The Right(s) Way Forward
- Sustainable Communities in Rural Areas
The Right(s) Way forward—is developed to be a community based participatory tool that aims at empowering community members to analyse the community’s environmental degradations, gender inequalities, their use of and control over natural resources and to advocate for their rights. The tool is emphasising community ownership of the process and creating a space for dialogue between rights holders and duty bearers to address the community’s concerns in a collaborative manner.

"I like how you through the exercise extracted the knowledge from us. We know!" - Chairman of CBO

The Right(s) Way Forward process has three main parts consisting of Community Mobilisation, Dialogue for Change and Implementation of Joint Agreement. These three parts build on each other as the overall process moves forward. There is also a part in the process representing implementation of activities in the community action plan that the community can do independently.
Right(s) Way Forward Process

The overall aim of the process is to empower and enable the community members to analyse and act upon the community’s environmental degradations, access and control over resources, human rights violations and to advocate to hold state institutions accountable to fulfil the community members human rights.

The Community Mobilisation process is the first part of the process where the community plans the process, choose and train Community Facilitators and implement Community Workshops to come up with a Community Action Plan. In this phase the emphasise is on the community members analysing the community’s environmental degradations, access and control over resources and human rights violations in the community. The main result of the Community Mobilisation process is the Community Action Plan.

The second part is the Dialogue for Change process. This part is focusing on enabling a dialogue between the community and duty bearers. It starts with preparing community representatives to better understand the governmental and decision making structures, power relations, how to build arguments and present them in a dialogue. The second part is to engage in dialogue with duty bearers and stakeholders. The main goal of this process is to strengthen democratic structures by enabling dialogues between duty bearers and rights holders. If the process is successful and the community manages to get support for the prioritized issues in the Community Action Plan a Joint agreement may be a result.

The third part of the process is the implementation of the Joint Agreement. This part mainly focus on Monitoring and Evaluation. Joint structures for coordinating, undertaking decisions, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the process are agreed upon to make sure that the joint agreements are put into practice and that the community based organisation is central in the process.

Community Implementing Activities Independently is the part of the process representing activities in the Community Action Plan that are possible for community members to do themselves or with small amount of external support. This is defined as “Community Implementing Activities Independently”. Examples might include advocacy activities, trying sustainable practices or changing norms, attitudes and behaviour in the community regarding for example sustainable use of natural resources, gender, gender based violence, and access to and control over resources.
The Community Mobilisation process

In this section we describe the community mobilisation process in more detail. This is the first part of the process and includes three main steps:

A. Pre-planning and Stakeholder Engagement
B. Training of Community Facilitators
C. One or several Community Workshops

The result will be a Community Action Plan for Sustainability.

Pre-planning and Stakeholder Engagement

To start the Right(s) Way Forward process in a community a pre-assessment of the local conditions has to be made to ensure positive results. Below the most important steps in the planning process are described:

1. The formation of a Team of Community Facilitators

The first step is for the community to select a team of Community Facilitators. The team of Community Facilitators consists of five to six people. One or two should be selected from the partner organisation and four to five from the Community based on set criteria (see criteria in the box to the right).

2. Understanding the Right(s) Way Forward (RWF) process, roles, and responsibilities. The second step for the community and the selected Community Facilitators is to understand the RWF process and the roles and responsibilities of all those participating in the process.

3. Community approval to start a RWF process in their community. The CBO have had a meeting with the community leadership and community members to explain the RWF process and agreed initiate the process in their community.
4. Establish contact with duty bearers, other stakeholders, and supporting institutions. The Community Facilitators have established contact with the relevant local duty bearers and those in nearby communities and explained the RWF process. If possible, get their approval or support before starting the process to make it transparent and avoid resistance.

Training of Community Facilitators

The second part of the Community Mobilisation process is the Training of Community Facilitators. As mentioned above, the team of Community Facilitators is formed to guarantee that the Right(s) Way Forward process is owned by the community and all its members.

In the training of Community Facilitators the main objective is to strengthen the members ability and skills to manage processes and facilitating the RWF community workshop. In addition, they will also be trained in different concepts, such as sustainability, human rights, and gender equality, and will have tested the majority of the steps in the Right(s) Way Forward Community tool. The training takes five to seven days in total and is facilitated by skilled trainers.

