

TRANSVERSAL ACTIVITIES: REFLECTIVE JOURNALING

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CONNECTS WITH:
All Modules

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INTRODUCTION

Transversal activities are an important component of ecohealth courses. They are activities that last for several days and provide an opportunity for participants to return to them at several different moments, bringing new things that they have learned and making adjustments to what they had previously known (or thought they knew). The transversal activities presented here can be used as activities for all of the modules in this teaching manual.

PEDAGOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

- Transform student – teacher relations by fostering alternative modes of engagement, feedback and conversation.
- Foster transdisciplinarity by providing a space for participants to make connections between elements of the course which could not have been predicted.
- Act as a device for the creation of experiential continuity throughout the course.
- Break down linear thinking by encouraging multiple forms of expression.

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REFLECTIVE JOURNALS:

This activity is reflective process that runs throughout the course and involves writing daily journal entries in response to specific questions or prompts, and engaging in on-going small-group discussions to share and extend the ideas that are explored through journaling.

THE REFLECTIVE JOURNAL ACTIVITY IS DESIGNED TO:

- Facilitate students' understanding, meaning making, and application of ecohealth concepts (the "what, so what, and now what" of ecohealth) in relation to both the case study and their own projects.
- Support the exploration of the core conceptual, theoretical, methodological, and practical knowledges advanced during the course.
- Prompt the expansion of students' previous experience and knowledge as they delve in to new terrain.
- Provide a space where students can think through their own research ideas, the case study, and broad ecohealth questions.

DIRECTIONS:

- On the first day of the course students are given a blank notebook for their reflective journaling practice.
- At the end of most days, instructors will assign a reflective question and students will be asked to produce a reflective response (various forms of writing and/or visual expressions such as drawing, collage, or painting).
- The question will be discussed the following day in class, either in small groups or in plenary.
- At least twice during a 10 day course instructors could provide feedback on the journals. Students hand them in and instructors use sticky notes to make comments, or ask further questions.

MATERIALS:

- Unlined notebooks
- Sticky notes

LOGISTICS AND PREPARATION:

- Themes for reflective questions should be designed in advance of the course, and the specific questions developed during the day so that they pick up on the themes which emerge.
- Attention should be paid to the sequence of the questions throughout the days. The following is one way to approach the development of a series of questions for reflection:

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- WHAT...? (Observations and descriptions);
 - WHAT IF...? (Reflections on meaning, change processes and future scenarios);
 - SO WHAT...? (Interpretations, what does all this mean?);
 - NOW WHAT...? (Decisions, next steps, action)
- Where possible the ongoing reflective journal exercise should be accompanied by scheduled time for collective discussion of journals and reflections. This creates space for open discussion among the group around issues of interest, themes for follow-up, unanswered questions or points that need to be clarified.

IDEAS FOR JOURNAL WRITING:


- Keep track of "Aha!" moments as well as conflict and confusion.
- Take on the role of devil's advocate challenging everyone's assumptions including the author's-or ask a peer to play that role in relation to your assumptions/work.
- Refine, explain and defend a viewpoint that you disagree with (i.e., take a different position).
- Bring in a newspaper or magazine article that fits with the theme of the day's readings and write about how they are related/connected.
- Choose two images from the day's excursions, one that you can imagine as a black and white photograph and one that you can imagine as a colour photographs...sketch these moments and explain your choice of image. How did these moments add to your understanding of the complexity of ecohealth?
- Imagine you were able to interview the author of a particular paper or a community member from the case study. Write a list of questions that you would like to ask them.
- Try free writing or free writing in questions only.
- Try poetry or song writing to capture the essence of an elusive or complex concept.
- Consider head/heart/hands...what do you think about an issue, what is your emotional response to the issue, and how is your body reacting to the issue?
- Journal entries might also include responses to and critiques of assigned readings, class discussions, and community-based experiences. Entries should be varied and could include both written and artistic elements.

Activity 1: Passport

One effective way that the Copeh-Canada Teaching Team inserted prompts into our course was through a tool we designed and called "The Official Ecosystem Approaches to Health Passport." This passport was carried by the students and faculty and contained pages earmarked for the topics in the course. Students used the pages for reflexive exercises and to jot down pertinent notes and questions on the topics.

