



## **DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS & PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH TECHNIQUES**

**Training of Trainers Manual**

**Sponsored by**

**The Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)  
AND  
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**Prepared by**

*Aldene Shillingford (MSW), Consultant*

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## **Introduction**

Following the training of persons from across the Caribbean Region in 2003, in data collection protocols and participatory research techniques, which was sponsored by the CDB and DFID, participants articulated their satisfaction with the training workshops and expressed the desire for additional knowledge and competence in training others in their respective countries. The CDB has taken the first major step in ensuring the development of a manual for trainer of trainers in participatory research as a precursor to the demand for further training.

It is always a challenge to develop training that combines development and empowerment with research. This is the situation in the Caribbean where we are attempting to do both using Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) techniques. Burkey 1993 describes this development research approach as “self-reliant participatory development” and “an educational empowering process in which people, in partnership with each other and with those able to assist them, identify problems and needs, mobilize resources, and assume responsibility themselves to plan, manage, control and assess the individual and collective actions that they themselves decide upon”.<sup>1</sup>

The manual has two sections:

**Part one** addresses the knowledge preparation or content necessary for embarking on participatory research and covers topics such as”: Participatory Research, Quantitative versus Qualitative Research, Participatory Methods in Data Collection, The Semi-Structured Interview, Participatory Research: The Process of Engaging the Community and Conducting Participatory Research: The Field Visit.

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<sup>1</sup> Burkey, S. (1993) People First-A Guide to Self-Reliant Participatory Rural Development. London. Zed Books. p.205

In part one the trainer is assured in depth discussions of protocols and critical issues relating to research. Protocols apply to ensuring the validity of findings and that the proper procedures have been adhered to throughout. The critical issues apply to:

- Maintaining data quality
- Integrity of the data base
- Production of reports

In particular, the sections, which give information on preparing for the field, the difference between quantitative and qualitative measures, and preparation of the final report in either of these methods is given special consideration to ensure an understanding of protocols and issues. If the trainer gains a good grasp of what has been presented then the protocols of research will be fully observed.

**Part two** considers the skills needed by the trainer in aiding the learning and competence of trainees. There are many considerations when one decides to be a trainer, these range from the hallmarks of a good trainer to tips on becoming that good trainer. Topics covered include: The Role and Function of the Trainer in Adult Learning, The Trainer's Preparation and Techniques of Training and Understanding and Working with Groups. PLA involves working as a team in interfacing with and motivating people of diverse backgrounds. In order for trainers to be effective in transforming skills and influencing insights and action the requirement is for an understanding of adult learning needs, training skills and techniques and an understanding of groups. Since group activities and interaction are important factors in the lives of all humans, it is essential to have a grasp of basic group theory as it relates to group dynamics and group development in particular if any group formed is to function adequately.

## **Part 1**

### **Knowledge Preparation**

## **Chapter 1. Participatory Research**

### **1.1 What is Participatory Research**

Participatory Research refers to the use of participatory strategies that allow local people to participate in research that will ultimately lead to their own empowerment.

The research itself utilises methodologies, which promote participation and “self-development”.

Whereas traditional research has been noted for generating knowledge, participatory

**Today development has evolved to mean a process of social learning” whereby “ the participation of the actors or target group/clients in the development process has come to be acknowledged both as a means to an end in the process of people empowering and liberating themselves” (Lienbenberg and Stewart 1978 p. 85)**

research emphasises “knowledge for action” and a “bottom-up approach”. What does this mean? It is all about the researcher, who instead of being the expert, focuses on ensuring the involvement of local residents at all stages of the process. As Cornwall and Jewkes explain, the most critical difference is the “location of power in the various stages of the research process” (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995, pp 1667-1668).

### **1.2 Development and Research: A Look Into Past and Present**

#### **Approaches**

When governments speak of development, it has always emphasised the need for top-down approaches, extractive data, rigorous data analysis and explanations in order to plan projects for people. Further, traditional theories of development, particularly in the fields of economics and sociology have influenced the traditional research methodologies preferring to define development theoretically and test these theories against reality. These disciplines have both defined development “hypothetically, and then – using traditional research methodologies – test their hypotheses in order to

substantiate their theories and plan strategies towards their realization” (Liebenberg and Stewart 1998 p 87).

It is not surprising that many development programmes and projects are often described as “failures” having used inappropriate strategies of development and data collection in which learning has been a one way process for researchers or outsiders who extract information and develop policies and programmes **for** the poor. An unhealthy reinforcement of dependency on outside technocrats to provide the solutions, seem to be developing among the poor. This has led to a particular set of weaknesses being highlighted by both funding agents and development sources. These include:

- Funders have designed projects with specific time lines that called for “readily attainable quantitative objectives” which do not take into consideration “the rate of evolution of the development environment”
- Decisions about the “types of intervention, technological models and activities” were based on “available factual data which made no allowance for “socio-cultural variables – social realities – or continued change”
- The process of implementation followed “a pre-determined project design based on assumptions concerning environmental behaviour that often prove to be incorrect” (Liebenberg and Stewart p. 88).

The noticeable shift to the concept of sustainable human development has therefore taken these criticisms into consideration calling for the design of development projects and programmes which serve the realities of local people using participatory

methods, which try “to support development as a process defined and determined, by the people”. This change in focus realises that development of people and communities must be carried through by the people themselves in a manner that they understand and appreciate (Liebenberg & Stewart p. 90-91).

### **1.3 The Origins of Participatory Research**

Models of participatory methodologies are diverse and have varied roots. The five main strands, which have informed the approach used today, are:

- Activist Participatory Research
- Agroecosystem Analysis
- Applied Anthropology
- Field Research on Farming Systems
- Rapid Rural Appraisal

**Activist Participatory Research (1968)** was influenced mainly by the Brazilian Paulo Freire, an activist, academic and author of “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” and “to the practice and experience of consciencization in Latin America” (Chambers 1994 p. 954, Liebenberg and Stewart 1998 p.97-98). Freire focused on the exploited poor using dialogue and joint research to benefit people awareness and to motivate them to take political action. Through this approach there was the recognition that “poor people are creative, and capable and should be empowered, while outsiders have a role as catalyst and facilitators” (Pretty et al 1995 p. 55).

**Agroecosystem Analysis (1978)** is an approach developed in Thailand by Gordon Conway, it was used with local rural farmers to identify and assess agricultural practices. It draws on combining systems and ecological thinking in its analysis of systems and systems properties such as “productivity, stability, sustainability and equitability” and integrates this with the analysis of patterns such as space, time, flows, and relationship. The approach has contributed to the use of transect walks and visual representations or tools used in participatory research such as maps, seasonal calendars, trend analysis, flow and causal diagrams, bar charts, venn diagrams and ranking and scoring methods (Pretty et al 1995 p. 55, Chambers 1994 p. 954-955, Liebenberg and Stewart 1998 p.98)

**Applied Anthropology (1980)** became associated with development anthropology and was recognised as “legitimate and useful activities”, very different from the classical social anthropology of the past which concentrated more on understanding than on behaviour change. The approach uses conversation with people, observations, informal interviews and focus groups and detailed recording to gain insights of persons lives. The main contributions have been to:

- the idea that field learning is flexible art rather than rigid science
- the value of field residence, unhurried participant observation, and conversations
- the importance of attitudes and behaviour and rapport
- the emic/etic distinction
- the validity of indigenous technical knowledge (Chambers 1994 p. 955)

**Field Research on Farming Systems (1960)** has “led to the recognition of the fact that the farmer often knows better and therefore needs to play a much greater role in agricultural research”. The methodology has taught researchers to respect and appreciate:

- the complexity and diversity of many farming systems
- the knowledge, professionalism and rationality display by many poor small-scale farmers
- the farmers ability to conduct their own analyses (Liebenberg and Stewart 1998 p.99)

**Rapid Rural Appraisal (1970)** emerged in the late 1970s as a reaction to:

- dissatisfaction with biases
- disillusionment with questionnaire surveys and the unsuitable and unreliable results
- the costly procedures involved

In answering the question “Whose knowledge counts? it sought to enable outsiders to gain insights and information from rural people about rural conditions in a cost-effective and timely manner” (Pretty et al 1995 p. 55)

The defining characteristic of these approaches is the emphasis on collaboration and a collegial relationship as part of the research process. Chambers and Jewkes 1995 cite the main difference between participatory research and conventional research as “the alignment of power within the research process”. Whereas conventional research tends to be contractual and extractive the participatory research process is collaborative and collegiate.

There are four principal modes of participation, which can be seen as a continuum for ensuring participation in the research project:

- ***Contractual arrangements*** which involve the contracting of persons to participate in providing data which researchers need
- ***Consultative arrangements*** which involve consulting with persons “for their opinions” before interventions are made
- ***Collaborative arrangements*** which involve the researcher and local people working together to identify, design and initiate projects managed by researchers
- ***Collegiate arrangements*** which involve local people and researchers working together as “colleagues with different skills to offer in a process of mutual learning where local people have control over the process” **Chambers and Jewkes 1995, p. 1699,**

**A comparison of the process of Participatory and Conventional research:**

**(Chambers and Jewkes p. 1669)**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Participatory Research</b>	<b>Conventional Research</b>
What is the research for?	Action	Understanding with perhaps action later
Who is the research for?	Local people	Institutional, personal and professional interests
Whose knowledge counts?	Local people's	Economists, sociologists etc
Topic choice influenced by?	Local priorities	Funding priorities, institutional agendas, professional interests
Methodology chosen for?	Empowerment, mutual learning	Disciplinary conventions, "objectivity", and "truth"
<b>Who takes part in each of the following stages?:</b>		
Problem identification	Local people	Researcher
Data collection	Local people	Researcher, enumerator
Interpretation	Local concepts and framework	Disciplinary concepts and frameworks
Analysis	Local people	Researcher
Presentations of findings	Locally accessible and useful	By researcher to other academics or funding body
Actions on findings	Integral to the process	Separate and may not happen
Who takes action?	Local people with or without external support	External agencies
Who owns the results?	Shared	The researcher
What is emphasised?	Process	Outcomes

Continuing our learning of the origins of Participatory research, let us examine two models of participatory research, which are used extensively.

**Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)** was developed out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), action research, applied anthropology and agrosystems analysis. The emphasis shifted from contracting arrangements of extracting data, to consultative, collaborative and collegiate arrangements which recognised the importance and validity of local knowledge and the learning and empowerment which resulted from a process which encouraged persons to participate actively in identifying, analysing and acting upon decisions taken. It involves:

- The application of qualitative methods such as group discussions, focus group discussions, observation and interviewing
- The use of tools such as visual art - mapping, seasonal calendars, time lines, flow diagrams, matrices, pie diagrams drawn by people which facilitate their participation in understanding, analysing and solving of their own problems
- The changing attitudes and behaviour adopted by researchers which have placed persons at the centre or as the subjects of their own development

(Chambers and Jewkes, pp 1670-1671).

**Participatory Action Research (PAR)**, like PRA concentrates on the empowerment of people. PAR, however, takes “an explicitly political stance” as it focuses on those who are marginalized and socially excluded. PAR is action focused on the outcomes of the research process and ensuring that there is implementation of its findings as local people are motivated to “take action on their concerns”.

In PRA the tools of data gathering are expanded to include such activities as community-based theatre (animation), art and storytelling as well as using more conventional methods such as focus group discussions etc. PAR is described as more of “an attitude or approach” as opposed to a “series of techniques” (Cornwall and Jewkes, p. 1671)

As an umbrella term to speak about these popular approaches and methodologies we use **Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)**. PLA emphasises observation, dialogue and discourse, all these associated activities aiding in learning. It is participatory because all persons are respected with both resident and researcher acknowledging each other’s knowledge. This is the basis for the action developed and accepted. PLA brings together certain commonalities shared between all the approaches developed including:

- Use of a defined methodology
- The creativity in the use of context specific and highly adaptable methods
- The wide array of methods used which facilitate recognising multiple views.
- The encouragement of interactive sharing and learning.
- The flexibility experienced in the use of tools as well as the structured analysis permitted.

- The mobilising and motivation of people towards action.
- The use of the methods by various disciplines and sectors to benefit mutual learning for local people and those sectors which serve them.
- The use of the methods by various disciplines and sectors to realise a joint vision with local people and the development of effective and sustainable benefits. <http://www.iied.org/NR/>

In the contemporary period there has been a noticeable change in the scope and use of participation:

- To focus on “sub-national, national and international decision-making, not just phases local decision-making”
- To shift “from projects to policy processes and institutionalisation”
- To recognise “issues of difference and power”
- To emphasise “assessing the quality and understanding the impact of participation, rather than simply promoting participation”

<http://www.iied.org/NR/>

## **1.4 Ten Myths About Participatory Research**

Pretty et al pp 68-70 lists ten myths about participatory research:

1. **That it is quick.** The processes of joint analysis and learning are complicated, involves hard work and is time consuming
2. **That it is easy.** Successful application of the approach calls for experience and skills in facilitation, communication and conflict management
3. **That anyone can do it.** Requisite attitudes and behaviour of the researcher and the institution involved is necessary to encourage successful outcomes such as mutual learning and action in addition to providing models of attitudes and behaviour which can be adopted by the community
4. **That it is just fancy techniques.** The methods used can only reap real success if they are adopted at the agency level (governmental and non-governmental agencies). The environment within agencies must also be conducive to new learnings and innovations to aid institutional and policy changes
5. **That it is based on particular disciplinary perspectives.** Participatory research has grown out of practical field-work. The origins of participatory research provide sufficient evidence that its foundations rest on the influences of several field based sources and traditions
6. **That it has no theoretical base.** Participatory research is based on action-research. The issues highlighted in using the participatory methodologies “resonate with a range of philosophical debates within the social sciences”
7. **That it is a new invention.** Participatory research evolved out of anthropology in the 1840’s and qualitative research approaches traced back to two centuries ago “prior to the hegemony of statistics and quantification”
8. **That training is the answer.** “Training courses may be part of the answer, but they are not the only one” as organisations must ensure support to the approach through organisational change. Post training for the organisation to explore the implications of such approaches for the organisation itself would be useful
9. **That social actors involved are neutral.** This is a “flawed statement as “actors are never neutral” however “all participants have responsibilities for their actions” and “the political and ethical implications of participatory action-research and development must therefore be unpacked, discussed openly with all and responded to”
10. **That it is non-political.** In all actions taken by actors there are political consequences. The very engagement and empowerment of ordinary people is likely to create tensions and the researcher may need to take sides or take on the role of broker, mediator or negotiator (Pretty

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Article: What is PLA: [http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla\\_notes/whatispla.html](http://www.iied.org/NR/agbioliv/pla_notes/whatispla.html)

## **Chapter 2. Quantitative Research versus Qualitative Research**

Over the years, the general public has tended to regard scientific research as using only quantitative methods for data collection i.e being concerned with objectivity, precision and the use of numbers. Qualitative researchers continue to challenge this view. This chapter will therefore summarily define each method, pointing to strengths of each method and the need to understand the conditions which better suit either application. The two methods are often defined by comparing one to the other. However, it is useful to bear in mind that generally, quantitative researchers work with a few variables and many cases, whereas qualitative researchers rely on a few cases and many variables. Both qualitative and quantitative researchers use careful, systematic methods to gather high- quality data. However, differences in the style of research and the types of data needed, mean that researchers will approach the measurement process differently (Neuman 2003, Ragin 1987 in Creswell 1998).

### **2.1 Units of Analysis**

What or who do we study? Is it the group, the organization, the event, the social institution, the community or the entire society? Each one of these is called a *unit of analysis*. Within the social sciences, *individuals* are most often considered the units of analysis. However as we can see there are many other ways of defining our units for study and observation.

### **2.2 Purpose and Design of Social Research**

Neuman (2003) believes that the purpose of social science research can be organized into three groups based on what the researcher is trying to accomplish. The researcher may either: explore a new topic, describe a social phenomenon, or explain why

something occurs. Studies may even have multi purposes, but one purpose is usually dominant.

### **1. Exploratory Research**

Here the researcher explores a new topic or issue in order to learn more about it. If the issue was relatively new or it is difficult to find anything written about it, you would need to begin at the beginning. This is called *exploratory research*. The research goal is to formulate more precise questions that future research can answer. Exploratory research can be the first step in a series of studies. A researcher may need to conduct an exploratory study in order to know enough to design and execute a second, more systematic and extensive study.

### **2. Descriptive Research**

The researcher may have more highly developed ideas about a social phenomenon and want to describe it in some detail. Descriptive research presents a picture of the specific details of a situation, social setting, or relationship. In descriptive research, the researcher begins with a well- defined topic and conducts research to describe it accurately. Descriptive research focuses on the “how and “who” questions.

### **3. Explanatory Research**

This type of research is used when you encounter an issue that is already known, have a description, but you are curious about *why* things are the way they are. The desire to know “why”, to explain is the purpose of explanatory research. It builds on exploratory and descriptive research and goes on to investigate possible reasons for its occurrence/behaviour. It goes beyond focusing on the topic or providing a picture of it, by including the concept of causal relationships

When you conduct research you need to think about both purpose and method as part of the design of the project. The design will therefore take into consideration the amount of time associated with conducting the research. As we know, some research gives a snap shot of a single, fixed time in life (cross-sectional research) and permits you to analyse it in detail. Other studies provide a moving picture that lets you follow events, people, or social relations over a period of time (longitudinal research). Let us look at this in more detail.

1. **Cross-Sectional Studies:** Many research projects are designed to study some phenomenon by taking a cross section of it at one time and analyzing that cross section carefully. Exploratory, descriptive or explanatory studies can be cross-sectional (Babbie, 1995), but it is most consistent with a descriptive approach to research. Neuman (2003) argues that cross-sectional research is usually the simplest and least costly alternative. Its disadvantage is that it cannot capture social processes or change.
2. **Longitudinal Studies:** Longitudinal studies are designed to permit observations over an extended period of time. There are three types of longitudinal studies: Trend, Cohort and Panel studies.

