

# L4S: multi-stakeholder cooperation

The dominance of some actors over others can perpetuate disparities and poverty. While some actors work to access natural resources (e.g. natural gas exploration), poverty and pressure on the livelihoods of local communities persist. To deal with the resulting complexity, ESAPP used a transdisciplinary approach that includes the Learning for Sustainability (L4S) tool. L4S integrates research and capacity development at local, regional, and national levels.

## Sustainable development challenge

When addressing issues of sustainable development, most development practitioners use a “logical-framework approach”, a development approach which presumes a predefined perception of the project context. As a consequence, priorities change depending on decision-making levels and stakeholder interests. The resulting development processes are fragile and often hindered or even misused by some stakeholder groups. The dominance of some actors with strategic relations to and support from other strong actors can perpetuate disparities and poverty.

Such disparities are on the rise in the province of Cabo Delgado, in the north of Mozambique. The growing tourism industry, natural gas exploration, and, to a lesser extent, timber logging and fishing, all fuel marginalization processes. They also contribute to the ongoing degradation of the diverse *miombo* forest landscape (see photo, right). Segmented development interventions mean that efforts to mitigate forest degradation and secure local livelihoods – through collaboration between local communities, logging companies, and government authorities – remain inconsistent and inefficient. Thus, while a number of outside actors are interested in accessing the area’s natural resources, poverty and pressure on local communities’ livelihoods persist.

## ESAPP’s response

ESAPP used a transdisciplinary approach to deal with complexity and a multiplicity of actors. An important component of this approach was the Learning for Sustainability (L4S) tool. L4S was designed in the 1990s by the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) and has since been adapted to a number of development topics and contexts. The tool integrates research and capacity development at local, regional, and national levels. Workshops based on knowledge exchange between stakeholders and researchers help to identify the social, economic, and ecological dynamics leading to competing claims on natural resources. This analysis then forms the basis for defining sustainable development pathways. In Cabo Delgado, ESAPP worked to achieve a better understanding of ongoing development deficits and resource degradation, sharing this knowledge with relevant stakeholders as a basis for mutual supportive action. The process started out with experiences and preliminary research in the governance and management of natural resources, with the aim of developing a differentiated perception of the context. A partnership between the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Maputo, CDE, and the Mozambican logging company MITI made it possible to work with the main stakeholders and to grasp the whole complexity of development processes.



## Main messages

- Co-production of knowledge and capacity development (both individual and societal) for sustainable development require a transdisciplinary approach and a participatory appraisal of the local resource base and of competing claims on natural resources.
- The complexity of development issues in Cabo Delgado can be addressed through such an approach by investing enough time and means. To date, development partners have refrained from doing so because of their focus on fast economic impact and lack of awareness of underlying reasons for negative development trends.
- Fire management is key to preventing further degradation of the *miombo* forests in northern Mozambique. The main stakeholders need to understand this and jointly address fire management using established techniques.



*Miombo* woodlands are Eastern Africa’s dominant forest type. A highly diverse ecosystem, they provide a number of important resources to local communities, as well as high-value timber for export and habitats for wildlife. Finding ways of managing them sustainably is a crucial precondition for securing local communities’ livelihoods and sustainable development in Mozambique. (Photo: Andreas Kläy)



## The project story

ESAPP started its activities in Mozambique in 2002, on request from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), with a project in Cabo Delgado province, in the north. This project was conducted in cooperation with Helvetas and Gecorena, a local NGO.

The Learning for Sustainability (L4S) tool was first applied in Mozambique in the village of Ngura, Ancuabe district, using the local language Macúá. Typically, L4S workshops on sustainable resource management are conducted in villages over a three-week period, fostering co-production of knowledge between smallholder farmers and other stakeholders. This design is ideal for addressing local resource use and development issues. The concept proved effective to obtain new insights, and to sharpen the understanding of different stakeholder groups' perceptions and interests.

Encouraged by this success, ESAPP decided to scale out the tool. Subsequently, the project team implemented eight workshops, one of which was used to train Mozambican L4S moderators. The workshops were conducted with different university and NGO partners and in different contexts, in the Cabo Delgado and Maputo provinces.

Workshop participants mentioned that sustainable management of *miombo* forests is a major concern in Cabo Delgado. The ESAPP team therefore decided to focus on this topic in the northern part of the province, where degradation is less advanced. In parallel, the decision was made to build up long-term partnerships with relevant stakeholders. In 2008, collaboration was initiated with the Chair of History at the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Maputo, and a memorandum of understanding was signed with MITI, a private logging company and holder of forest concessions. The partnership focused on understanding natural regeneration of *miombo* forests and improving it through better forest management by MITI and local communities.

Research on the above topics was mainly conducted by Master's- and Bachelor's-level students. Three of them were Mozambicans registered at UEM, and three were Swiss students from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH Zurich) and the University of Basel. Their studies were integrated into the transdisciplinary project interactions and thus into an overall action research process. Their findings showed that combatting uncontrolled forest fires is the best way of reducing ongoing soil degradation and promoting biodiversity.