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Here is what the relevant pages looked like:

<p>QUE FAIRE AVEC CE PASSEPORT? Voici votre passeport officiel pour l'aventure. Gardez-le toujours sur vous. Après chaque session ou activité nous vous invitons à prendre quelques instants pour réfléchir à la pertinence d'intégrer ce que vous avez appris à votre travail ou projet et à noter ces réflexions (mots, musique, dessins, etc.). Nous vous invitons à utiliser les pauses, dîners, et activités sociales pour parler avec au moins cinq personnes du cours au sujet de votre travail. Quelle perspective unique ces personnes apportent-elles? Utilisez-les dernières pages pour conserver des informations importantes (courriel, références, site Web, etc.).</p>	<p>HOW DO I USE THIS PASSPORT? This is your official passport to adventure. Carry it at all times. After each class or activity take a moment to reflect on how what you learned could be integrated into your work or your project and write it down (words, music, drawings, etc.). Throughout the course use the breaks, lunches and social events to speak with at least five participants about your work. What unique perspective do they bring to your subject area? Use the pages at the end of the passport to keep track of important information (emails, references, web sites, etc.).</p>	 <p>Genre / Gender</p>
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Activity 2: Checklist and reflection on a specific project

This checklist and reflective exercise was developed in the context of our joint project – Ekosanté – with the Latin American Community of Practice in EcoHealth (CoPEH-LAC). It can be used at the beginning of a course similar to the poster exercise to get students thinking about their own research from an ecosystem perspective (you can print out pages . The more checklist style questions can be removed to generate reflective journaling questions given out at key moments in a course.



CoPEH-Canada checklist and reflection on a specific project

Section 1 – Project profile

1. Project Title:
2. Project duration (beginning and end dates): mm/yyyy – mm-yyyy
3. Country (or countries) and Region(s) of the project:
4. Complete names of institution(s) involved in the project:
5. Which of the following areas, does your project include?:
 - a. Mining
 - b. Pesticides
 - c. Occupational health
 - d. Environmental health
 - e. Community participation
 - f. Watershed management
 - g. Solid waste management
 - h. Public health
 - i. Infection disease
 - j. Non communicable disease
 - k. Animal Health/Veterinary public health
 - l. Determinants of Health
 - m. Food Security and Sovereignty
 - n. Indigenous Health and Well-Being
 - o. Climate Change
 - p. Urban planning
 - q. Forestry and Forest Management
 - r. Professional development training
 - s. Other: _____

Section 2: Contextual Details of Project

1. Briefly describe the ecological and/or geographical scale of your project (i.e. village, city, political region, ecoregion – desert, mangroves, wetlands, watershed, forest, prairie, mountains, coastal, etc.)

2. Within the ecological or geographical scale of your project, the main features of the ecosystem are:
 - a. Urban
 - b. Semiurban
 - c. Rural
 - d. Wilderness
 - e. Disturbed or disrupted, type:
 - i. Resource extraction: _____
 - ii. Environmental degradation: _____
 - iii. Climate effects: _____
 - iv. Natural forces (ie. fire, flood, quake, drought): _____
 - f. Coastal
 - g. Agricultural
 - h. Forest
 - i. Rainforest
 - ii. Cloud Forest
 - iii. Dry Forest
 - iv. Old growth forest
 - v. Mixed forest
 - vi. Other: _____
 - i. Watershed, name: _____
 - j. Wetlands, marshes
 - k. Desert or Arid lands

3. Is there an intersectoral aspect of your project? If so, provide brief details of the people, institutions or strategies involved
 - a. Yes
 - i. Research: _____
 - ii. Action: _____
 - iii. Policy: _____
 - b. No

c. Give examples of how key actors identified in your study (for example communities, organized groups, state institutions or interagency committees) have or plan to incorporate the results of your project into their own research or practice agendas?

d. Does your analytical approach include a consideration of how the successes of your project could be scaled to support projects occurring in larger geographical contexts or in arenas which may be geographically, politically, ecologically or culturally distinct from the present study site?
 Yes, please describe

No

8. Briefly describe the aspects of your project work, objectives, and central question/problematic that reflects the links with human health and well-being.

a. Is your project designed to address a problem that is:

Short Term (months)

Medium Term (years)

Long-term (decades)

b. Does the problem(s) that your project addresses require the integration of perspectives from diverse disciplines?

Yes. Please explain why:

No

c. Which of the following issues does your project focus on explicitly (You can select more than one option):

Gender equity

Social equity (other than gender). Which: _____

Community participation

Policy and advocacy (Research to action)

Complexity

Ecosystem sustainability

Transdisciplinarity

Other, please specify: _____

Section 3: Research

1. Have the impacts of the interactions between different drivers (for example social, economic, environmental and health) been considered in your analysis?
 Yes. The interactions most relevant to this study are:

No

2. Has the design and execution of this research project built capacity (in the research team) to conduct integrated research, for example to work transdisciplinarily?
 Yes, how?