- a. **Trend Studies** are those that study changes within some general population over time. This type of research can observe stability or change in the features of the unit or track conditions over time.
- b. **Cohort studies** examine more specific subpopulations (cohorts) as they change over time. Typically, a cohort is an age group, such as those people born in the 1970's, but it can also be based on some other time grouping, such as people born during Hurricane Gilbert, and so on.
- c. **Panel studies** are similar to trend and cohort studies except that the same set of people, group or organization is studied each time (Babbie, 1995). Neuman (2003) describes it as a powerful type of research.

## 2.3 The Qualitative Research Design: Purpose and Process

### Defining Qualitative Research

According to Berg (2001) quality refers to the what, how, when, and where of a thing- its essence, and ambience. With that in mind, qualitative research refers to the meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, symbols and holistic in depth

descriptions of things. For this to happen, qualitative research is conducted in the natural setting of the problem. On examining his/her role, the researcher realises the capacity to be introspective as to the effect (s)he might be having on the research process. Simultaneously, as an instrument in the process of data collection, (s)he gathers narrative , texts, visual images, analyses them inductively, focusing on deriving a meaning or an interpretation which is true to that of the participant. Qualitative researchers are inherently concerned with representing the richness, texture, and feeling of raw data as their use of the inductive approach emphasizes developing insights and generalizations from within the data collected (Neuman, 2003; Lincoln and Guba, Denzin and Lincoln, Halmi in Creswell 1998).

As Denzin and Lincoln (in Creswell, 1998) add

Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials- case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts- that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives. (p.2)

## **2.4 Why use Qualitative Methods?**

The discussion hinges on the argument that sees the social sciences as relying single-mindedly on the use of survey techniques, regardless of whether or not the method is appropriate for the problem. In fact we might even see studies being awarded high approbation simply because of the choice of method. A good example is in the social sciences where academic publications still routinely prefer the quantitative method citing the use of more rigorous methodologies and consequent statistical analysis.

As Berg points out however, despite conflicting paradigms and attendant methods of data generation, “everyone is doing science, provided that science is defined as a

specific, and systematic way of discovering and understanding how social realities arise, operate, and impact on individuals and organizations of individuals” (Berg, 2001). Qualitative research can justifiably be compared with rigorous quantitative research and more critically should not be viewed as an easy substitute for a “statistical” or quantitative study.

Clearly there are specific characteristics of the qualitative approach to which the researcher should be committed. Cresswell highlights five of these:

- *Commit to extensive time in the field.* The investigator spends many hours in the field, collects extensive data, and rigorously addresses issues of acceptance and the process, rapport, and effect of an “insider” perspective.
- *Engage in the complex, time- consuming process of data analysis-* the tedious task of sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to meaningful thematic categorisations or understandings. For a multidisciplinary team of qualitative researchers, this task can be shared; for most researchers, it is a more lonely, isolated time of struggling with the data. The task is challenging, especially because the database usually consists of complex texts and images.
- *Writing extensively and completely in expressive and persuasive language, because the evidence must represent the findings.*
- *Participate in a form of social and human science research that is evolving constantly.* This calls for flexibility and commitment to the process so that it can be clearly explained in the reporting

Why do we engage in qualitative research? What are the kinds of problems that would best be answered using this approach?

- i. *Select a qualitative study because of the nature of the research question. In a qualitative study the research question often starts with a how or a what. This is in contrast to quantitative questions that ask why and look for a comparison of groups or a relationship between variables, with the intent to establishing an association, relationship, or cause and effect.*
- ii. *Choose a qualitative study because the topic needs to be explored. In this case variables cannot be easily identified, theories are not available to explain behaviour of participants or population of study, and theories are not to be developed*
- iii. *Use a qualitative study because of the need to present a detailed view of the topic.*
- iv. *Choose a qualitative approach in order to study individuals in their natural setting. This involves going out to the setting or field of study, gaining access, and gathering material.*
- v. *Select a qualitative approach because of interest in writing in a literary style; the writer brings himself or herself into the study, the personal pronoun “I” is used, or perhaps the writer engages a storytelling form of narration.*
- vi. *Employ a qualitative study because of sufficient time and resources to spend on extensive data collection in the field and detailed data analysis of “text” information.*
- vii. *Select a qualitative approach because audiences are receptive to qualitative research. This audience might be a graduate adviser or committee, a discipline inclusive of multiple research methodologies, or publication outlets with editors receptive to qualitative approaches.*
- viii. *Employ a qualitative approach to emphasize the researcher’s role as an active learner who can tell the story from participants’ view rather than as an “expert” who passes judgement on participants. \*\*\*change substantially*  
Cresswell 1998

## 2.5 Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research has grown out of diverse disciplines (anthropology, sociology, psychology) that are marked by distinctive interests, theories, issues, and research methods. Over the years a number of methods have evolved all firmly bases in the use of narrative and text. Five of the more popular methods are the case study, biographical life history, ethnography, phenomenology, and grounded theory. A discussion of these is outside the parameters of this text. However we would recommend Linclon and Denzin and Creswell for those person interested.

## **2.6 The Quantitative Research Design: Purpose and Process**

### **Defining Quantitative Research**

Creswell 1994, (as cited in Leedy 1997) defines quantitative study as “an inquiry into a social or human problem, based on testing a theory composed of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalizations of the theory holds true.”

Quantitative research usually starts with a working hypothesis to be tested. The relevant variables are isolated and operationalized and any extraneous variables are controlled. Data is then collected from a large number of participants, usually by means of a questionnaire and the data is then analysed with the arising conclusions being stated. A statement is also made as to generalisability of the findings based on the sampling method used.

A *hypothesis* is any statement, proposition or assumption that serves as a tentative explanation of certain facts. To derive a theoretical hypothesis, however, the researcher forms statements which are used to explain various concepts related to the theory. A hypothesis may direct the researcher’s thinking to possible sources of information that will aid in resolving one or more sub-problems and, in the process, the principal research problem (Baron 2001).

According to the traditional model of science, scientists begin with an interest in some aspect of the real world. A theory therefore is a systematic explanation for the observations that relate to the particular aspect of life that the researcher is interested in. It can be further defined as a system of interconnected abstractions or ideas that

condenses and organizes existing knowledge about the social world (Babbie 1995, Neuman 2003).

## **2.7 Why Use Quantitative Research?**

Quantitative researchers seek explanations and predictions that are generalisable to other persons and places. The intent is to establish, confirm, or validate relationships and to develop generalizations that contribute to theory. Quantitative researchers are more concerned about issues of design, measurement, and sampling because their deductive approach emphasizes detailed planning **prior** to data collection and analysis. They stress objectivity and more, “mechanical” techniques. They use the principle of replication, adhere to standardized methodological procedures, measure with numbers, and then analyse the data using appropriate statistical tests (Neuman, 2003, Leedy, 1997).

Quantitative researchers tend to use experimental or correlation designs to reduce error, bias, and extraneous variables. Underlying these research designs is the belief that there is relatively stable reality “out there” that can be measured through well-designed questionnaires or other instruments. Quantitative research is also done to facilitate large samples that represent the population, in a form that is easily converted to numerical indices. Quantitative researchers are most interested in describing the norms of the population sampled.

## 2.8 Quantitative Research Methods

There is a range of research designs applied in quantitative research. These relate directly to the purpose of the research as explained in Section 2.2. The important issues addressed in the decision as to whether one pursues a descriptive, exploratory or explanatory design will include:

- Extent of knowledge of the population which is to be sampled
- Choice of sampling method i.e using probability or non-probability sampling
- Range of statistical tests applicable
- Ability to control the testing environment and thereby the variables included in the hypothesis formulated.

One should bear in mind that scientific enquiry derives from the natural sciences. For the social scientist therefore, one finds less use of the experimental design as there is the challenge of being able to control social conditions, people's behaviours and to objectively measure changes in attitudes and/or values held.

### Surveys

Considered as one of the non-experimental research designs among the quantitative designs, survey research has been used for centuries. Survey research is the most frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences. Also called a *descriptive survey* or *normative survey*, the method looks with intense accuracy at the phenomenon of the moment and then describes precisely what the researcher sees.

Normative survey implies that whatever we observe at any one time is “normal” and under the same conditions could be observed again in the future. The basic assumption underlying such an approach is that, given phenomenon often follow a pattern, or norm (Leedy 1997).

### **When do we use surveys?**

Surveys may be used for descriptive, explanatory and exploratory purposes. They are mainly used in studies that have individual people or discrete groups as their unit of analysis. Survey research is probably the best method available to the social sciences interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly. Careful probability sampling provides a group of respondents whose characteristics may be taken to reflect those of the larger population, and carefully constructed standardized questionnaires provide data in the same form from all respondents. Surveys are excellent for measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population. They are also appropriate for research questions about self-beliefs or behaviours (Babbie 1995; Neuman, 2001).

### **Techniques for gathering survey data**

A common instrument for observing data beyond the physical reach of the observer is the questionnaire. The researcher uses this to measure selected operationalized variables. When preparing a questionnaire, the researcher thinks ahead to how he or she will record and organize the data for analysis. He or she then pilots the questionnaire with a small set of respondents similar to those in the final survey, in order to determine if the questionnaire is ready for administration. During the pilot the researcher asks the respondents whether the questions were clear and explores their interpretations to see whether the intended meaning was clear. After the pilot and the

questionnaire has been adjusted (if necessary), the researcher then administers the questionnaire to the selected sample. The respondents read the questions and respond using the questionnaire. The researcher then organizes the data and prepares them for statistical analysis (Neuman, 2003).

### **Evaluative Research**

Neuman believes that evaluation research is the most widely used type of applied research. Researchers use it to learn whether a program or activity accomplishes its intended objectives. Most fundamentally, evaluation research is appropriate whenever some social intervention occurs or is planned. A social intervention is an action taken within a social context for the purpose of producing some intended result. In its simplest sense, evaluation research is a process of determining whether the intended result was produced. Evaluative research therefore tends to employ a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods dependent on the type of program being evaluated and the perceived type of data to be generated.

## **2.9 Understanding Sampling**

Sampling is the selection of a subset of the population which is being studied. The purpose of selecting the sample is to be able to observe and make inferences about the nature of the total population. Bear in mind that not all data lend themselves to sampling. In addition it is not always possible to generalise findings to the larger population. The techniques of or methods used in sampling therefore fall into two categories. viz. *nonprobability sampling* and *probability sampling*. In depth discussion

of sampling methods for quantitative analysis is not covered in this text. We will however, examine sampling for PLA methods in Chapter three.

## **2.10 Observation as a Component of Collecting Data**

Both quantitative and qualitative research may include some observation. In quantitative research observation may compliment the use of standardized scales, questionnaires or other objective instruments. The measures used for observation also have to be pre-designed and tested before application.

In field research and other qualitative approaches, however, fixed structured instruments for observation are subject to in process adjustment as a great deal of what researchers do in the field is to pay attention, watch, and listen carefully. They use all the senses, noticing what is seen, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched. The researcher becomes the instrument that's absorbs all sources of information, devising a way to expand on any structured instruments which may be used (eg. field notes).

Observing in research is often detailed tedious work. In addition to the physical surroundings, a field researcher observes people and their actions, noting each person's observable physical characteristics: age, sex, race, and stature (Neuman, 2003). All these characteristics and more, impact on the interaction of the individuals being observed.

Consequently, there are various roles that the observer can adopt as one should realize that different situations require different roles for the researcher. The literature

differentiates the researcher's role in the observation process in terms of level of participation.

- 1. The complete participant** - This researcher may be a genuine participant in what is being studied or may pretend to be a genuine participant. In this case, the researcher is seen or identified only as a participant and not as a researcher. In this case the researcher has to act the part that is suitable in order to fit in and not be identified as an outsider. Of course there are ethical concerns when this is done. Is it ethical to deceive the people you are studying? Babbie, (1995) argues that no researcher deceives the subjects for the sole purpose of deception; rather it is done in the belief that the data will be more valid and reliable, that the subjects will be more natural and honest if they do not know the researcher is doing research.
- 2. Participant- as- observer** - In this role the researcher participates fully with the group under study, but makes it clear that a study is also being undertaken. It is believed that there are dangers in this role. The subjects may shift much of their attention to the research rather than focusing on the natural social process, and the process being observed may no longer be typical.
- 3. The observer – as - participant-** Here the researcher identifies himself or herself as a researcher and interacts with the participants in the social process but makes no pretence of actually being a participant.
- 4. The complete observer** - At the other extreme, the researcher observes a social process without becoming involved in it in any way. In this role, it is quite possible that the subjects being studied might not realize they are being studied because of the unobtrusive nature of the researcher

## **2.11 Ethical Considerations in Social Research**

Neuman cites that outside the rare disturbed individual, most unethical behaviour results from a lack of awareness and pressures on researchers to take ethical shortcuts. Researchers face pressures to build careers, publish, advance knowledge, gain prestige, impress family and friends, and hold a job. However, this is no justification for disregarding ethical procedures both in terms of design and process. If one is going to engage in social research, one must be concerned with the ethical concerns ensuring that the following requirements are addressed before one enters the field and consequently while the research is being conducted.

- 1. Informed Consent-** This speaks to participants being aware of the research intent and voluntarily giving their consent to participate. It is a fundamental ethical principle of research. It is not enough to get verbal permission from individuals; they need to know what they are being asked to participate in so they can make an informed decision. This consent should be written. Participants can become aware of their rights and what they are getting involved in when they read and sign a statement giving their informed consent. This can be particularly challenging especially in the case of children, disabled persons and even the elderly. It cannot however be dismissed.
- 2. No harm to the participants-** Social research should never injure the individuals or groups of persons being studied, regardless of whether they volunteer for the study. Social research should guard against physical harm, psychological abuse or legal jeopardy of its participants. One of the clearest instances of this norm in practice concerns the revealing of information that would embarrass the participants or endanger their home life, friendships or

job. It is possible for subjects to be harmed psychologically in the course of a study. The researcher must be aware of the often-subtle dangers and guard against them.

**3. Anonymity and Confidentiality-** The protection of subjects' interests and well-being is the protection of their identity, especially in survey research. A respondent may be considered anonymous when the researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. A researcher protects privacy by not disclosing a participant's identity after information is gathered. Even if anonymity is not possible the researcher should protect confidentiality. *Anonymity* protects the identity of specific individuals from being known. *Confidentiality* means that the information may have names attached to it, but the researcher holds it in confidence or keeps it secret from the public.

**4. Deception-** In some cases, full disclosure of the procedures could influence the nature of the results, in which case only partial or incomplete information about the procedure is given to the participants in advance. Social researchers sometimes deceive participants in field and experimental research. A researcher might misrepresent his or her actions or true intentions for legitimate methodological reasons. However, deception is never preferable if the researcher could accomplish the same results without deception. Whenever deception is used in experiments, the experimenters should conduct a debriefing- *an explicit statement to the participants about what deception was used and why it was necessary*. During the debriefing researchers try to alleviate any discomfort that might have occurred during the experimental

session, and discuss the research with them, which is educational to both parties (Babbie, 1995; Newman, 2003; Baron, 2001)

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, you encountered issues related to both qualitative and quantitative research. It is by no way exhaustive of the topic. It merely serves as a guide to introduce to you the intricacies of both methodologies. In summary we would point out that quantitative research takes a linear path from selection of the research question to production of results. It emphasizes objectivity and the use of explicit, standardized procedures with a preference for associational and causal explanations. While, qualitative research follows an iterative, circular path and emphasizes intimacy with the details of a natural setting or a particular cultural-historical context, strategies of data collection are also concerned with validation and replication.

Increasingly social science researchers suggest that the distinction made between the two approaches is over-stated, being presented as a rigid dichotomy. Too often, one style is judged against the other on the basis of the assumptions and standards of those styles. The quantitative researcher relies on a priori decisions, fixed hypotheses and numerical measurements. The qualitative researcher argues against turning humanity into cold normative numbers with inadequate regard for context, changing perspectives and larger societal infractions. The challenge for the well-versed, prudent social researcher is to understand and appreciate each style or approach on its own merit, and recognize the strengths and limitations of each.

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## **Chapter 3. Participatory Research Methods in Data Collection**

PLA is a process that involves not only data collection but focuses on how to empower and guide people to act. PLA is particularly appropriate for gathering data in a short period of time with limited infrastructural support. There are a number of methods employed when doing PLA. PLA utilizes open-ended questioning along with a specific suite of visuals to collect data.

### **3.1 Sampling Methods**

As in all research, selection of a sample is an important step in the process. For PLA sampling methods used are assisted by knowledge gained in the community and often occur simultaneously with knowledge building.

The principle of sampling in PLA is somewhat different from that underlying quantitative research (section 2). Quantitative research emphasises random selection of the sample and differentiates between probability and non-probability methods of selection. Here we focus on non-probability methods of selection as the true purpose of the developmental research activity is to gain the views of as many persons who the topic impacts on. Consequently we will include as many stakeholders as possible not leaving it to the representatives of these groups to speak on behalf of others.

There is another important difference between quantitative and qualitative research in that sampling is not a discrete process. As a part of sampling one is able to do more than simply select persons or other units of analysis. Rather one is engaged in the research process beginning to collect information and data as the interaction begins in the community.

Respondents can be selected in a number of ways.

- After gaining community acceptance and permission, plan a **transect walk** through the community. This will allow for both planned and chance encounters with a wide range of persons.
- **Snowball sampling** where community residents are well known to each others
- **Quota sampling** where the selection of specific sector areas are needed for specialised or thematic information (eg. from farmers or about social status, gender)
- **Key informants** selection so as to ensure full stakeholder representation

### **A Transect Walk**

A transect walk is a guided walk through a cross-section of the community which is being studied. It can be described as “purposeful” and involves systematically walking with well known key community persons through an area, during which time you observe, listen, and discuss what is heard and seen. During this time the researcher and the team are exposed to the community so that physical contact can be made. Transects allow you to make informal contacts with a wide range of persons and validate data gained from other sources. It also allows one to set up further formal contacts inclusive of persons who are not there at the time. Transects are also normally done to build rapport and to establish a relationship of trust.

