live, it also fosters innovative solutions and competitive advantage of value-adding activities, ultimately of the territory itself.” (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to involve everyone and not exclude anyone?
- How to make local and regional authorities trust in the local people?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

2. Area-based approach

"The micro-regional scale is small enough to address the identities of local communities as a driving factor of local development, and it is at the same time large enough to bundle forces for attaining a critical mass for tangible projects and to effectively perform as a partner in global networks." (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to define the LAGs' geographic borders?
- What population is big enough to achieve critical mass and innovation?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

3. Local partnership

"The local partnership is the most appropriate instrument combining broad bottom-up participation of local citizens with decentralised top-down support and funding from regional and national programs. It is a formal requirement for sound governance and at the same time the showcase for the quality and consistency of the local strategy. It is the hub for networking between local actors and with external partners." (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to keep the partnership as open and transparent as possible?
- How to secure skilled staff and adequate administrative resources?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

4. Multi-sectoral integration

"The low-threshold and demand-oriented funding allows new actors to benefit and to become active contributors to local development. Young people, women, voluntary workers, unemployed and other disadvantaged groups get access to support and funding which they otherwise wouldn't have by depending solely on mainstream programmes." (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to involve even the challenging interest groups (e.g. immigrants)?
- How to prioritise between the very different types of needs?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

5. Networking

"The quest for linkages and synergies between different sectors, strands of activities and thematic networks of actors brings forth a new appreciation of the interrelationships and reciprocities between the parts and the whole. In other words, the local actors are encouraged to adopt a systematic view on problems, potentials and solution paths. Often, a quality assurance and branding strategy can act as a powerful lever <u>to bring actors within one sector, but also across sectors, together.</u>" (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- What is the LAG's role in relation to other local development bodies?
- How to avoid sector-based thinking and overlapping work?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

6. Innovation

"The thrust on innovation is probably less important in respect to the actual innovative content of the projects – although most brilliant innovations indeed have emerged – but rather as a constant fillip to search for novel, hitherto unseen and sometimes even bold solutions apart from beaten tracks. The LAG and its staff should act as an honest broker between different types of actors, who would otherwise never have come together." (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to mobilise innovation?
- What is the right balance between risk and innovation?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

7. Inter-territorial and international cooperation

"Inter-territorial cooperation and networking bestows a European dimension to local development in rural areas from the very start on. It allows local actors to experience similarities and differences in utterly new dimensions, it opens up people's minds, leads to knowledge exchange, pooling and transfer and provides new perspectives for solution oriented strategies and concepts regardless of the great diversity of rural areas and governance contexts." (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to keep it simple but effective?
- How much to invest in cooperation?

The LEADER specific features & drivers of success

8. De-centralised management and financing

"The relative autonomy and responsible role of local partnerships in program implementation, leaving strategic choices and the selection of projects to the LAG – be it in the formal framework of a global grant or not – constitutes an invaluable incentive for individual and organisational learning. It brings forth new relationships between the local and regional/national level of governance, and it enables LAGs to become active players in bringing in additional resources of public and private origin into the area and to articulate themselves with global networks." (Lukesch & Schuh 2007)

- How to measure and self-evaluate the outcomes?
- How to avoid bureaucracy, misinterpretations and consultant-driven LAGs?

Adaptability in a very new and different environment?

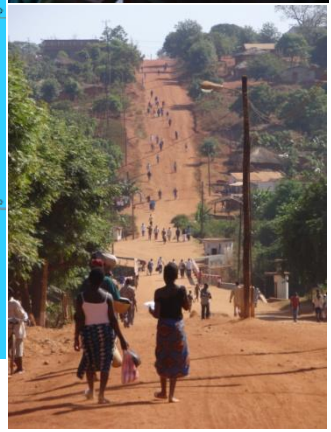
Case Mozambique, Alto Ligonha

- 170 000 inhabitants (38/km^2)
- half less than 15 years old
- life expectancy 35 years

2007: Lecturing & capacity building

2008: Local strategy design

1) agricultural cooperatives
2) local trade structures
3) community forestry & cashew nuts



2009: 11 LEADER projects selected worth of 12 000 €

2010: Mid-term evaluation & 14 LEADER projects selected worth of 19 000 €

The lessons learnt

1. LEADER can adapt anywhere!
2. In Africa it's more about giving access, in Europe about mobilising people
3. Small funds and grants don't attract the corrupted people
4. Politicians need concrete development tools to be handed over to the people
5. Involve everyone in the strategy building process – use the local media
6. Capacity building/ training sessions are crucial in the beginning
7. Teach by example and good practice rather than long lectures
8. Constant monitoring of the projects in a supportive way pays back
9. Develop easy-to-use indicators to measure outcomes already in the strategy
10. If something goes wrong, the LAG or Managing Authority must intervene

At the end

REMEMBER!

LEADER is not yet another EU funding programme, it’s a bottom-up development methodology. In order to use the method right and effectively all of its 8 special features must be valid simultaneously!

At the end

ALSO REMEMBER!

LEADER is not about money, it’s about giving access and mobilising the rural people to shape their own future!

”It’s not the people who aren’t credit-worthy, it’s the banks that aren’t people-worthy.” (M. Yunus)

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

See more in Google:

A LEADER Dissemination Guide Book

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