No. Why not?

3. Integrating knowledge about ecosystems, health status, and the social and ecological conditions of the population(s) studied has been useful for (you can select more than one response):
 Testing a research hypothesis
 Generating new knowledge from the study about the interactions between social, environmental and biological dimensions of health
 Including the actors involved in developing a solution for the problem or intervention studied
 Translating knowledge into action in relation to the management of ecosystem dynamics (biophysical and social environment) that are associated with the health condition(s) under study
 Influencing legislation or organizational practice(s)
 Has had no impact on the project's findings or usefulness

Other _____

Section 4: Action

1. In this project, there was active participation from (you can select more than one option):

- Community Leaders
- Decision makers
- Other research groups
- Community Groups
- NGOs
- Business
- Churches (which denomination?)
- Other: _____

2. The execution of actions and strategies arising from this project directly involved actors working at the level of the (you can select more than one option):

- Municipal
- Regional
- National
- Other: _____
- None

3. When you reflect on the participatory processes developed in your project did you have stakeholder participation?

- During the entire process (determining the problem and object of study, research design, fieldwork, analyzing results, proposal writing, decision making, planning and implementing activities and evaluation)
- During parts of the research (for example, stakeholders participated in certain phases and not others such as in the research design but not in conducting the research)
- We did not have a participatory process

4. Are there barriers, facilitators, and / or political or jurisdictional, cultural and social challenges affecting intersectoral collaboration for action among the institutions participating in the project?

- Yes what? _____
- No

5. When your project is completed, what new learning about ecosystem approaches to health research and practice do you think you will have contributed to? (You can tick more than one option):

- How to design and implement an ecohealth project.

COPEH-CANADA CHECKLIST AND REFLECTION ON A SPECIFIC PROJECT

- New methodologies.
- Other ways to incorporate and work with stakeholders.
- Capacities to influence policy or practice.

Describe your answer(s):

6. During your project, what evaluation strategies have you used to enable making changes that have improved project? (You can tick more than one option):

- Developing a better understanding of the problem under study
- Including actors who were not initially involved in the project
- Enhancing the participation of stakeholders in finding solutions to problems
- Improving the communication of findings and suggestions from the project to decision makers.

Other: _____

None

7. On what level have the principle impacts of the project been achieved?

- Local
- Regional
- National
- International
- Global
- There has been no impact

Section 5: Policy

- 1 The planned and/or completed interventions for your project should have/have had an impact on (You can select more than one option):
 - a. The design of intersectoral/inter-governmental strategies and approaches
 - b. The execution/undertaking of intersectoral strategies and approaches
 - c. The design and execution/undertaking of strategies and approaches solely within the health sector
 - d. We have not had any of the above impacts

3. Has your project succeeded in including, intervening or influencing any health or environmental policies? (You can select more than one option):
 - a. Strategies that improve the ecological efficiency, impact and sustainability of the use of resources
 - b. Strategies that prevent, mitigate, control, remediate, and/or correct the possible ecosystem and environmental effects included in the objectives of our project
 - c. Plans, strategies, and agreements with stakeholders that are responsible for follow-up, evaluation and monitoring as they pertain to project objectives
 - d. Other
 - ii. Describe:

1. Does your project incorporate multiple and diverse kinds of knowledge, experiences, histories, narratives and evidence in the development of recommendations intended to support policy change? (with specific attention to local knowledge)
 - a. Yes
 - iii. Which ones?

 - a. No

2. Which community groups, and non-community groups, have taken-up and used the results of your project to develop and/or undertake (in those cases where they exist, and did not have existing similar policies) initiative to change and improve their policies?

iv. Describe:

1. Has your project resulted in an intervention, or a policy change pertaining to health and ecosystems/environment:

a. Over the short term (months)

b. Over the medium term (years)

c. Over the long term (decades)

d. At the close of our project, we have not yet achieved these kinds of results

3. Does the exercise highlight strengths that you could build upon?

4. Does the exercise highlight missing information? Missing connections? How could you go about addressing these?

5. Do you feel proud of the impact your project is/will have? If so, how could you share this expertise with other researchers? If not, what do you need to be able to improve the reach of your work?

6. What are the opportunities for having an impact on policy? Are you equipped to mobilize toward this work? If not, what is missing?