While you walk through you are able to identify different zones, local technologies, and introduced technologies. The researcher also gets a chance to ask questions,

seeking problems, solutions, and opportunities. During the walk, mapping and /or diagramming can be used as resources for identifying issues, problems or findings.

A transect walk is a simple device to ensure that the team explores and understands fully the spatial differences in an area under study. The researcher walks the periphery of the area, along with a select group of local people, observing differences in the area. It is also good to involve the local people in observing, as local people always see things outsiders are likely to miss. After the walk, it is advised that the team produce a transect diagram -a stylized representation of the area covered by the walk – as this will be useful in de-briefing and community boundary setting.

**Mapping is simply a drawing of the community and helps to identify the boundaries of the community, major landmarks in the community and the resources available in the community. Maps drawn by local people aid research decisions about sampling as community members are able to suggest others to be involved in the research following such an exercise. Maps are also useful in the verification of secondary source information, for comparisons, and for monitoring change.**

### **3.2 Interviewing and Dialogue Methods:**

#### **Questioning Techniques**

Chambers (1997), whom we can call the father of PLA, believes that questionnaire surveys are still the most common method used for “central uppers” to learn about the lives and conditions of “peripheral lowers.” He sees researchers as considering the local person as ‘object’ rather than participant. However, he believes that like other learning tools questionnaires as used most frequently in surveys, entail interpersonal relationships of power, distorting local realities to fit into pre-conceived frameworks. For that reason Chambers stresses the importance of being fluent in a range of

questioning techniques, rather than the using questionnaires when involved in PLA research. There are two main types of questions used. These are:

- 1 **Grand Tour questions** - These are broad open-ended questions which are framed in a manner to elicit quick immediate response. From this,, one is able to carry on the conversation getting more in depth as the discussion continues. It also sets the stage for the interest of the discussion and should be used to introduce the subject in as non-threatening a manner as possible.
- 2 **Direct probe questions** – At times there is need for clarity before moving on. Direct probing is useful here. Also the discussion may be going terribly off course with ones focusing on items outside of the scope of the research. It is important that we do not cut off conversation in an attempt to keep it on track. However sometimes one will find the participants seeking information which is outside of that particular discussion or “jumping the process”, (eg. moving to action before resources have been identified).

**Guidelines for using the questioning techniques-** These are in no particular order of importance:

- a) Ask questions clearly
- b) Use simple language
- c) Help the participants to feel confident and relaxed
- d) Practice active listening (holding eye contact, noting body language, nodding, etc)
- e) Listen more than you talk
- f) Give full attention to the respondent
- g) Be focused, do not rush the interview or the discussion
- h) Do not prompt participants responses (do not put words in their mouth)
- i) Paraphrase, rephrase or reword questions (to ensure that the respondent understand what is asked) and responses (to ensure that you understand what you hear)

### **The Semi-Structured Interview (see also Chapter 4)**

The Khan Kaen school of PRA has regarded this as the “core” of good PRA. When conducting such an interview, the interviewer has a mental or written checklist, but remains very open to new aspects and to following up on the new and unexpected.

It is sometimes called conversational interviews, interviews that are partially structured by a flexible interview guide with a limited number of preset questions. This kind of guide ensures that the interview remains focused on the development issue at hand while allowing enough conversation so that participants can introduce and discuss topics that are relevant to them.

### **Focus Group Discussion**

A focus group is used to obtain specialised information. It is a relatively low cost, semi-structured, small (four to twelve participants plus a facilitator) group meeting used to explore people’s attitudes, feelings, or preferences, and to build consensus. A checklist of themes and open-ended questions is used to focus and guide the interview to obtain the data needed.

## **3.3 Use of Visuals and Diagrams**

Diagramming and visual sharing are common elements in much of PLA and are used in a complimentary manner. They can be applied as part of community meetings or small group sessions. With a questionnaire, information is transferred from the words of the person to the paper of the questionnaire. This information is considered

personal and private, unverified, and processed and appropriated by the interviewer. In contrast, with visual sharing of a map, model, diagram, or unit or lengths used for counting, estimating, ranking, scoring, and comparing, it is open for all who are present to participate. Different people add details, and crosscheck and correct each other. The learning is progressive. The information is visible, semi-permanent, and public to the group, and can be checked, verified, amended, added to, and owned, by the participants (Chambers, 1997).

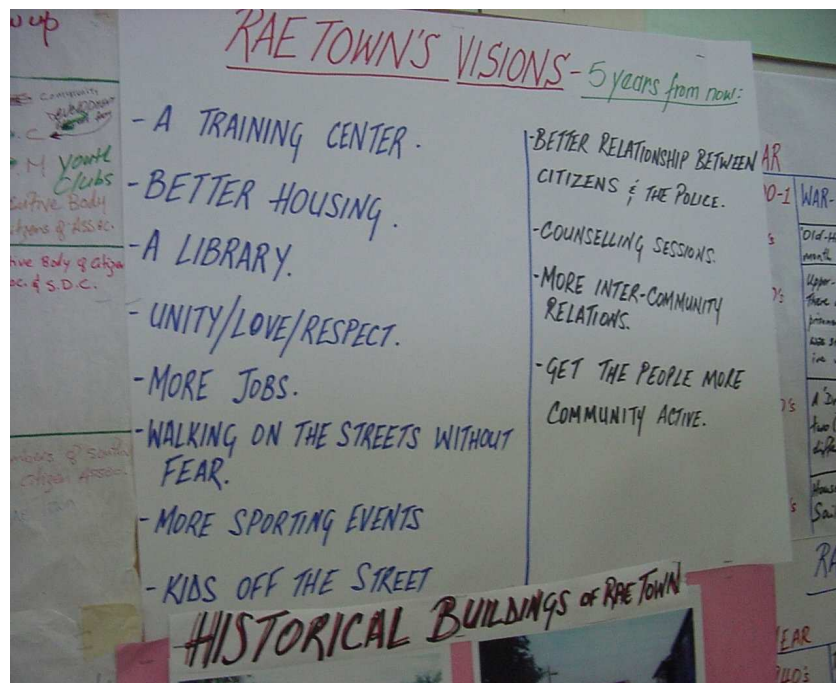
PLA involves the use of a number of visuals. Ideally visuals should flow into each other. There should be a seamless movement from visual to visual. This requires an intimate knowledge of the various visuals that are utilized. The visuals used to collect data are dependent on the type of data needed. Some of these might be:

- For information on Physical and Natural resources: Here we would use Mapping, Brainstorming/Listing, Timelines graphs and trends, Matrices, and Demographic Analysis can be used.
- For information on Social and Cultural information: Venn Diagrams, SWOT analysis, Problem Tree, Wealth Ranking, Innovative Pie Charting, and Mapping (Mobility and Asset mapping) can be utilized.
- For obtaining information on Economic Information: Wealth Ranking, Demographic Analysis, Activity lines, Mobility mapping, Matrices, and Seasonal calendars can be used
- To get information on the History of the area: Timelines, Trend analysis, Mobility maps are used.

### 3.4 Visual Tools

#### Brainstorming and Listing

Brainstorming is the means by which lists are constructed. Brainstorming starts by asking the group to list as many ideas / responses to a particular question. Ideas are captured without judging them. After ideas have been recorded then they can be organized through group discussions. It is used to generate a high volume of ideas in a non-analytical manner which permits the ideas of one individual to stimulate the ideas of the other individuals in the team. The researcher should never criticize, evaluate, judge or discuss ideas. They should let the discussion flow, asking for clarification of an item if necessary. This becomes a list which can be ranked or unranked.



Brainstorming chart (SDC Handbook, 2004)

## **Ranking**

Chambers (1997) states that ranking and scoring for social characteristics have long been part of social anthropology. People in communities rank other individuals or households for varied characteristics. Also called preference ranking or direct matrix ranking, it is an exercise in which people identify what they do and do not value. Ranking exercises do not always converge on consensus. There can be significant differences between the values, scores and ranks of different individuals or groups. This is not however considered a weakness of the method, but rather it allows us to realize expressions of different realities. Ranking allows participants to understand the reasons for local preferences and to see how values differ among local groups. Understanding preferences is critical for choosing appropriate and effective interventions.

This tool is used to get some idea of the importance attached to a problem/ solution relative to other problems/ solutions. It is generally used when exploring problems/ constraints or options/ opportunities and helping to place these in order of magnitude, priority or preference (Social Assessment Training of Trainers Workshop 2005).

### **A Matrix or Pair- Wise Ranking**

A Matrix or pair wise ranking is an extension of a list. The pair wise ranking allows for individuals to compare each issue and then decide between two issues, which is most important. Firstly, issues determined from discussion are prioritised based on the number of votes received.

Issue	No Phone	Police Brutality	Bad Roads	No work
No telephone	X	Police Brutality	Bad Roads	No work
Police brutality		X	Police Brutality	Police Brutality
Bad roads			X	No work
No work				X

### Matrix/ pair- wise ranking

Each pair of issues is asked in both directions. Diagram 1 shows a preference for No work in the issue list.

### Wealth and Well- Being Ranking

This method ranks household according to well-being or wealth, including those considered poorest or worst off. It is used to explore perceptions of Wealth differences and inequalities. It is also known as Vulnerability Analysis, a technique for the rapid collection and analysis of specific data on social stratification at the community level. This visual tool minimizes literacy and language differences of participants as it considers factors such as ownership of, rights to productivity, assets, life cycle stages of members of the productive unit, relationship of the productive unit to locally powerful people, availability of labour, and indebtedness.

It is also useful for gauging the relative positions of households in the community and indicators of wealth. This visual is achieved by asking persons to describe the characteristics of a rich household then a poor household, and after the criteria for rich

and poor households have been established respondents are then asked to sort households into various categories from rich to poor. The information for a wealth ranking is usually presented in a matrix.

### Well-being analysis

House #	# of Persons in household	Land owned By H/H	Wealth Category	Food recipient
1	2	5 acres	Rich	No
2	5	½ acre	Poor	Yes
3	6	None	Destitute/Poverty	Yes

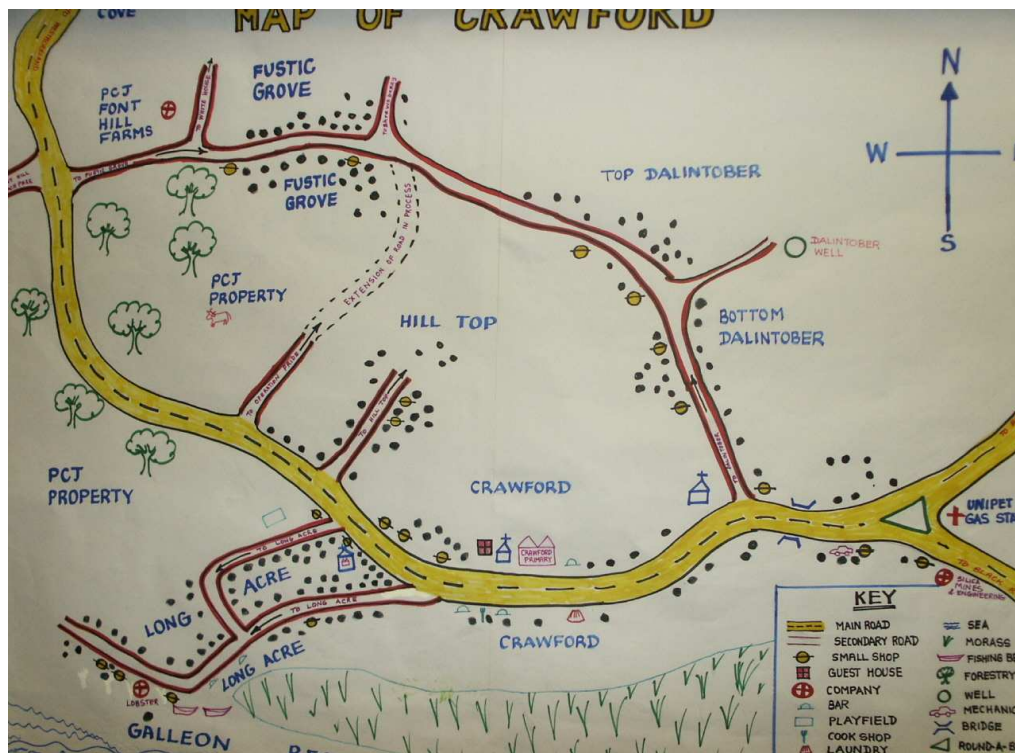
### Mapping

Mapping is a generic term for gathering “pictorial form” baseline data on a variety of indicators. Mapping is simply a drawing of the community and helps to identify the boundaries of the community, major landmarks in the community and the resources available in the community. A good community map usually includes public buildings, service centres, roads, farms/houses, and green areas. Chambers (1997) believes that this method, in which local people make their own maps, is probably the most widespread PLA method. In this method local people present their own view on their natural resources. This is an excellent starting point for participatory work because it gets people involved in creating a visual output that can be used immediately to bridge verbal communication gaps and to generate lively discussion.

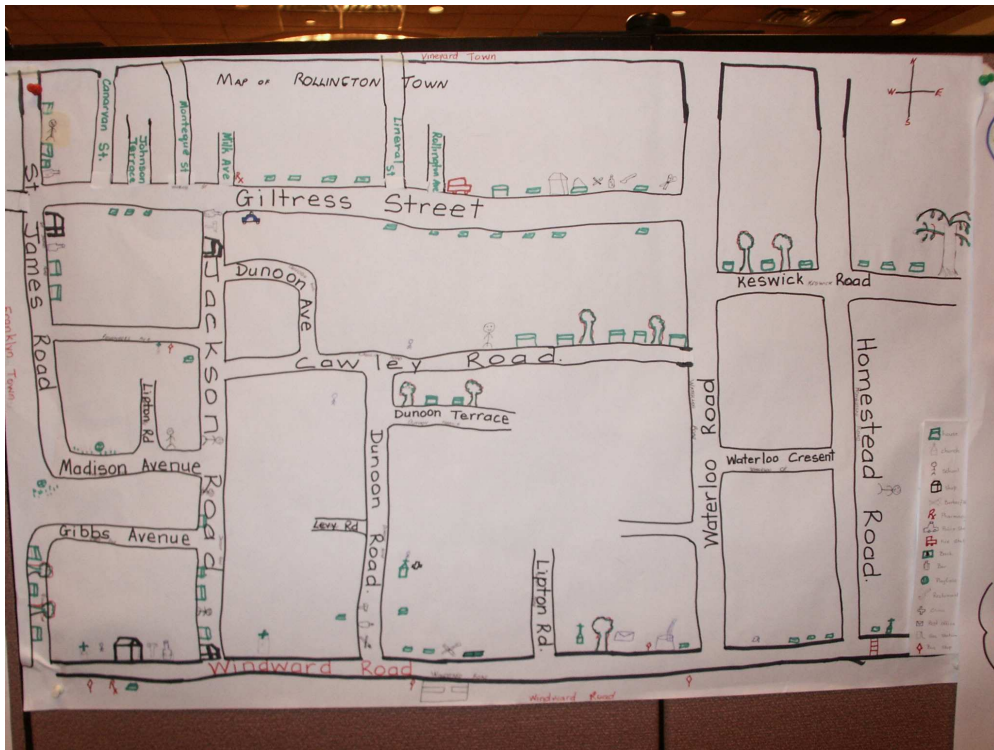
Maps are useful as verification of secondary source information, as training and awareness raising tools, for comparisons, and for monitoring change.

Maps are especially important in rural development projects in which planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are required. The best sources of information for such maps are the people who live and farm an area. The maps allow us to collect and position a lot of information and recognize spatial relationships. They reveal differences in farming practices and pinpoint constraints. The shared generation of a map creates consensus and facilitates communication among respondents. At the same time, it helps the team to gain insights into the ways that people think, their priorities, and their reasons for wanting or not wanting to do something (World Bank, 1996).

**Social Mapping (SDC Handbook 2004)**

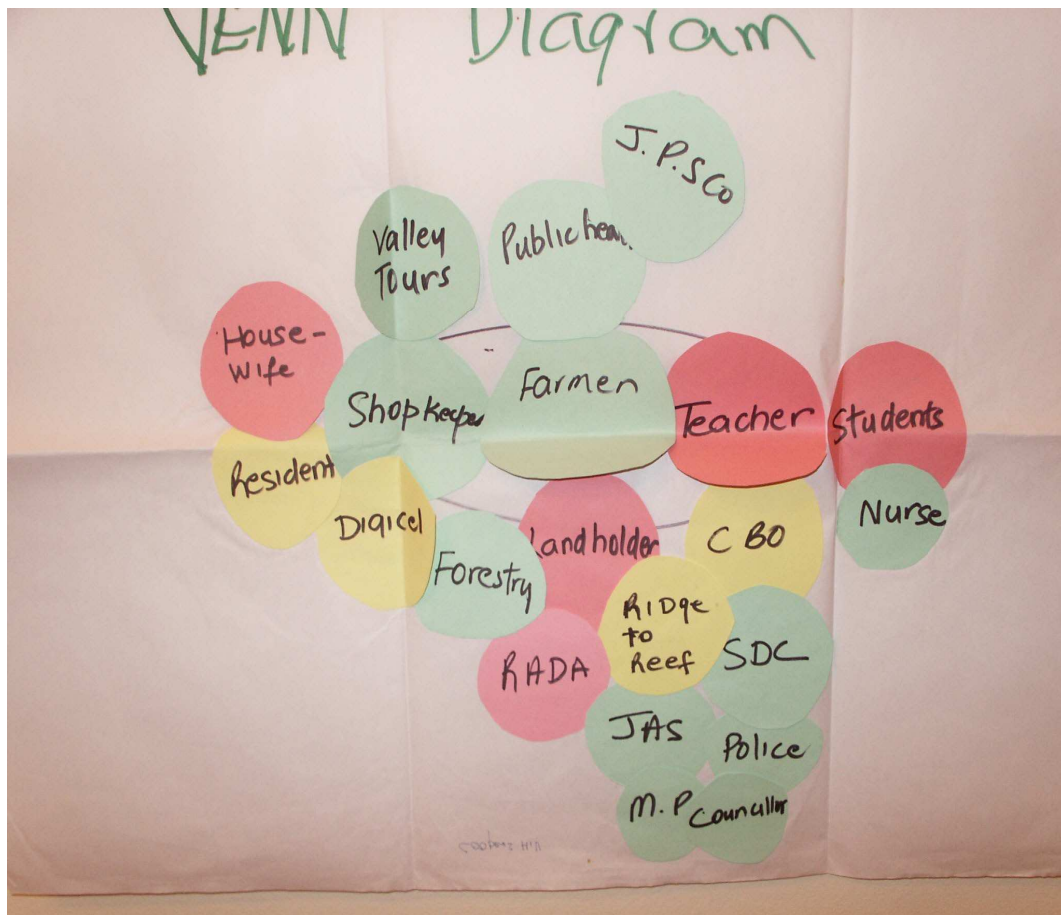


**Social Mapping (SDC Handbook, 2004)**



for community growth. Proximity to or distance from the central question, as well as the size of circle are the indicators used to answer the questions. Overlapping of the circles indicates related organizations. Both negatively or positively assessed institutions are represented in a Venn/diagram.