The Community Workshop

The last part of the Community Mobilisation process is the Community Workshop. This is built as interactive sessions where the members of the community will explore and analyse environmental degradations in the community and its links to gender inequality and violations of rights. The participants will identify stakeholders and responsible entities. They will also try to identify what solutions are needed and where to get support. The result of the Community Workshop is a Community Action Plan. The Community Action Plan is based on a vision of a more sustainable future for the community. It outlines several desired changes for sustainability including sustainable practices, guaranteed rights, gender equality, access and control of resources as well as equal participation and influence in decision-making processes and management of natural resources in their communities. It includes both issues the community can work on independently as well as issues they need support from duty bearers.
The second part of the process, the Dialogue for Change includes two main steps:

A. Preparation by CBO
B. Dialogue with Duty Bearers

In this phase the Community Based Organisation (CBO) will start to strategize around how and in what forums the prioritised issues from the CAP will be discussed with Duty Bearers. The preparation will include enhancing the participants knowledge on the country’s government and decision making structures, power relations and mechanisms for participation. It also aims at strengthening communication skills and the ability to develop and present strong arguments. Participants will identify relevant duty bearers, decide on a forum to attend and prepare for the dialogue with duty bearers.

The dialogue with duty bearers can include several meetings. Depending on the prioritised issues, different duty bearers such politicians, various institutions and municipality administration officers may need separate meetings for example.

Basically, the dialogue can be any forum in which community-based members, representatives of the community, duty bearers (such as politicians and staff from various government departments and institutions) and other identified strategic stakeholders are brought together to discuss problems and solutions. It could also be capacity strengthening activities for both duty bearers and community members.
Right(s) Way Forward—Story from the field

In 2016 Forum Syd in collaboration with their partner organisation Dandelion Kenya carried out the RWF Gender Equality process in Majani Mingi in Nakuru County. Representatives of the community together with trained Community Facilitators developed a Community Action Plan (CAP) in which they prioritised clean and safe water availability as well as adequate health services in their village. The community arranged a dialogue event that brought together more than fifty Community Representatives, key County Government Leaders and other stakeholders who had an opportunity to discuss and jointly agree with the Community on measures to take in order to address the issues in the CAP.

Zubedah is one of the Community Facilitators also a youth leader in the constituency that shared her story after the Dialogue event. Before the RWF process, Zubedah believed that household work was meant for women only. She thought that women were supposed to take care of the house, the children and their husbands. However, after the process, she realised that men and women can share the household work and thinks that men should assist their wives. She also thinks that this will bring a better relationship with respect and love and that men will start to appreciate women even more.

Zubedah tells us that the process has helped to reduce gender based violence in the area that was so prevalent before the training. She says that the knowledge has impacted the community since the Community Facilitators and participants in the workshop of the Right(s) way forward process are educating the community in churches, schools, social places and in women groups. Already now there is a notable change in the community. However, she also tells us that there are some people especially the elderly that dislike the process because they think that the Kenyan culture doesn’t allow men to do the household chores.

Zubedah thinks that it is valuable to work together as a community and that she has seen a successful progress ever since they came together. She thinks that one person can’t achieve it all. Working as a community is the best way to achieve success.

The Right(s) Way Forward process also helped the community to plan a meeting with the Governor so that they could present their arguments as to why they need a hospital nearby. Zubedah thought that the meeting went well and that the duty bearers came up with solutions to the community’s problems. They promised that they will follow up the process until they see a hospital in Majani Mingi.
They agreed that the community were in need of a hospital so Zubedah was satisfied with the results of the meeting.

After the process, Zubedah has seen many changes in her home. Men are now helping women with the household chores and they are working together. She says that it is a big, great and positive change that resulted from her telling them about human Right(s) and Gender Balanced Home.

Zubedah is so proud after the training and describes herself as a changed person and now thinks that responsibility belongs to everyone, both women and men. If people work together, there will be success at the end but individually, we will not go far. She is now a role model and a champion of change both in her own family and in the community at large.

Overall many members of the community are talking about the positive changes related to men partaking more in household work and also decreasing rates of gender based violence. In the meeting with duty bearers a joint decision was taken that Duty Bearers and the community would jointly follow up on the renovation of the health centre which will solve the problem of poor and inadequate health services in the villages. In addition the Duty Bearers and Community agreed on solutions to the problem of unclean water. The proposed solutions included purification of water in the community water dam and also fencing the dam to prohibit animals from drinking from the same dam as the people.