**Top:** Stakeholders participating in an L4S workshop in Nkonga village are discussing access to and management of natural resources. Stakeholder groups sometimes defend their interests vehemently against those of other groups. Guiding participants through the different groups' particular views and leading them towards a shared perception of the socioecological system and their common interests in it is the main aim of the L4S approach. (Photo: Andreas Kläy)

**Bottom:** Another L4S workshop brought together traditional healers and researchers to discuss sustainable management of *miombo* woodlands. Traditional healers are widely respected as environmental and social experts and as resource persons, based on their vast experience and knowledge. This experience and knowledge, and the fact that they have no direct stake in resource governance, makes them more open-minded and sensitive to the larger picture. (Photo: Martin Brüllhardt)





## Innovation and relevance

ESAPP's long-term experience in Cabo Delgado helped to raise the team's awareness of the complexity of development trends. It also forged a strong personal network that fostered innovative public–private cooperation between academic and government institutions and a logging company. This set-up was instrumental in facilitating transdisciplinary research and learning processes at the grass-roots level. It was complemented by students' research, which enhanced stakeholders' knowledge on the dynamics of *miombo* forests in Cabo Delgado and pointed out options for their improved management.

The L4S tool further improved the capacities of relevant stakeholders to cooperate. It helped make clear that the enforcement of forest laws in Mozambique is failing mostly because of a lack of capacity and competence, as well as of cooperation between different decision-making and planning levels. Indeed, conflicting stakeholder interests tended to block reflections on the socioecological dynamics of *miombo* forest degradation.

The ESAPP team was able to contain these conflicting interests by inviting 20 healers, mainly women from four villages, to take part in an L4S workshop in 2011. Most stakeholders recognize healers as environmental and social experts who do not have a direct stake in resource governance, and who can therefore mediate between other stakeholders. Thus, their involvement in the workshop was an invaluable asset for the project.

In terms of forest management, the project made it clear that uncontrolled forest fires are the main ecological cause of the continuing degradation of *miombo* forests, as they hamper the biome's capacity to regenerate. Subsequent ESAPP activities thus concentrated on creating knowledge and capacity to reduce uncontrolled forest fires. It soon became clear that cooperation between the communities and the forest concession holder is the only promising approach to achieving this goal. This project focus is highly relevant throughout Eastern Africa. *Miombo* forest degradation is already advanced in many areas of the region and management concepts are urgently needed.



**Top:** Local communities establish their crop fields in the *miombo* woodlands. They use fire to clear the natural vegetation before planting. Sometimes their fires get out of control and damage large areas of woodland. Uncontrolled fires were identified as the main cause of forest degradation, making improved fire management a key ingredient of sustainable resource management in Cabo Delgado. (Photo: Andreas Kläy)

**Bottom:** High-value timber is transported by lorry to the ports of Mocímboa da Praia and Pemba before it is exported, mainly to China. Concession holders play an important role in managing the *miombo* woodlands. However, most of them lack adequate entry points for collaboration with local communities and with government institutions. The project helped to establish such collaborative links. (Photo: Andreas Kläy)



**Andreas Kläy, Ing. ETH**  
Associate Director  
Centre for Development and  
Environment (CDE)  
University of Bern, Switzerland



**Yussuf Adam, PhD**  
Professor  
Departamento de História  
Universidade Eduardo Mondlane  
Maputo, Mozambique

## Highlight profile

This highlight is based on the achievements of 7 ESAPP priority action projects.

**Implemented during:**  
2001–2014

**Total funds contributed by ESAPP:**  
CHF 316,000

**Implemented by:**  
Centre for Development and Environment  
(CDE), University of Bern, Switzerland

**In collaboration with:**  
Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM),  
Maputo, Mozambique; MITI, Cabo Delgado,  
Mozambique; Gecorena (Comité de Gestão  
Comunitária dos Recursos Naturais/The Coal-  
ition for Community Resource Management),  
Pemba, Mozambique; various governmental  
institutions

**Main beneficiaries:**  
Communities in Cabo Delgado Province of  
Mozambique

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CDE  
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## What is ESAPP?

The Eastern and Southern Africa Partnership Programme (ESAPP) is a research implementation programme funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), coordinated by the Centre for Development and Environment (CDE) of the University of Bern, Switzerland, and implemented jointly by CDE and a network of partner institutions in Eastern and Southern Africa. Launched in 1999 and completed in 2015, ESAPP implemented over 300 priority action projects in the programme region, which included Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Madagascar.

## What are ESAPP Highlights?

ESAPP Highlights are a series of 24 project descriptions providing insights into ESAPP's research and implementation partnerships. Each Highlight describes a succession of demand-driven priority action projects addressing local and regional sustainability issues. The 24 Highlights are collected in a publication that includes additional background information on ESAPP (see citation above). The individual Highlights and the entire publication are also available for download on CDE's website: [www.cde.unibe.ch](http://www.cde.unibe.ch) (keyword search: "ESAPP").