**Venn Diagram (SDC 2004)**



**Roti Diagram (SDC Handbook, 2004)**



### Triple Roti Diagram

This visual examines issues not organizations. It is made up of three circles with the inner circle reserved for things the community can do for themselves. Within the outer circle are those things that the community has no control over while the middle circle is used for things the community can do with help. Items in the inner circle usually form the basis for an Easily Achievable Tasks (EATS). This will then assist with future planning as some assessment of community resources will help with selection of the circle for each issue. The following three visuals are very specific in intent.

They also call for innovative diagrammatic representations which usually evolve out of the discussion.

## Timelines

Timelines are used to generate a historical profile of the community. A time line relates a history of major remembered events and changes in a community or village with approximate dates. This can include crisis events, natural disasters and major positive developments. It identifies how the situation or condition was in the past, and what changes took place over time (ToT Manual, 2005)

### Time Line (SDC Handbook, 2004)

<u>Time</u> FOR GRANTS LEVEL	<u>Line</u>	DFID Facilitators
2002	—	Distribution of Toilets UDC Lift up Program Decline in Tourist Arrival Flooding, RADA assist
2001	—	Disaster, Poor Tourist Arrival Flooding, Cleaning of drain Beautification, Assistant JAS Flood Victims got assistance from MP, ODPEM, RIO GRANDE Dirty
2000	—	Flooding, Poor Tourist Arrival Back to school assistance from MP Damage to Agriculture
1999	—	Flood, Massive Baptism on the expectation of the coming of Christ, Poor Tourist ARRIVAL, JSIF Road Repairs Program, Employment
1998	—	Flood, Land Slide, Death, Injury Damage to Agriculture, P.M. VISIT Parish Council Election
1997	—	General Election, Flooding Damage to Agriculture Poor Tourist ARRIVAL



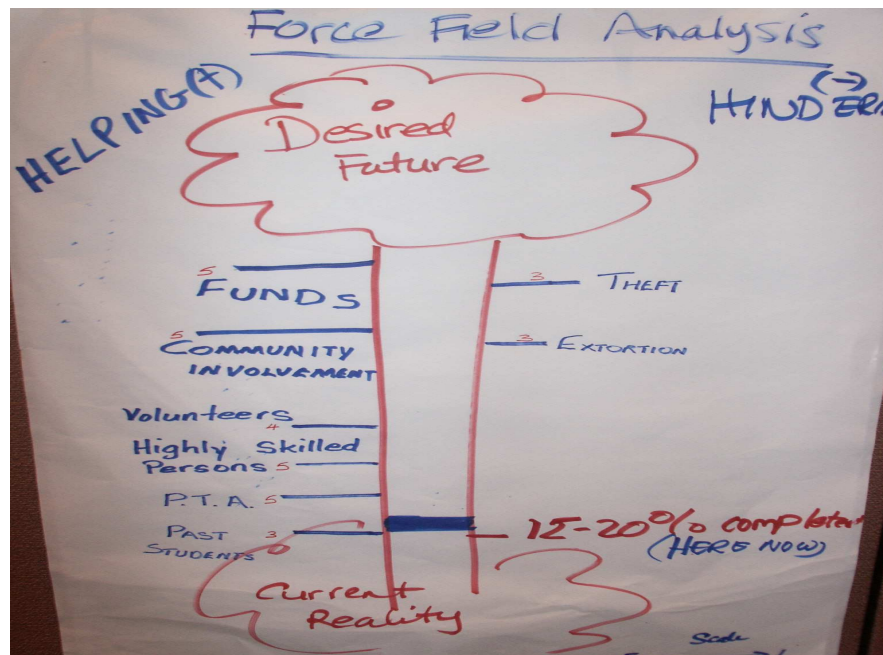


The final group of visuals are used to help with understanding the range of problems being experienced.

### Force Field Analysis

This is a tool for issues and problem analysis and can be used to formulate and design Easily Achievable Tasks (EATS) plans. It helps the community to identify internal and external factors that can help or hinder the resolution of a problem. It is done by drawing a vertical line and placing the problems below the line and the solutions above. On the left of the line all the helping forces are listed while the hindering forces are listed on the right side. Each helping or hindering force is represented by a line which points to the centre line. The line is made long or short depending on the importance of the force. Helping forces refer to things that the community already has at its disposal and not what they hope to get.

### Force Field (SDC handbook, 2004)



## **Problem Tree**

The problem tree is a tool often used for action planning, starting with identification of problems in a community, its causes and effects. The trunk represents the problem, the roots represent the causes of the problem and the leaves and branches represent the consequences or effects of the problem (Training of Trainers manual, 2005).

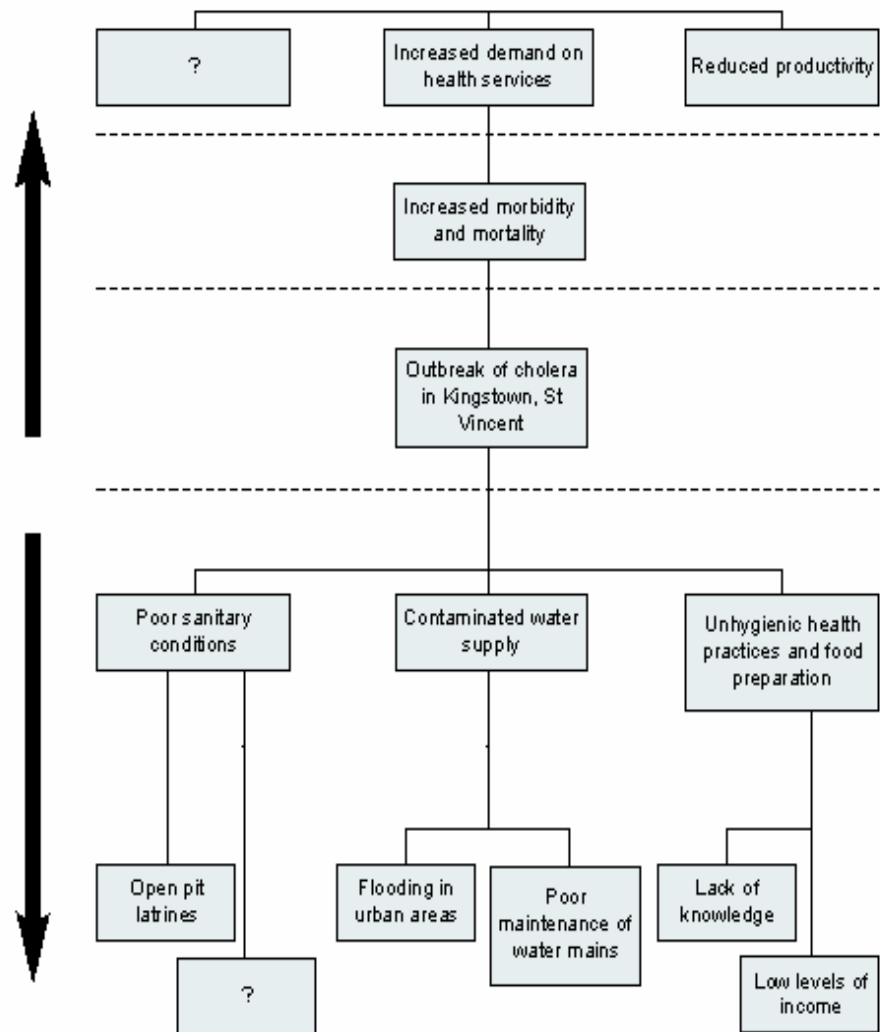
Problem analysis helps to:

- Separate and understand better the real causes of problems
- Build stakeholder understanding and consensus
- Identify possible constraints
- Clarify the size and complexity of a problem
- Establish different ways of solving the problem

Problem analysis is usually pursued for focal problems. This can be arrived at by arranging the identified problems in a problem tree according to the causal relationships between them. When there is agreement on the focal problem, construct a problem tree

- Identify immediate and direct causes of the focal problem (the roots)
- Identify immediate and direct effects of the focal problem (the branches)
- Review, verify and make any necessary adjustments.

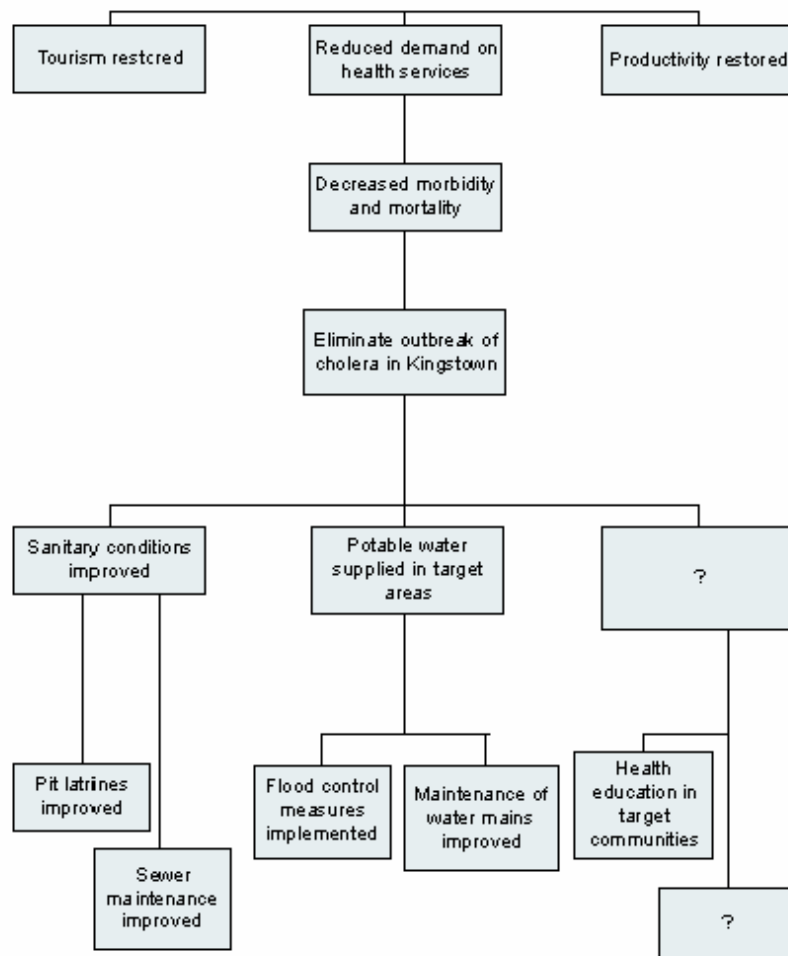
**Problem Tree (SDC Handbook, 2004)**



## Objective Tree

This is a variation of the problem tree and seeks to illustrate the consequences of solving a problem. The trunk represents the objective; the roots the things represents what needs to be achieved, the objective and the branches and leaves represents the consequences of achieving the objective.

### Objective Tree (SDC Handbook, 2004)



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## **Chapter 4. The Semi-Structured Interview**

### **4.1 What is a Semi-Structured Interview?**

A semi-structured interview (also called an interview brief) is a method of Participatory Learning and Action that engages respondents in a conversation through a series of guided questions. It has a pre-determined focus, but flexibility in how the questions are structured and allows for open-ended discussion of the answers. The interviewer is able to probe so as to amplify responses and gain greater clarity. The interview brief is developed as a series of questions. The interviewer however does not need to stick to the sequence of questions, as the intention is to follow the flow.

### **4.2 Purpose & Objectives of Interviews**

With PLA we will find that the interview brief is used on a range of occasions, ranging from informal small group discussions, interviews with key respondents to larger group settings. When used with individuals it helps to build rapport as a responsive working relationship needs to be established. In this setting the interviewer is able to generate detailed information that might not necessarily be revealed in the group situation. Group interviews generate new information and also allow the interviewer to cross check other sources of information building on the group discussion

### **4.3 Steps Involved in Planning and Organizing a Semi-Structured Interview**

According to Serour (2005) the steps involved for successfully handling of the interview, as a technique for gathering data, are simple but very important.

### **Steps to planning the interview**

1. **Establish the objectives of the interview.** Make a list of questions with notes for probes. Prepare to be flexible. Do not have too many points, because you want to get in-depth information
2. **Prepare for a range of setting** – Not all interviews will be pre arranged as some will be spontaneous encounters. However, the interviewer should know the key questions to be covered and be able to adjust to the setting. Where pre arranged the ideal situation is to have a private interview with as little disturbances as possible
3. **Select an appropriate interviewer** – Make sure that the interviewer is accepted. This usually means someone with similar characteristics as the respondents, in terms of age, gender, ethnic background etc., but in some cases people like to open up to ‘experts’ or ‘outsiders’ whom they see as impartial. These outsiders may be the members of the team who are not from the immediate community. Interviews with key respondents should be conducted by those persons who are most experienced using the technique.

### **Steps to conducting the interview**

1. **Prepare** – Be prepared in terms of dress, time to spend, knowledge of the topic/problem/concern, and any possible eventuality. As simple as this may seem, some interviewers do not prepare in advance. Those with the most experience are often guilty of this, thinking their skills can overcome a lack of preparation.
2. **Obtain consent** – Keep in mind the ethical and process concerns of respect and informed consent. If any electronic recording will be done, get the respondent’s permission to do so.
3. **Introduce the issue** - Clearly introduce the issue being investigated in a manner using language that is understood by the respondents
4. **Pose your open questions** – Always start with a fairly neutral issue and then build to deeper concerns
5. **Observe information** – Information comes from many sources and if we keep in mind the fact that observation is a critical add-on in the research process, we will make notes of what happens beyond the spoken word- look for non-verbal cues, facial expressions, gestures, body language etc. (the duty of the observer or bin-collector)
6. **Do not lecture**
7. **Do not interrupt**
8. **Do not anticipate what people will say** - or end statements for the respondents
9. **Record notes unobtrusively.** Record information in a small note- book. If possible have a separate note-taker as to avoid distractions.
10. **Thank respondents for their participation** at the end of the session. A critical part of conducting an interview is that the interviewer must be a good listener.

(Social Assessment Training of Trainers Workshop 2005).

**On completion of the interview it is recommended that:**

1. The team should meet and elaborate on their summary notes from memory immediately after the interview. This is encouraged as a debriefing session and also to ensure that information not recorder during the interview will be documented and not lost.
2. The interviews should be recorded, direct quotes if possible, what you saw and your own judgements.
3. Modify the checklist of topics and guide questions with relevant information that emerged during the process of the interview

**4.4 Awareness of Self: Identifying Biases and Attitudes**

In the interview knowledge of self is critical. One needs to be aware of themselves, one's personal biases, likes and dislikes and how this can affect the interview. This is why the selection of the interviewer is as important as the selection of the respondent. In an interview there is a two-way dialogue which calls for a high level of interaction. If there is any hint of disrespect or holding to a particular way of thinking on the part of the interviewer, the interview will lose its validity. Respondents have a way of telling you what they think you want to hear, especially if there is any doubt as to your real intent. Bringing one's thinking out in to the open usually helps with opening new thoughts and perspectives as long as this is introduced simply as another perspective without personal ownership.

Robert Chambers, after years of practice argues strongly for self- critical awareness. This he believes will allow the interviewer to be more aware of personal biases, and will also allow the interviewer to become more aware of other persons' realities.

*“understanding that realities are multiple, and that others’ realities differ from one’s own and from each other, then becomes **the way forward**, a means of learning and doing better”.*(Chambers 1997 p. 203).

See Chapter 5 Section 5.3, Preparing for Negotiating Entry – Attitudes and Behavior and Chapter B.2, Section 2.1 - Self-Preparation and Reflection on Self for more.

## **4.5 Team Roles and Role Reversals**

On entering a community, both the community residents and the researchers have roles. The perceptions of these roles depend on the previous knowledge held by each party. These perceptions, however, can and often do change as the process unfolds. This is evident particularly during the interview and after the interview. As one grows in the skill of interviewing, it becomes clearer that while the interviewees may have a preconceived notion of who an interviewer is or should be, these notions appear to be malleable. Since an interviewee’s preconception may be based on correct or incorrect information, the actual conception of the interviewer’s role rests on the definition of the situation established during the course of the interview itself. It is important to note that the role that the interviewer plays is not etched in stone, nor do the interviewer and interviewees operate in a vacuum. In fact any role assumed has the function of establishing and maintaining enabling rapport.

Many roles are available to the interviewer. The interviewer has the opportunity to shape, alter, and even create desired role images (Berg, 2001).

*“role-taking is a conscious selection, from among one’s actual repertory, of the role thought to be most appropriate to display to a particular respondent at the moment. Gordon ”*

Among the main roles advocated for those involved in the process of interviewing are:
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1. **The Facilitator** who conducts the interview or facilitates participation of the group in discussions and analysis.
2. **The Co-Facilitator** who assists the Facilitator in getting group members to participate. This role may or may not be necessary, depending on the amount and type of activities involved and the number of persons in the group.
3. **The Note-taker** who takes notes of data gathered or produced.
4. **The Observer** who observes relationships and group interactions, noting discomforts and comfortable situations for all as well as attitudes and behaviour of those facilitating. The observer also serves as the time-keeper for activities/exercises.

#### 4.6 Facilitation Skills

Ideally, the process of interviewing, whether it is with an individual or group, requires persons trained in the art of facilitation. There are certain characteristics that define a good facilitator. A skilled facilitator should:

1. **Be well organized and prepared** - whether the facilitator intends to work with several specific questions, or with several general topical areas. The facilitator should have clear idea about things will proceed.
2. **Be able to create rapport** - the facilitator must make participants feel comfortable talking individually or openly in a group situation. While it is the responsibility of the facilitator to guide the discussion, (s)he should avoid offering opinions and substantive comments. This is not a n easy task as being quiet when one has an opinion is a formidable task. The facilitator needs to learn the skill.
3. Be willing to observe, listen and question non-judgementally

#### 4.7 Use of Focus Groups

There are many different forms of interviews and interview subjects, requiring different approaches. The focus group may be *defined as an interview* style designed for small formal groups. Using this approach researchers strive to learn through discussion about conscious, semiconscious, and unconscious psychological and socio-cultural characteristics and processes among various groups (Basch, 1987; Lengua et.al., 1992, as cited in Berg 2001). They are guided discussions in which the facilitator uses a non-directive style to facilitate discussion. The facilitator is careful not to introduce her or his own point of view in an attempt to influence the discussion. Rather all person are encouraged to participate and disagreement is handled by the group process. The facilitator opens the discussion asking a broad question and should be prepared to introduce 3 or 4 more questions during the conversation. Focus groups usually take between 1 ½ to 2 hours. Permission must be given by the group for tape recording of the interview and participants should be made aware of the intent of the discussion at the outset. Group members may also take on additional roles of recorder (manually) and timekeeper.

Focus groups provide a means of collecting qualitative data and when administered properly, are extremely dynamic. Interactions between and among group members stimulate discussions in which one group member reacts to comments made by another. The resulting synergy allows participants to draw from one another and to brainstorm collectively with other members of the group. A far larger number of ideas, issues, topics, and even solutions to a problem can be generated through group discussions than through individual conversations or one-on- one interview (Berg, 2001).

Focus group interviews allow the interviewer to observe a process that is often of profound importance to qualitative investigation - namely interactions. Focus groups also allow the researcher to access the substantive content of verbally expressed views, opinions, experiences, and attitudes. It provides a means for assessing intentionally created conversations about research topics or problems.

#### **4.8 Recording the Interview**

##### Advantages of recording

1. Provides a completely accurate record of what each person has said
2. If properly explained can increase sense of respect that information is important
3. Gives the interviewer more time to listen and respond more rapidly without worrying that information will be lost
4. It allows for better eye contact and rapport which is important for the respondents to feel comfortable and be as open as possible.
5. It allows replay of the interview for other team members if there are other individuals involved in the process.

##### Disadvantages of recording

1. It is possible that using a tape recorder will make the respondents more self conscious and less willing to respond as openly.
2. It can also cause the interviewer to listen less since it is all being recorded
3. It becomes more difficult to identify important passages or differentiate between respondents especially in a long session
4. It increases the cost of gathering data, having to source a tape recorder and tapes.

Please see Chapter 6, Section 6.6 Developing reports

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## **Chapter 5. Participatory Research: The Process of Engaging a Community**

### **5.1 Understanding Community**

For some persons community is perceived as a place where people live while for others the word conjures up images of close ties, unity, togetherness and interaction. Both meanings are correct as communities are formed when people decide to form a social unit tied together because of affinity, affection, interest, common location, culture and/or common activities ((Fellin in Rothman, Erlich & Tropman 1995 p.114) Community can be formed voluntarily or involuntarily but once defined is identifiable to those persons who belong.

Keeping in mind this duality of focus in the definition, i.e of interest and of locality, important functions of the community are the identification/rationalisation of boundaries and the range of reasons for being. Further to satisfy the 'inhabitants of this space', there are particular issues which must be addressed. For example, to what extent are local people able to access and have control over what is required for their survival? To what extent do local people rely on institutions, individuals or groups inside or outside the community to meet both personal and community needs? What levels of local organising are present in communities to aid satisfactory community functioning? The answers are important as inherent in the concept of community are the elements of social cohesion and identity, both of which contribute significantly to the psychological and social development of the community.

As development practitioners, we need to understand community. We need to be aware of the history, the significant events and the significant actors. To be effective

workers, knowledge of the institutions within and outside of the physical boundaries leads to understanding the choices made, the types of interactions evidenced and most critically the social networks which serve to influence community growth. We can only begin where the people are, using our skill and knowledge to create an atmosphere within which change will flourish.

Community therefore speaks about bringing together people. For community development workers, the coalescing of interests, thoughts, people, is for a specific purpose viz. action, action which is designed to resolve shared problems.

## **5.2 Understanding Powerlessness, Helplessness, Dependency and Empowerment**

When people are motivated to actually come together in a community to participate in addressing problems that affect their lives they realise the strength generated by the collective and feel empowered in the process of making their own decisions. Conversely, in some instances, attempts to come together may fail. Beyond reasons related to physical threats or inadequacies, there are emotional and cognitive weaknesses and in this section we will examine feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and dependency, which are only resolved when a sense of capability and attendant capacity become evident. This we will term a sense of empowerment.

### **A Sense of Empowerment**

Having worked with poor urban and poor rural communities over the years, there is a particular feeling-set which stands out. It is an apparent feeling of powerlessness, which manifests as anxiety, unconcern, disinterest and / or dependency. On examination of these feelings, one root cause is a disconnect between perceived and

actual ability to control any decision making related to self and/or the community in which one lives; a sense of powerlessness. This feeling is most evident in those societies where residents see themselves as stigmatized by the 'outside' society with attendant boundaries being placed on any possible attempts at social inclusion. As the study points out "whereas the powerlessness of an individual has been defined as his inability to obtain and use resources to achieve his personal goals, powerlessness in groups and communities may be defined as the inability to use resources to achieve collective goals". (Shillingford 2005 p. 29). This inability is further exacerbated by the frequent lack of basic resources and amenities within these same communities. Thus helplessness/powerlessness manifests the following feelings and characteristics:

- I do not have the knowledge and skills to understand and resolve complex problems. Persons lacking information and skills to analyse problems tend to blame themselves when things go wrong hence they either blame themselves for causing the problem or they do not attempt to solve the problem in order to avoid blame
- People may feel powerless about influencing decisions, as they fear retaliation. Whether the approach taken is authoritarian or democratic, many avoid protest due to the belief that those in authority are always right, a belief rooted in a political culture, which sanctions persons if they disagree with or question decisions taken at the top.
- I need to depend on that person who has more power than I have. The dependency on those who make decisions that affect one's personal life,

whether they be abusive or oppressive, is another reason why persons feel powerless, as they believe that they cannot survive on their own.

- Being isolated emotionally, geographically or socially is a major factor in the powerless syndrome as a sense of loneliness becomes real and reinforced on a daily basis.
- To some powerlessness is reinforced, as countries move from an agrarian reality, calling for new skills, which are highly inaccessible to the poor. The lack of knowledge and capacity then becomes a real barrier to involvement (Rubin & Rubin 1992, Shillingford 2005, Wint )

Working with these communities from an empowerment-based perspective, will serve to raise the consciousness of the inequalities while serving to open alternative coping strategies as residents move along a continuum of growing strength.

Empowerment is recommended as a goal and a process as we work with poor marginalised groups. A sense of empowerment is a bridge between the political and the personal, which works at three levels “the individual, interpersonal and the institutional levels where the person develops a sense of personal power, an ability to affect others and an ability to work with others to change social institutions”

(Gutierrez, in Rothman et al 1995, p.206, Simon 1990).

Empowerment occurs where there is a noticeable change from being apathetic, to being involved in the types of action to bring about changes in one's life situation. As a researcher/facilitator the task is to create the circumstances for people to participate in collective decision-making, consciousness-raising activities and mutually respectful discourses, which will inevitably lead to their own empowerment. The participatory approach to development research facilitates this experience for all marginalized, dis-empowered groups.

Gutierrez cites others in articulating what is necessary for empowerment to be realised:

- 1) "Increasing self-efficacy" or "developing a sense of personal power" or a belief in ones ability to affect change in one' state of affairs (Fagan, 1979; Garvin,1985; Hirayama & Hirayama,1985; Mathis & Richan, 1986; Pernell, 1985; Pinderhughes, 1983; Shapiro, 1984; Solomon, 1976).
- 2) "Developing group consciousness" or unity among the powerless, which "results in a critical perspective on society that redefines individual, group or community problems as emerging from a lack of power". Once realised the focus of collective group consciousness shifts to identifying and resolving the causes of problems experienced as a group or community (Burghardt, 1982; Friere, 1983; Longres & McLeod, 1980; Mathis & Richan, 1986; Solomon, 1976; Van DenBergh & Cooper 1986).
- 3) "Reducing self-blame" in order to focus energy on building the capacity to alter one's life-state or condition of living (Garvin, 1885; Hirayama & Hirayama, 1985; Janoff-Bulman, 1979; Keefe, 1980; Longres & Mcleod, 1980; Purnell, 1985; Solomon, 1976).

### 5.3 Preparation for Negotiating Community Entry

#### Community Entry

Community entry is not merely a walk through, a visit to or a meeting with persons in a community, it is in fact much more. Community entry, like empowerment, is a goal and a process; It connotes acceptance by a community of an individual and/or her agency's mandate and an agreement to work in partnership with the individual and the agency. This acceptance by the community has to be earned. The path followed has

to be conscientiously planned. The importance of this planning cannot be over emphasised, imagine yourself as the stranger in the following story:

*A stranger to a community knocks on the gate of a resident. The resident looks through the window and acknowledges that he is at home. Being suspicious, he speaks to the stranger from his window. The stranger visits the community on another occasion and knocks again on the gate of the resident. Having gained knowledge of the visitor from the last encounter with him, the resident comes to the gate and speaks to him. On the third visit, the resident is obviously more comfortable with his visitor whom he invites onto the veranda to sit and have a chat. On the fourth occasion the visitor is accepted and is invited to dinner.*

*Stop for a while!!*

*Why not discuss the elements contributing to change in attitude of the resident and change in behaviour of the worker on each occasion.*

**Preparing for negotiating entry : the elements**

**( a ) Attitudes and behaviour**

The attitudes and behaviour of an individual who desires to gain entry to a community are paramount. The principles of the participatory approach offer key insights and are summarised below:

<b>The right attitude is</b>	<b>The right behaviour is to:</b>
openness	✓ share and support
humility	✓ establish rapport
curiosity	✓ show respect for local opinion
acceptance	✓ observe and listen not lecture
Sensitivity	✓ embrace error and learn from it
neutrality flexibility genuineness	✓ allow the community to analyse and create answers

The individual must pay attention to his or her own value system and be prepared to abandon pre-conceptions, to be self-critical, self-aware and to learn from mistakes in order to enhance personal development. Although this is easier said than done, researchers in gaining access for engaging and working with communities, will need to spend quality time reflecting on personal resources and challenges. The following questions may aid the preparation:

*Ask yourself the following*

- *What have my experiences been like in working with communities in the past?*
- *What am I confident about? What has worked for me in the past? What do I intend to use on this assignment? What weaknesses do I possess in terms of values, attitudes and behaviour that I need to give attention to? What do I need help with?*
- *How patient am I with others? Am I inclined to do for others what they need to do for themselves?*
- *How well do I work as a team and with my superiors and colleagues? Am I accepting of the views of my colleagues? Am I argumentative? Do I always dominate the conversation? How well do I resolve issues so that I can work harmoniously with others? Do I take statements made about me personally or do I reflect on them and use them to change those things that have caused conflicts with others? Do I offer my opinion and state my needs or do I go along with what others say just to please?*

- *What community values are very different from those of my own and how do I plan to remain neutral, non-judgemental and accepting of others? Do I have biases in terms of whom I speak to in the community or the places I visit when I go there?*

- *What are my personal goals or vision and objectives for working with the community? What roles will I play? Do these converge with the agency and with those of the community or do they diverge?*

- *How will I prepare my family for my work with the community? Most work with communities takes place late evenings and into the nights and on weekends as work is based on the community's time, not mine. What is likely to conflict with my work and home and how do I plan to resolve this?*

Reflection on personal strengths and challenges is very important since they are likely to impact the work done with colleagues, teams and the community.

### **(b) Creating and using a journal**

It is also useful for researchers or those involved in facilitating community change and empowerment, to keep a journal. This will aid in the identification of attendant values and biases as well as realising problems, the process of planning and problem solving and evaluation. Allen (2001) provides hints for the creation of a journal.

#### **Purpose**

A journal aids learning, planning, problem solving, creative thinking and personal growth and development. This is achieved by maintaining a dialogue with self through making daily entries in a journal. Specifically a journal allows for:

- recollections and reflections on the events of the day
- expressions of thoughts and emotions
- identification of problematic events or situation
- planning, problem-solving or intervention and evaluation
- the development of insights
- documentation of strengths and weaknesses to gain encouragement for self and others

#### **How to start**

All that is required is an exercise book, a notebook or folder papers to begin documenting daily actions, events, circumstances and relationships experienced. It also involves setting aside time each day to review previous entries and to make plans

for future action. It would also be good idea to keep a journal copy on a diskette or on a computer.

### **Learning**

Through actions/interventions recorded as well as principles/values that informed actions/interventions, new insights are developed. Additional reading of literature may also aid new learning. Identifying Problems/Challenges & Planning

What are the problems or challenges being experienced? These can be work related, personal or interpersonal events, circumstances and relationships. What are the underlying factors contributing to each situation? Being honest with self in order to identify how ones action, body language, tone, insensitive thoughts, expressions and actions may have contributed is important. What are the goals and strategies that need to be considered/developed? Who, when, where, how and what will one use in developing strategies?

In assisting with personal or interpersonal problems the question is -What spiritual resources can one use to ensure ones directions are appropriate and to give one the inner strength and resources needed to achieve growth?

### **Problem-solving**

With regard to problem solving the question to be answered is 'What are the options that would aid arriving at a solution'. Listing these, no matter how far-fetched, and examining the consequences of each option will aid the final decision taken.

### **Evaluation**

- How well has a strategy worked?

- Is there any need to change goals or review problem-solving options?
- What has been learnt from the experiences?
- What has been learnt from other sources – books, persons involved etc.?

### © Learning about the Community

Negotiating entry calls for an understanding of the community. Henderson & Thomas (1992) speak of "absorbing the nature" of the community which is gaining an understanding of the people, their attitudes and interests and existing groups or organisations serving the community.

#### **Gathering Secondary data about the community**

Once a community has been identified and selected, the researcher or facilitator needs to find out sufficient information about the community in order to be able to tune in to the situation of the community before planning to work with them. To do this there may be need to:

- Obtain a copy of and read the national survey which may have important information about a community or an area in which the community is found
- Make contact with the Ministry responsible for Social Development to ascertain whether information on the community or a profile of the area within which the community is located is available
- Find out if any organisation or institution has worked in this community previously and the type of work done.
- Meet with persons who have done work in the community to obtain information about the area

**Some suggestions, which may be helpful in obtaining initial observations:**

- (a) **Planning a visit to the community.** This aids observation and can be done by attending a community church service for example or visiting a local bar or arranging to visit an organised group
- (b) **Finding out who are the existing community groups.** Identifying the existing community groups and making plans to meet with them or with a representative from each of them will benefit information gathering. These may include Community Citizens Associations, Churches, Schools and Youth Groups etc. It will be important to find out how the community perceives these groups and how the groups perceive each other.
- (c) **Finding out who are considered the leaders.** Identifying those considered leaders or influential persons in the community (those who are respected), and making plans to meet with them. Influential and respected persons can become key informants in the process of gathering information and in gaining entry to the community. It will be important to also find out how the community members perceive these persons.
- (d) **Planning a walk, otherwise called a transect walk through the community.** A transect is a systematic walk with key informants through an area which allows for: observations to be made, questions to be asked discussions to be initiated, listening to occur and learnings about local issues/challenges and local solutions. (Chambers & Guijt 1995 Newsletter 26/27)

The idea of a walk through the community is to observe characteristics of the community and to scan the environment in order to be able to form an early impression and to meet with persons informally to gain a sense of attitudes and behaviour.

Observations of the following are recommended:

- The state and condition of the community's infrastructure and facilities such as schools, community centre, play and recreational areas
- The level of deprivation or development
- The areas of neglect
- The state of buildings and other physical structures
- The provision of utilities
- The people, their countenance, the activities that they are involved in, where they converge, their relationship with each other, who they regard as leaders, and ways of life

A member of one of the existing community groups, (identified as some one who is respected by the community), could facilitate the walk and introduction to others in the community. The transect walk provides a good opportunity to meet people, engage in friendly conversation and begin the process of relationship building. This should not be a fact finding walk on the first occasion but one which gives you a sense of some of the community's characteristics.

## **5.4 Building Relationships**

### **(a) The community**

The idea of meeting with the various community groups is to build a relationship with them and to get a sense of both the community's issues and whether persons would be willing to partner in working on issues identified. They will also be able to advise about other community-based organisations or groups that could be visited.

Additionally one would have met persons who would be able to suggest others who they feel are knowledgeable, respected and who may be willing to talk about community issues. The views of those met in the beginning should be examined critically at a later date when there will be the chance to verify some of what was said. The ability to build rapport also enables a better understanding of the nature of the community identified for intervention and useful suggestions about the way to proceed.

The community needs to learn about the researcher and the researcher needs to learn about the community in order for them to gain an accurate picture of each other.

Although some of the information gained at this stage may not be new, having spoken to outside agency personnel or having read documents, the activity will benefit the building of rapport with key community persons or informants who can provide preliminary information for use in planning your entry to the community.

It is important to remember the attitudes and behaviour discussed earlier and which are critical to developing a trusting relationship.

## **Introductions**

Introductions should be made to the representatives of the community whom meetings are planned with or whom discussions will be held with hence there is need for preparation on what will be said. Attention to important attitudes such as honesty rather than deception, being genuine, sensitive and enthusiastic about your work is suggested.

### **An example of an introduction:**

I am Marva Grannum and I am here with my colleagues from the Disaster Management Programme also known as DMP. The DMP is an organisation that works with communities like yours, in helping them to solve problems associated with the management of the effects of natural disasters.

The names of my colleagues are .....and we are here to assist the River Head community in sharing information about its experiences with natural disasters. We are interested in your ideas about what are the effects of disasters, how these can be reduced and how best we can work together to achieve these.

We are also interested in learning about your community, its history, culture, its people and its issues and how these influence your life.

The DMP has been working with community groups for the past twenty years helping them to develop and achieve goals for the betterment of their communities

We are anxious to work with this community and we are hopeful that through our joint sharing and learning we can together determine what is needed to benefit the River Head community.

The approach we use is called participation and it is enjoyable as we draw, play games, act out stories and discuss issues. We have fun and we are sure you will have fun too.

We would like to gain your permission for working with this community over the next six months at least so we will really get to know each other better. If you give approval to our purpose for working with this community, we will be depending on you to work with us and to help us identify persons who are also willing to partner with us. We will be spending the next month or so sharing information so that together we can come up with a plan for your community.

- It is good idea to state who you are, the purpose of your visit, the agency you represent, an example of its past work with communities, the role that you intend to play, the method you will use, the expectation of the community and how long you intend to work with the community
- It is crucial that the image of the organisation that you are representing is one which is positive in the eyes of the community
- You must have noted the use of the word "we," it is a good idea to work as a team initially. The assistance of others in co-facilitating has many advantages which will be discussed later

#### **(b) The Employing Organisation**

Creating understanding between the implementing organisation and the needs of participatory research, which is likely to lead to development work with the community is very important. The understanding of development work by the implementing organisation is necessary as achievements occur when the goals of

agencies converge with the goals of communities. The researcher will need to ensure there is understanding by both the community and his/her implementing organisation of his/her roles and boundaries in the development process.

Knowledge of the types of commitment and support the agency is likely to make based on the varying situations, which communities may arise, is critical to the work being carried out.

The organisation's commitment to address the needs of a community is already shaped by its constitution and its mandate as well as those of the funding organisation. Time should be spent understanding the agency, its mission, goals, objectives, structure, roles, (including his own) policies, procedures, and resources, its funding sources and how organisational decisions are made.

The implementing organisation needs to be informed at all stages of the process to ensure that common interests (of community and organisation) are shared and discussed.

## **5.5 Planning an Initial Visit to the Community**

It is best to get an introduction to the community by local leadership or a respected group in the community. It is never advised for a group of persons to descend on a community without the community having prior knowledge of their visit. In planning for an initial transect walk through the community attention to the following is useful:

- Having learnt of groups in the community for example church groups, schools community organisation, etc. contact should first be made with one of these groups to benefit a first introduction to the idea or purpose for wanting to

engage the community in research activity or to hold a field training exercise with them. Permission to visit the community should also be gained.

- If past knowledge exists of an organisation which had done previous work in the community, then contact with the organisation to provide an initial introduction to the community would be adequate
- If no knowledge exists of either a local group or an organisation, which has worked with a community in the past, then a visit to a local church service or group or business in the community would be a good place to begin to introduce the purpose of the engagement. It is recommended that no more than two or three members of the development team conduct this initial visit.
- It would be also be a good idea to plan an attendance at any event conducted by a group for example a church service once a meeting has been held with the leadership of the particular community group and permission is granted for attendance at an event. In this way the process of relationship building and the observation of a large group can commence.
- Later plans should include a planned initial visit by members of the team to the community to conduct a transect walk to further introduce a project or an idea for work with the community. It would also be a good idea for persons from the leadership-core of the group to introduce the team and its purpose to the community.

- Find out which days and time are suitable
  
- Let persons know how long the visit will last
  
- Arrange for the larger community to know of the visit, through posters, announcements in church, school PTA or any other method of communication advised by the local group
  
- Prior to visiting a community a team of researchers should plan what exactly will take place on the first community visit, they should also be aware of the following:
  - The purpose of the visit
  - The goal (or what you intend to accomplish to ensure a successful visit)
  - The objectives (the things you will do to accomplish the goal)
  - The actions you will take to achieve each objective
  - The roles you will play on the visit
  - The persons to be contacted both within the agency and the community to assist in organising the visit
  - The actions to take to ensure adequate communication with all sections of the community and/or for meeting with community persons or groups
  - The time frame in which to complete the exercise

- Of importance to the work plan are the expected outcomes or those things that indicate that the goal has been achieved
- Role play is important as it benefits a rehearsal of how the planned activities will be carried out and encourages feed-back from team members on attitude and behaviour
- The resources needed such as venue, transportation, refreshments and materials also must be arranged. The community can be consulted re an adequate venue to assemble at prior to a community walk or to meet with members of the community

## **5.6 The Benefits of Participation**

In preparation for the visit to the community, it will be worthwhile for researchers to review the modes of participation and the process involved in engaging and empowering communities. These include the contractual, consultative, the collaborative and collegiate modes of participation.

There are several benefits to community participation:

- Participation encourages community members to voice their needs and issues. Outsiders are never able to determine the best needs of any community without consulting first with the community.
- Participation encourages the articulation of priority needs of a community by a broad cross section of community members who come together to discuss these.

- Participation respects local knowledge and know how in the design of projects or interventions. As priority areas are selected, local knowledge benefits solutions.
- Participation builds technical and interactive skills of community members as they begin to work together collaboratively on problems articulated.
- Participation builds trust, confidence and self-worth as community members recognise the importance of their knowledge and ideas in solving community problems.
- Participation promotes the development of local leadership and role models for others in the community.
- Participation reduces conflicts as local community members learn to respect the opinions of others and agree through consensus on areas for work.
- Participation fosters a sense of ownership of solutions agreed on in solving problems and creates the conditions for sustainability
- Participation encourages community members to organise around problem identification and solutions by strengthening a community to take action to solve its problems

- Participation aids the development of a sense of accomplishment as community members work together and achieve success in community problem solving
- Participation allows for the recognition of the ability or capacity of a local community group or organisation to influence decisions in their lives

## **5.7 Challenges Encountered With Participation**

While it is recognised that participation has many benefits there are also challenges, which researchers should be aware of as they seek to engage communities in the process of participation. In one study, “Institutional and cultural challenges in working with the poor and marginalized”, Shillingford 2005, cites cultural obstacles to participation as well as social, structural and administrative obstacles (pp 28-38). The following paragraphs give highlights of these obstacles observed in one community under study

### **Social Obstacles to Participation**

Social obstacles to participation are those factors that encourage dependency. Traditionally communities in developing countries have depended on the expertise of outsiders to solve their problems and make decisions on their behalf. The resultant apathy and dependency experienced, creates challenges in engaging persons to participate as they lack confidence and harbour feelings of self-doubt in their abilities to make a difference in their lives.

The study pointed to the community’s identification of external persons such as politicians and pastors who were recognized as leaders of the community. To further

emphasize the dependence experienced by the community, political officials made decisions on behalf of the community and even dominated at meetings, which also involved local community members. The historical experience of control and dependency is reinforced when a participatory approach to development is not attempted.

### **Structural Obstacles to Participation**

Structural obstacles to participation include obstacles presented by government organisations, which have control over “affairs of the state”. The centralised structure of government presents an unsupportive environment to people participation and serves to alienate those who are most needy and who should be the prime beneficiaries in any government’s development plans. Additionally the influence of politicians in some instances of deciding the particular programme for development lacks respect for people who are perceived more as objects of development plans rather than active participants involved in identifying and developing their own programmes.

### **Administrative Obstacles to Participation**

Administrative obstacles to participation are the controls established over “decision-making, resource allocation and the information and knowledge”. If people are to be actively involved in their own development, it is important for them to participate in decision-making and for them to be provided with resources and information to benefit actions. The study identified a community’s feeling of inadequacy in solving its own problems as the external agency failed to communicate critical information needed and if information was communicated, there was the failure to “take into consideration the use of simple language and techniques in presenting information for

ordinary persons to be able to understand and act on”. It is without doubt that many governments are reluctant to support the costs involved in accomplishing authentic participation.

### **Cultural Obstacles to Participation**

Clientelism is a cultural obstacle to participation, and seen in the relationship established between “patrons and clients”, it is a form of “power structure” established by politicians who control decisions taken and who distribute resources in order to maintain power. Brokers or area leaders are important elements of the relationship as they form the link between the politicians and the poor. “Issues of power and control” are cited as being at “the core of the relationship that existed between the government agency and the community”. Through the “personal relationship” developed between the government agency and the area leader, “the agency’s control of the project was ascertained” and the community’s ability to display self-determination was frustrated.

Additionally, as clientelism does not allow for any form of confrontation of power-holders, the community was unable to challenge the government agency about the ways they felt dis-respected and about the undermining of their efforts to participate in the development plans which affected them.

As a result of blocks to participation encountered by communities, persons may not readily understand or warm to researchers seeking to engage them. The following responses may be encountered due a community’s past experience of outsider’s negative attitudes and approach to work:

- Anger and dissatisfaction with outsiders
- Feelings of intimidation
- Mistrust in or suspicion of why their knowledge is needed. In the past many in the community may have been accused of informing or labelled an “informer” for providing knowledge which may have been used in a negative way. On the other hand the community may have been “researched” before with no follow-up activities or feed-back from the time they invested previously.

### **The implementing Agency**

Agencies involved in development work or in using participatory research are likely to present other obstacles.

- There may be discomfort in working with poor rural, remote or urban inner city communities
- Agencies may find the exercise time consuming if deadlines are to be met and time wasting in the amount of data collected for analysis or
- Conversely the agency may regard the approach as “quick” and “easy” when in fact the processes involved are “slow” and “complex” in order to develop correct insights (Pretty et al 1995 p.68-69). As a result visits may be rushed without attention to the social and psychological preparations necessary thus compounding the problem of powerlessness experienced by local people.
- Implementing agencies may also feel that just about anyone can do participatory research and may want to embark on training for a wide cross section of its staff. Agencies which takes this approach need to realise that this does not mean that all who are trained will embrace open learning or that “open learning leading to action will result” as “attitudes and behaviour of

participants, the organisational context for planning and action and the wider political economy all affect opportunities for success”. Hence there is the need for addressing “wider issues of organisational change, management and reward systems, staff behaviour, ethics and responsibilities” (Pretty et al 1995 p.68-69).

- Additionally information gained during participatory research, may challenge the technical expertise and power holders or there may be the loss of control over the decision to implement a certain project or over the design of a project since a community may decide on other objectives or another set of priorities to work on
- The motivation towards action stimulated by utilising the participatory approach can be problematic if support by the facilitating agency does not materialise
- If users of participatory methods are not cognisant of gender differences or power or class differences then these may be overlooked during the research phase

## **5.8 Selling the Idea of Participation and Gaining Commitment**

Selling an idea to a community to engage in participatory research can sometimes be difficult based on the complex problems and challenges that the community may have encountered in the past. Based on the understanding of powerlessness and the obstacles, which have created self-doubt, fear and dependency it can be quite a task to convince a community of its ability to create change.

In selling the idea of participation both the community and the holders of power must be targeted and persuaded to buy into the benefits of participation.

## **The community**

In relation to the community a phased approach using the modes of participation is recommended in helping the community to realise that they are the experts and that local knowledge is valued. As mentioned previously these phases include:

- Contracting the community's involvement in the use of participatory exercises to benefit the stimulation of the community's interest
- Consulting persons for their opinions to benefit confidence building and the respect of local knowledge
- Collaborating with persons in the design of an intervention or project to create empowering experiences and a recognition of the community's ability to solve its problems
- Establishing collegiate relations or mutual learning between the community and the researcher to aid capacity building and the realisation of community control over decisions
- Ensuring that the implementing agency is willing to give support to both the purpose for which the participatory research is being carried out as well as support to the kind of actions that communities are motivated to take.
- Facilitating recognition, visibility and credibility of the community

In engaging the community, the methods and tools of the participatory process ensures the recognition of priorities and decisions articulated by the community, aids community building and provides an empowering experience in the sharing of information for persons to feel encouraged to act on.

### **The “Big Man” or Holders of Power**

The “big man” or those who the community perceive as the holders of power are likely to feel threatened and may act disruptively hence they too need to be convinced that:

- Community participation is cost effective as it ensures community ownership and sustainability
  - Many past failures of projects designed and implemented by outsiders have been due to the lack of community involvement and participation in all phases of a project’s design and implementation
  - Contracting, consulting and collaborating with communities encourages the community’s participation as well as their appreciation of and respect for power holders
  - Community participation leads to empowered communities that will take control over their lives, transforming their situations for the betterment of their communities and the larger society of which everyone is a part of.
- (Unknown contributor)

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## Chapter 6. Participatory Research: The Field Work

### 6.1 Preparation for the Field-Visit: Cognitive and Emotional Elements

In preparing to go into the field there are a couple of questions with which one is faced:

- \* *Why am I here?*
- \* *Am I here on behalf of an external agency to help with the facilitation of agency goals?*
- \* *Will this really be development research?*
- \* *Am I here to help with the facilitation of community-defined goals?*
- \* *Is this just a training exercise for some researchers?*
- \* *Are the goals of the agency which I represent, externally or internally determined?*

These questions need to be resolved before we begin the field-visit, as the sequence of events will be significantly different depending on the decision. We have already made the point that participatory research is more than token representation around the “table”. If the participatory research is to generate real benefits to the community then the community needs to realise what the process of community development and self-reliance really means to them both in the immediate and the follow-up activities.

On the other hand, if the purpose is simply training in the use of the participatory approach, then the community should be informed of this in order to prevent dishonestly and raising expectations. As many trainers have now come to realise, there is an ethical dilemma both in terms of honesty and de-valuing of people’s time

(especially poor people's time), which is best resolved by remaining in the classroom.

Going into the field must remain a real experience with real consequences. If, however, one decides to go into the field as part of training, extreme care must be made to inform the residents so that the topic selected for research is made by the community and the findings will therefore be beneficial to them. It may also be strategic to involve an agency, which will continue to work with the community selected for field-based practice learning, in the training.

There are added benefits to the inclusion of staff members of an agency (who are already working in the community) in training, in that they would have already established relationships with the community selected, they also possess the secondary data needed for other trainees to absorb the true nature of the community, they could act as key informants in brokering introductions to local groups and individuals and the transfer of skill that the training opportunity provides would enhance the quality of their work with the community in the future. It is important to note however that they may not provide entry for the other research trainees; this is part of the training, as community acceptance is individualised and reflects the personal relationship built with the community.

## **6.2 Preparation for the Field Visit: Physical Elements**

### **a) The Community**

Contracting and consulting community members to participate in the research activity and making arrangements to

*"The emphasis on participation is closely linked to, and is sometimes in tension with, a concern about power relationships - between the community of participants and outside structures such as government or NGOs; between groups of participants within the community; and within groups of participants at the level of group dynamics. This concern influences, for example, decisions about how groups will be constituted during a PRA/(PLA) process. A relatively common approach is to have separate sessions for various stakeholder groups within a community - for instance, women, men, and youth - and later in the process to hold a plenary session at which each group can present its findings, recommendations, etc. Working in this way can be an important means of helping marginalized segments of the community to develop some confidence and solidarity before having to speak before those whom they perceive as more powerful. PRA (PLA) practitioners, aware that communities are not monolithic and are often characterized by significant disparities in wealth and power, may need to identify stakeholder groups themselves in a non-participatory way, often before doing almost anything else. While general participation is, on the whole, desirable, they must also ask themselves, Participation by whom and for what?" (Robinson 2002)*

utilise community resources begin early in the process of engaging community involvement. These discussions and agreements provide an advantage in the development of researcher/community relationships and in determining avenues of support for local resources and economic activities.

In gaining permission for fieldwork, approval should also be sought from all sections of the community. It is the responsibility of the research/trainer to ensure that the entire community is communicated with. The process of negotiating entry (see chapter 5) provides insights into the steps to be taken in advance of the visit by the team of researchers/trainees. Pretty et al 1995 p.91 provide other considerations:

**Arranging venues for any community interaction:** It is best to allow the community to make the decisions re time and place for all interactions so that even chance encounters occur within acceptable locations. In addition, the times selected should be the best for the majority.

**Accommodation:** If researchers are planning to reside and/or work in the community for a short while, practical arrangements should be made with the community as to the types of facilities and amenities available.

**Community Resources:** From time to time as part of the research process, we will need refreshments. This should be provided by the community and might entail helping with the cost.

**Transportation:** Ensuring transportation for the team is important and a community's involvement in providing this could assist in developing early relationships for work in addition to utilising and assisting the earnings of local persons.

**Materials:** Ensure the availability of all necessary materials for the exercise such as charts, paper, pens, tape and notebooks, markers, beans etc.

**Unexpected Occurrences:** Unexpected happenings are likely to present challenges to the fieldwork. Thorough planning gives attention to the unexpected, and it is recommended that the trainers brain storm about possible unplanned events and possible options.

In working with Caribbean communities the following are noted as examples:

- Political upheavals or social tensions in the community
- Natural occurrences like heavy rains or hurricane
- Unplanned events such as a funeral service for a prominent community or society member which the community is likely to attend
- A community's last minute decision not to accommodate the research exercise.
- Problems with securing transport or the break down of vehicles

### **6.3 Preparation for the Field Visit: The Team**

Teams conducting participatory research usually comprise the main researchers (2 or 3 persons) with a second group of field assistants who may or may not come from the community (3-5 persons). Different disciplines are often represented. Inclusion of personnel trained to assist with field-work has numerous advantages. Some of these

are knowledge of the community, residents and local language, providing temporary jobs for qualified unemployed in the community, inclusion of persons who have previously worked with the team on other projects, visibly supporting the concept of community participation. Most importantly it is the first step in leaving the knowledge of data generation in the community after the research. Bear in mind:

- **Gender:** Each team should comprise a mix of both male and female researchers to assist comfort in the disclosures of male and female community members and to ensure that gender related topics are included in discussions. Hopefully, they should also serve as role models displaying amicable and respectful relationships between one another
- **Social Backgrounds:** Like the benefits realised in having persons of varying disciplines working together, having persons of varying social backgrounds as part of a team's composition also leads to the sharing of ideas from different perspectives and to shared learning

Any team has a personality of its own. However, each individual has clearly defined roles, which must be stated and discussed before entering the field. An important element also is each member committing to completion (barring unforeseen situations), and also being committed to total participation in all aspects of the research process.

### **6.3.1 Deciding on Fieldwork Objectives**

Although Chapter 4 gave information on the fieldwork objectives as well as the development of an interviewing checklist and team contracts, fieldwork objectives

and contracts are again mentioned here to emphasise the importance of these in the preparation for work in the field.

The decision regarding objectives of the participatory fieldwork will depend on the suggested themes and questions for investigation developed by the sponsoring organisation. Once secondary data is known and presented as a case study, the research team will formulate objectives for the field research.

For the fieldwork training purposes trainees should also focus on what they need to know and understand better. As the use of the participatory approach begins in the classroom setting, each team is asked to formulate:

- Learning objectives for the team
- The objectives for the theme(s) selected
- The methods and tools of participatory research that will be necessary to achieve objectives. It might also be useful to explore and state how each method suggested relates to the objectives formulated.

**An example of objectives developed by a team:**

**Theme:** Disaster Management

**General Objective:** To learn the tools and techniques of PLA

**Specific Objectives:**

- To apply the most appropriate methods of PLA in the research process
- To find out the effects of the 2004 hurricane experience on the farming community and ways in which the community coped
- To find out a community's awareness of local farming practices which are environmentally friendly and those practices which are not
- To identify local groups or individuals interested in partnering with the Disaster Management Programme in developing a project to support and promote farming practices which are environmentally friendly

Pretty et al states that the objectives are useful for “daily review meetings in the field to assess and redirect the work. They will be helpful for final evaluations to assess what has been accomplished, and to discuss what was not realised and why this was the case”. Teams may decide to work in different ways once they are out in the field and have recognised the varying situations presented. For example the team may decide to work together with a particular group to capture all aspects of the theme selected. Conversely if a large cross section of age groups turn out for the field exercise the team may decide to work in groups of three or four in engaging community members of the different age groups on the selected theme (p. 94).

### **6.3.2 Developing Team Contracts**

Allowing teams to develop contracts for work provides an opportunity for the teams to develop their own rules and norms of behaviour.

Contracts developed by teams ensure conformity and controls over behaviour and an understanding about the team's expectations.

### **6.4 Empowering the Community: The Handing Over of the Stick**

Once the process of preparation has been completed it becomes time to engage the community using field exercises.

#### **Getting started**

Helping research trainees to assume new roles once they arrive in the field can be challenging. Prompting by the trainer and team members to emphasize what Guijt et al p.96 suggests:

- Listening rather than telling
- Creating learning situations rather than dictating terms and conditions
- Facilitating rather than controlling the research and or development process
- Watching, listening and learning
- Beginning the fieldwork with a “concrete activity” which will stimulate group involvement
- Reminding team members to relax and to be patient as “they do not have to learn everything in the first few minutes”

Team members and trainers can play a critical role in observing and reminding trainees of these roles whenever it is called for. In encouraging local people to dominate, Chambers 1994 reminds that the activities of “outsiders” are to:

- Establish rapport
- Convene and catalyze
- Enquire
- Help in the use of methods
- Encourage local people to choose and emphasize methods for themselves

#### **6.4.1 Visualisation: A Powerful Tool**

It is recognised that local people “have a greater capacity to map, model, quantify, and estimate, rank, score, and diagram than outsiders have generally supposed them capable of”. Additionally the “popularity and power of participatory diagramming and visual sharing” has been underscored in recent times (Chambers 1994 pp 1255-1256).

- Past experience has provided evidence that early activities such as asking community participants to create a map of their community or drawings whether on the ground or on paper provided has had the added advantage of stimulating early participation. It is therefore suggested that preparations include a tangible activity to benefit early participation. “This can be accomplished with minimal facilitator involvement - an initial explanation followed by occasional probing questions.” (Robinson 2002). To get started the actual handing over of a stick or marker or pencil to a group to begin the drawings is a demonstration of the respect for local knowledge and authority. As persons create diagrams or visuals (mapping, ranking, scoring, counting or quantification), “all who are present can see, point to, discuss, manipulate and alter” thus ensuring participation, ownership and triangulation with people “cross checking and correcting each other (Chambers 1994 p 1257).
- The grouping of local persons into small groups based on the section of the community where they live or based on other criteria such as age or gender can also benefit further participation regarding particular themes such as area descriptions, perception of problems and analysis and goal setting. This also provides added benefits to learning about the perceptions of various groups.
- Encouraging local people to develop their own criteria and symbols is another way of demonstrating respect for local knowledge and local control. Over enthusiasm or impatience of researchers may often lead to the imposition of their own ideas regarding criteria and the use of symbols on an activity (Guijt et al). Hence researchers/trainees must be mindful of this and

depend on other members of the team to observe and guard against this through hints and reminders.

- Once diagrams are created those involved should be recognised. This is done by asking local participants to provide the names of persons who did the drawings. Each diagram should include also the name of the facilitator (Guijt et al)
- Encouraging the reversal of roles and the handing over of the stick to local people in having them present their findings to other community groups and to the trainees in a planned feedback session with the community. In this way the community is able to demonstrate authority over the process. The idea too of having all visuals created and mounted at a selected place on walls also assists confidence and respect of participants and encourage local debate and discussions facilitated by local participants who now own and control the process. Local participants can also take the process further in demonstrating their empowerment and influencing both new respect of their knowledge, knowhow and decisions by presenting their findings to policymakers, researchers and bureaucrats. (Guijt et al)
- Making a video of the field exercises can enhance training and analysis for trainees and local people who will be able to comment on observations, on attitudes and behaviour and on the use of participatory principles. Taking pictures may also serve to enhance the reporting of field based activities and provide a record of the event for community people to refer to (Guijt et al)
- The sequencing of activities through participatory diagrams and visual sharing are said to be powerful and empowering experiences.

## 6.4.2 Analysis

Visuals present an agenda for discussions, descriptions, interpretations, triangulation and action. Researchers are able to “interview” the visuals drawn by local people and probe for answers thus leading to new observations and analysis. As indicated by Chambers 1994 p. 1257 in the examples below:

- **Social mapping** allows for the identification of “household listings, and for indicating population, social group, health and other household characteristics” and can lead to the “identification of key informants, and then discussions with them”. Social maps also provide for “up-to-date household listings which is then used for well-being or wealth ranking of households which leads in turn to focus groups with different categories of people who then express their preferences, leading to discussion, negotiation and reconciliation of priorities”
- A “**resource map** leads to planning transect walks in which villagers who made the map act as guide for outsiders. The transects in turn lead to the identification and discussion of problems and opportunities, which then lead to listing and ranking options.....debating and analysis lead to people’s decisions”
- **Pairwise ranking and matrix ranking** has been used in the development of criteria and preferences. It encourages “discussions and elicits detailed knowledge and understanding” through the process of comparison of items listed” (Jones 1996 p. 3)
- **The analysis** by local people offers the means to assess validity and reliability “in more conventional ways”

The importance of the sequencing of participatory methods is cited as important to learning and the analysis of data by local persons, additionally Chambers 1994 points to other benefits:

- It encourages a strengthening of local commitment
- It enables triangulation and the identification of “errors or omissions” in earlier research activities. **Triangulation involves cross-checking the data** in order to get multiple perspectives in the use of varying participatory methods and analysts in different locations to obtain different sources of information. **Triangulation uses the tools of PLA – interviews, observations, diagrams while the information sources includes events, places and people**
- The various methods involved “interact cumulatively, each activity adding a dimension and details which qualify and enrich others, so that taken together the whole becomes more than the sum of its parts”

### 6.4.3 Interviewing the Visuals

To benefit the analysis of data collected, researchers ask questions to understand the meaning behind what people are saying and to help community participants to present and understand issues so that they can initiate change.

For example: In assessing the problems faced by coffee farmers the map drawn by farmers to indicate the farming zones in the community is used as the first point of reference to engage in analysis.

- Is coffee the main crop grown in the community?
- Where exactly are these crops grown?
- Describe how farmers prepare the hillside slopes for the growing of crops
- Please explain the kind of ongoing activity carried out after the seedlings are planted
- What are the problems faced by coffee farmers? –(Allows- for the use of other tools - problem listing/ranking and problems tree)
- What are the reasons for such low crop outputs? (selecting one problem)
- You have identified ‘burning the land’ to prepare for planting, as one reason for low crop output? Could we talk about this some more?

- In order to strengthen the skills needed for analysis, it would be useful at this stage to review Chapter 3 “Participatory Research Methods in Data Collection” for a summary of participatory methods

## **6.5 Fieldwork: Debriefing, Feedback and Presentation**

Guijt 1995 pp 104-105 and Donald pp 71-73, presents on review, debriefing, feedback and presentation and acknowledge that preparations for the field involve daily reviews or debriefing sessions which are cited as important for reflections, learning and planning. These sessions present opportunities for the trainer to gain knowledge of challenges faced as well as how learning is progressing in the field for trainees. It is important to note that these sessions are controlled and presented by the trainees themselves or community participants (if done in the field) with minimum intervention from the trainer/researcher – a symbol of handing over the stick to the trainees and/or community people.

If the trainees are conducting these sessions at the workshop setting, it is suggested that these sessions take place in the mornings before leaving for the field to benefit planning the day’s activities and in the afternoon once trainees return from the field to aid debriefing about the day’s activities.

### **6.5.1 Debriefing and Planning:**

**Debriefing and Planning** sessions includes

- **Discussions about dynamics** within the team itself and with community groups. It is suggested that individuals practice openness, personal reflections and acceptance to critique presented in order to develop the correct attitudes and behaviour as well as the necessary skills associated with PRA/PLA practioners and researchers.
- **Reflections** by the group is initiated by the observer’s report. As roles are interchangeable for each team, each team member will get an opportunity to play the observer role.

- **Discussions of findings from the field and the sorting out of data collected** under themes, using the guide developed is part of both debriefing and planning activities carried out by team members after each day's exercises. Data is discussed and information which needs further clarification is recorded on a discussion sheet. At this stage information or observations not recorded can be shared at the feedback sessions to aid analysis.
- **The note-taker's role** is also a very important since it is the note-taker who ensures that information on field exercises are recorded and that the demographics of all groups or individuals participating are recorded
- **Acknowledging what went well.** An important part of debriefing is acknowledging what went well and to praise others to build their confidence.

## 6.5.2 Feedback and Presentations

Feedback sessions offer opportunities for the presentation and analysis of information in order to inform research and proposals for community action. These sessions may take place in the field with community participants as well as in the training workshops with the research trainees.

### Organising the Information

Data is organised using diagrams and using narratives. In organising, it is best to:

- Sort information by themes (Health issues/needs/resources, Farming issues/needs/resources) and sub- themes (male, female, youth, adult, elderly)
- Use a matrix to identify thematic information across communities
- Identify significant findings (due to age, gender, social class, occupation etc)

**Example of a Synthesis Matrix to indicate differences and similarities across communities (Madden 1999)**

<b>Thematic Focus</b>	<b>Sub-themes</b>	<b>Differences</b>			<b>Similarities</b>
		<b>Community 1</b>	<b>Community 2</b>	<b>Community 3</b>	<b>Common Responses</b>
Farming practices	Male farmers				
	Female farmers				
Farming needs	Financial				
	Social				
Resources available	Physical				
	Natural				
	Social				

### **Presentations in the field**

Presentations may be verbal, written and/or visual. If community participants are involved in the exercise, it is wise to know the advantages of each type of method for presenting selected. Written presentations may intimidate and alienate those who are not literate, verbal presentations are useful if persons are able to accomplish this well, while visual presentations of diagrams drawn by local people are most effective as they allow for interpretations and further discussion and analysis.

In the field, preferably at a neutral place such as the community centre, it is best that local people make presentations to the wider group of community residents and to the research team, as information presented on the drawings made by them, can be interpreted and analysed by them. The exercise also offers opportunities for debates, insights, and analyses as various perspectives are heard. Division into smaller group categories (young men, women) may also benefit more effective analysis as persons will feel freer among peer groups in expressing themselves. Field presentation provides for the development of action plans by local people.

For field presentations, a time suitable for the majority of the community to be in attendance must be planned. The process cannot be rushed hence adequate time is needed to ensure thorough discussions to take place.

### **Acknowledging Community Ownership of Visuals Created by Them**

Visuals or diagrams done by community persons belong to them and should be left in the community once the presentations are complete. They should be labelled with the date, the location, the method used, the issue, the findings and names of the persons group who drew them.

### **Presentations at the training workshop**

If presentations are not conducted in the local community, for training purposes each team will be asked to present an exhibition of its visual work with the community in order to stimulate discussion among other trainees. Presentations are considered part of the learning for trainees since they allow team members to:

- Practice presentation skills
- Illustrate differences in methods and sequences used
- Describe innovations and methods used
- Discuss issues of substance (Guijt et al 1995 p. 105)

Guijt et al advises on **Tips for a Good Presentation:**

- Plenty of time is necessary for preparation and allocation of roles within the group. An entire morning or after noon (post field visits) may be dedicated to this
- Presentations are made according to sequences, a process matrix will assist this activity and help teams reflect on their experience as a team, and how much they have achieved and learnt. The process matrix also allows learning how other teams utilise different methods and combinations for investigating similar or different issues and about the commonalities or differences in issues presented by a community. Ask teams to prepare a process matrix on sheets of paper.

Included are the:

- Team's name
- Male/Female ratio of the group
- Location
- Community Entry Employed
- Key Issues Dealt With
- Sequences of Methods Utilised
- Planning Outcome and Follow up
- Successes recorded (For example the creation of awareness for information on HIV among community groups)
- Successes recorded (the late arrival of the majority of male participants)

- Teams will mount an exhibition of visuals. A small corner on the sheet with the diagram or separate letter sized paper attached to the drawing should indicate the following:
  - The method used
  - The issue discussed
  - The date, place and group used
  - Drawn by:
  - Facilitated by:
  - Redrawn by: (if the activity was done on the ground - materials used)
  - Key findings
  
- Strict time limits are allowed for each presentation
  
- The focus of the presentation is on lessons learnt
  
- A time keeper from each team will be appointed to ensure that the time limit is honoured
  
- Questions which may guide the presentation made by teams include:
  - What is the difference between this method and others you have done in the past?
  - What were the findings?
  - What is the difference between this finding and those obtained in the past?
  - How can these findings be used for planning future research or actions by the community?
  - Did you find working as a team important?

## 6.6 Developing Reports

Madden's training notes for the JSIF/SDC Training for Community Based Organisations, Module 1, Organisational Development (1999) pp 48-50, highlights four levels of reporting:

- Recording field notes
- Writing daily reports
- Writing a synthesis report for every community where the research is conducted
- Preparing an overall country synthesis report, based on findings from all sites in the country

### **Recording Field notes**

This includes recording basic information of all discussions and visuals made. This information will be used to analyse and synthesize/organise the data collected.

Phrases and symbols used by local people ensures the authenticity or originality of the information gathered. The analysis is not complete until the visual is discussed and analysed by the group hence recording should include questions asked, explanations given and the meanings of language used.

The field note-taker is critical and good note taking is important. Permission must first be granted from the community to take notes if this is not granted or it is not possible to take notes, the recording should take place immediately after returning from the field.

### **Writing daily Reports**

Following daily reviews, debriefing and reflections from various teams deployed to different sections and groups in the community benefits the triangulation of the data. Once the information/outputs are shared the, the teams should divide up the tasks and share the responsibility for writing up the reports. Each team could work on a selected theme. All reports should be collected by one person.

Daily reports help to focus the field activities, sort data according to theme and prepare for the next day's activity hence information that is unclear will become part of the objective for the field exercise the next day. The daily review may also lead to the development of additional themes for investigation.

### **Synthesis Report**

Once the research in the field is complete teams will engage in writing up a synthesis report. This report flows from the daily reports which are analysed to be able to draw conclusions. All teams will need to review the the entire process together.

The process of writing up the field study report according to Pretty et al includes:

- Collecting Information by objective
- Organising the information
- Analysing the information
- Writing up the information
- Reviewing the report

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## **Part 2**

### **B: Considerations for Training the Trainer**

## **Chapter B.1. The Role and Function of the Trainer in Adult Learning**

What are the conditions under which adults learn best? The answer to this question is fundamental for trainers to be able to work effectively with adult learners. The main function of a trainer in adult learning scenarios is to establish adequate conditions in the learning environment.

The trainer's role is to guide a process of discussion and exchange among the participants. This process uses the individual and collective experience and knowledge to connect new learning and thereby generate information and knowledge about matters that are meaningful to them. It is against this background, that this chapter will present some guidelines that can help in making adult training activities a rewarding experience for the trainer and adult learner alike.

### **B. 1.1 Creating a Participatory Learning Environment**

This means an environment (formal or informal) where the participants are actively involved and sharing around matters that are important in their world and one which reflects the diversity of the participants. Stephen Brookfield (1986 p. 1) describes such an environment as one in which “... *adults teach and learn in each others company, they find themselves engaging in a challenging, passionate and creative activity. The training environment must fit the uniqueness of the learners and the learning situation.* (Knowles et al pg. 3)

**The main elements for a participatory learning environment are:**

- Centered on the learner. Their needs and expectations must inform the planning, design and delivery of the actual training content which should be based on a general understanding of their needs and goals.

- Physically comfortable: The aging process brings about changes in hearing, sight, pace of movement. Long periods of sitting can create discomfort and hence be distracting. Frequent short breaks are desirable and the sessions should be interactive
  
- Psychologically comfortable: **One has to:**
  - Foster respect among all participants
  - Allow them to participate in freely exchanging their ideas, beliefs and experiences about the topics.
  - Provide the encouragement they need to feel safe and supported as a learning environment can be threatening to adult learners, who tend to have doubts and anxiety about their capacity to absorb and apply new knowledge.
  - Demonstrate sensitivity and respect for the individuals' self esteem, ego and pride in all aspects of the training process, hence for example, there are no stupid questions.

#### **B.1.1.1 Profile of an Adult Learner.**

Knowles et al (2004 pp115 – 117) offer a framework for understanding the profile of an adult learner, whereby, within the boundaries of 'individual and situational differences' the following core principles give a profile of an adult learner:

- Adults learn differently from children in that they are independent and self-directing. This means that they decide:
- What is important to learn at a particular time and phase in their lives

- (a) Why it is relevant and appropriate
- (b) How they will access the knowledge they need and
- (c) When learning will take place because they have competing demands on their time in giving attention to their roles in family, on the job and in their communities

- Adults need to see the relevance of new learning, and how it can be applied to solve current problems and help them to make effectual decisions for positive change.
- Adults come to a training/learning group firstly as individuals with their life experiences, levels of expertise and practical knowledge on a wide range of issues and topics, personal values, opinions, skills and varying educational backgrounds. These make up their reference points for processing new information and ideas.
- Adults need to be ready to learn. Readiness may be stimulated by:

#### Life circumstances

A developmental task at the particular stage of their psychological development. Readiness is important to adult learning because a learning situation causes exposure and invites disclosure. Adult egos and pride are therefore at risk as they are likely to have doubts and anxieties about their capacity to absorb and apply new knowledge.

- Adults are motivated to seek new knowledge and skills that they can integrate with what they already know, and will use.
- Adults' previous knowledge base and experience gives them an advantage, in that it serves as a reference point to make linkages with new ideas.
- The adult's phase of his/her life cycle influence what they need and want to learn as well as their approach to learning it.
- Adults need to have indicators to evaluate how they are progressing and becoming more competent.

### **B.1.1.2 Engendering a Process of Self-Development**

Adults grow and change throughout their lives and will need/seek help to deal with the changes. Self-development may be described as the process that helps individuals to acquire qualities and personal attributes that are manifested in a particular way of being/behaving.

In contrasting teaching versus enabling learning, Pretty et al 1999 chap. 1 p.1 states "Learning is not usually an outcome of formal teaching. Instead it comes from a process of self development through experience." The statement illustrates a multi-directional flow of (a) lessons learned (b) shared meanings (c) previous experience (d) knowledge between and among fellow learners, (including the facilitator).

How to bring about this process may be the ultimate challenge of the participatory adult training experience. The following are offered to assist in guiding an approach to engender self-development.

- As adults grow and change throughout life, they will need /seek help to adapt to changes and trends in the society, in technology and the economy. Such changes inevitably affect them as individuals and the communities of which they are a part and they will need help in dealing with these changes.
- In general, adults will choose to learn what they are interested in at a given phase in their development, or what is needed to function in a given context, such as re-tooling for better job prospects or for improved social status/relations. Learning helps them to make changes in the light of new experience.
- If what they have learned is useful to their current life situation, and they perceive that they will benefit from acquiring new knowledge, they will invest energy to learn and be able to apply it willingly. The content should therefore be based on their needs and goals.
- Although they are voluntary and self-directed learners, their previous learning experience may have been teacher-centered. They may therefore need help and encouragement to take responsibility for their own learning.

### **1.1.3 The Role of Previous Knowledge and Experience.**

The previous knowledge and experience of adults serve as a filter for what is new to them and what they already know. Their knowledge and experience influence how they receive and make sense of new ideas. This is promoted in an adult learning group setting, which provides opportunity for them to make linkages and comparisons with

how they feel and think, about their knowledge and skills, against their strengths and achievements and how they will use the new knowledge and skills. R.M. Gagne 1971 in Brookfield 1986 pg. -- describe the benefit as “ a powerful explosion in a field of knowledge and skills in collective reflection.” . The importance of the following cannot therefore be overstated and involves attention to:

- Use of real life examples and practical applications.
- Observing, monitoring and using feedback as a guide and making modifications along the way as indicated.
- Promoting trust and a good rapport so learners can feel safe in suggesting relevant and mutually beneficial changes during the training.

It is important to bear in mind that with adults, learning tends to be a means to an end and not an end in itself. They will decide how/if they will integrate new ideas with previous knowledge and use it.

### **B.1.2 Hallmarks of a Good Trainer**

The ultimate goal for adult learning, as stated previously, is to engender a process of self-development. Pretty et al 1995 states that in order for this to come about, the following are vital to successful training:

*A good trainer:*

- Recognizes that with adults, learning is a means to an end and as such, they have special needs in a learning situation that differentiate them. These needs, e.g. personal development or community action, demand a special approach by the trainer.

- Demonstrates understanding that adults experience push and pull forces that motivate them to seek knowledge for a variety of reasons
- Is able to collaborate with learners on matching activities to the learning tasks and support their self-directedness by relinquishing control of the results
- Recognizes that feelings of achievement, self worth and enhanced self-esteem are important to adults.
- Anticipates managing/transforming conflict that is likely to arise, given a mix of minority opinions, differing viewpoints and value bases among participants.
- Ensures that the environment invites learning thus supporting motivation.
- Understands that people have different ways of learning.
- Guides/facilitates the training process
- Researches and uses material and equipment that will capture attention and curiosity.
- Is enthusiastic, fair, respectful and ensures an atmosphere that is non-threatening, and affirming.

- Demonstrates appreciation for diversity in the group and promotes inclusion e.g. he/she negotiates learning objectives and alternative ways of feeding the desire to learn with the participants.

### **B.1.2.1 Understanding Motivation for Learning**

Motivation is intrinsic and an important aspect of learning that can be triggered by internal and external factors. The word comes from the Latin verb “to move”. Nahavandi et al (1999 pg. 190) describe it as “a state of mind, desire, interest that translates into action.” This description suggests that based on an urge within the individual, or a feeling of being drawn towards something that is valued by them, adults will decide to seek learning experiences in order to gain knowledge and skills that will help them, for example, to meet the challenges of life-changing events such as loss of employment or bereavement or to attain a better quality of life, socially or materially.

Adults want to be proficient in the things that are important to them, so they come to learning situations voluntarily. However if their needs are not met, they may also choose to withdraw, literally or figuratively. The aim therefore is to ensure that strategies are employed that will extract, support and deepen their motivation. Aspects of the learning environment itself, as well as characteristics and attributes of the trainer/facilitator can enhance motivation.

### **B.1.2.2 Understanding Diversity in Learning Styles and Diversity in Clientele**

This chapter has highlighted some of the commonalities of adult learners but it must be borne in mind that they are not a homogenous group and there is no one best way to learn. A maxim for the successful training of adults therefore is to honor diversity and avoiding stereotyping. In so doing one has to understand that:

- Personality, culture, background, abilities, stage of development, social class, status, income source cause adults to have several different points of view.
- Adults belong to a variety of social groups for example, family, church, hobbies, job, political party, and community, hence they have unique needs and ways of responding.
- Adults use the experiences they have with their social groups as a basis for learning, and appraising and drawing conclusions about what they perceive.

People learn by paying attention to information that is perceived through the senses and based on experience, give meaning to it. Howard Gardner (1993) refers to learning styles as “ the preferred, distinct and consistent way in which we sense, think, solve problems and remember information.” Three styles of learning are described below.

- Some individuals learn best when they create a mental picture of what they are learning. These are visual learners and are helped by pictures more than by explanations
- Auditory learners prefer the spoken word and are helped when they talk it out, even if it is only with themselves.

- Some individuals learn best when they can move around and touch, as in laboratories.

While a totally non-homogenous approach is impractical, as far as possible it is important for the trainer to select a variety of learning materials and activities to meet the needs of each learning style.

### **B.1.2.3 Understanding Diversity in Learning Needs**

In this era of significant and extensive change, what an adult learned as a youth is no longer sufficient for coping with the demands of modern social, demographic and technological change. Patricia Cross (1985 p. 1- 3) identifies their combined impact as influencing the need for ongoing adult learning. Depending on their individual circumstances, this may be either 'necessary or desirable'.

Against the background of these influences, as well as their individualism, adults will have diverse learning needs. Developing an appreciation for diversity in the learning needs of adults is critical for engaging adults in a formal or informal learning setting:

Respect for them, as individuals, their maturity and experience should under gird all aspects of the training.

In a learning/training situation, knowledge is being generated and as such there are inherent power relations between the giver and the receiver of this knowledge. Bear in mind that some adults have had bad experiences with authority figures; hence power disparities should be acknowledged and not ignored so that the impact as a barrier is minimized.

Some adults may have had negative learning experiences in their past therefore a learning situation could evoke strong emotions and prevent individuals from benefiting optimally from the interchange. In a training environment, adults therefore need social networks and peer support groups for emotional support and guidance.

### **B.1.3 The Trainer as an Effective Communicator**

Effective communication happens when messages are conveyed and received in the way that the sender, using verbal and non-verbal signs and symbols, intended. In the participatory approach to training adults, it is important to appreciate that there are multiple factors that influence how senders and receivers construct common meanings.

#### **B.1.3.1 Developing a Learner-Centered Approach**

Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paolo Freire, is credited with popularizing the learner-centered approach, also known as the participatory approach, as a way of teaching literacy. He proposed that the best point of departure for teaching people to read, was to stress the importance of their experience, knowledge, strengths and concerns, in discussing matters that were important to them, and thereafter use this a decision-making tool for actions that they could take to make their lives better. (Spencer 1990)

Features of the learner-centered approach include:

- Information about the adult learner's needs, goals and interests is sought.
- Participation of the adult learner in setting learning goals and objectives is observed

- Involvement of the adult learner in the decision-making process – who, what, when, where, and why.
- Participation by the adult learner in choosing a strategy for assessing his or hers own progress as well as the end result.
- Allowance of a measure of control and responsibility for their own learning
- Dialogue and interaction facilitated on an ongoing basis so that the adult learner participates and learns by teaching others what they know.
- Focus on the adult learner’s real-life needs and use natural situations to make it easier, relevant and interesting.

### **B.1.3.2 The Feedback Loop**

The feedback loop describes the return flow of a message from one source (the sender) to another (the receiver). It allows those involved in the exchange to check whether the message was accurately received. The loop suggests that the communication messages go in a circular direction so that the originator of a communication message has the opportunity to explain, correct or intensify the message. The dynamics of the process allow for the illuminating any misunderstandings.

Learners depend on the trainer to give them feedback on how they are progressing in practicing a skill and trainers depend on learners for feedback on the extent to which about the content and design of the training match their personal learning objectives.

As was stated earlier in this chapter, adults in a training situation are vulnerable because their pride, ego and confidence are at risk from challenges to their ideas, opinions, values and fear of making errors. The following guidelines are offered to assist in monitoring the feedback loop:

- Clarify the expectations of the participants at the outset of the training
- Monitor self to ensure the same message is communicated verbally and non-verbally.
- Monitor self to ensure that personal feelings, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions are not projected into the message and lead to misunderstanding
- Give and encourage feedback, immediately or delayed as indicated.

### **B.1.3.3 Perception versus Reality**

“Perception is the process by which an individual selects, organizes and interprets information about the environment and thus gives it personal meaning.” Robert Vecchio (1988 p. 97)

Is perception different from reality or is it reality? Do we hear and see what we want to? There are myriad differences in ways of communicating and the positions and attitudes about these differences influence how the messages are understood and the ways in which conclusions are drawn from what is perceived.

Adults have insights to share and knowledge to contribute but there are spoken and unspoken rules that govern interactions between and among people, as well as how these rules are interpreted

The learning situation represents change. Change can be very uncomfortable for adult learners, especially when it challenges beliefs that they hold strongly. Consequently some will need more support and encouragement than others.

Depending on their background, experience and ways of communicating, people will react to change in various ways, and also have conflicting interpretations of the same thing; the responses vary according to how they attach meaning to what is taking place in the setting.

Motivation and attention play an important part in how adults perceive the training. Because they have several roles and responsibilities, if they not motivated to participate, boredom might set in, they become distracted and tired and miss out on what the training is meant to achieve.

Communication occurs whether you want it to or not as non-verbal cues provide information so what is not said can speak louder than what is said

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## **Chapter B.2. The Trainer's Preparation and Techniques of Training**

Tim Wentling (1993 page 4) offers the following inclusive definition of training. It points to important qualitative dimensions that require a substantial investment in self awareness and an appreciation of adult learners as a heterogeneous group. Part of the a trainer's modus operandi therefore is to display a willingness to allow for unpredicted directions, including reversing the roles of trainer and learner, that the curiosity of the participants could take in the learning process, and to do this while keeping an eye on the overall goals of training.

*“Training is an educational process which requires more than just information-giving and skills development. It requires the trainer to have a thorough understanding of the training process and the role and value of the proper and systematic planning in it“*

The purpose of training is to teach a skill or a particular type of behaviour, within a specified period of time, in order to raise awareness, build capacity and to help people improve their performance in some desired area. The focus of this chapter will be on attaining effectiveness as a trainer of participatory approaches. This depends equally on preparation of self and the amount of preparation that is required in choosing strategies that will enhance learning.

In this era of globalization, a participatory approach to training has the potential to allow marginalized and minority individuals and groups to respond to opportunities that the market provides.

The custom of the participatory approach is that it does not promote a design for achieving results; indeed blanket recommendations are inappropriate. Instead, it aims to create structures that will support the flow of information and the exchange of ideas

among stakeholders, as they build their capacity to set and fulfill their own goals and evaluate the actions that they have taken.

Training in this area is therefore rooted in the value of respect for the participants' knowledge and opinions on how to improve their own well being against the background of their multiple diversities.

This makes the trainee/participant the central figure and places the trainer firmly in the facilitator/moderator role, who, rather than imparting knowledge, causes learning to come about with a level of coaching and supervision.

### **B.2.1 Self Preparation and Reflection on Self**

This type of preparation requires intentional stocktaking of the basic ingredients which are your attitude, personality, motivation and confidence in your knowledge, skills and ability to do a good job without arrogance or insensitivity. The former comes through self reflection and taking steps to make those internal changes that will make you the kind of person that the participants can relate to easily. The latter comes through building competence in dealing with groups of adult learners and developing skills and knowledge-based competencies that match the requirements training. The following is offered as a self checklist to get you started:

- Do you have a warm personality?
- Do you have good communication skills, especially listening skills?
- Are you enthusiastic about helping people to reach the training objective?
- Do you understand how people tend to behave when they are part of a group?

- Do you have good conflict management skills
- How much do you know about the target group?

### **B.2.1.1 Personal Training Styles: Acknowledging Strengths and Weaknesses**

Given the need of adult learners discussed in the previous chapter, a personal training style that is open, relaxed and enthusiastic is most likely to have the most favorable results. How training is conducted has a stronger influence on the change that is desired than the content itself. The physical, emotional and intellectual environment that surrounds the training experience is what gives meaning to it. For this reason it is important for the trainer to pay attention to his/her personal training style, as this is often influenced by his/her personal learning style. The value of participation suggest that a training style that be flexible, in order to adapt to the needs of the target group including conducting the training in the local language as indicted.

Be aware that people have personal preferences in the way that they see the world and make an effort to discover how you learn best so you can appreciate their differences. Acknowledge that their styles may be different from your own and structure the training in ways that use strategies that match these varied styles of learning as closely as possible.

Pay attention to how much you talk because training is essentially to elicit communication between trainer and participant, as well as among the participants themselves. It is therefore a major training weakness if the trainer talks too much and monopolizes the conversation.

The checklist below provides some areas to assist in monitoring the strengths and weakness in your personal style as a trainer and to make the necessary adaptations as required by the particular training event:

- I appreciate that adults are busy people and as such, are likely to be demanding and impatient for the results they seek in attending a training exercise.
- I will find out what the participants want to learn, why a particular topic is important and how it will be of benefit to them.
- I use the participants' own experiences in the learning conversation.
- I realize that some amount of anxiety is needed to focus the attention of the participants but if this level is high, it will affect learning negatively.
- I use humor because a lesson that is learned in fun is easy to recall.
- I use appropriate training games and structured learning activities to engage participants and to reinforce learning.
- I realize that training games and humor lower anxiety and get participants absorbed.
- I use coaching, praise and positive reinforcement to point participants in the right direction.
- I provide support when participants struggle to understand and use their new learning.
- I am mindful that adults retain 20% of what they hear, 30% of what they see and 90% of what they do. The focus therefore needs to be on having participants do what they are learning, instead of observing, hearing or reading about it.

- I know that to be effective I must learn and develop three communication skills that denote respect and are therefore essential in training; these are asking questions, summarizing and paraphrasing.

## **B.2.2 Clarifying the Trainer’s Role**

### **B.2.2.1 Defining the Training Boundaries**

Training can be conducted formally through workshops, meetings and training courses, or informally, as in field visits and on-the-job training. Whatever the type, training can be organized within boundaries that are structured or unstructured, depending on the following:

1. the amount of time available for the training
2. how flexible or fixed the content can be
3. when it can be scheduled.
4. the number of participants

The type and duration of a training of event also influence the training boundaries.

Examples of training events are presented in the table below:

<b>Event</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Meeting	A group gets together to discuss ideas, make decisions, analyze a situation and make plans.
Training workshop	Participants learn together, over a short period of time, and a moderator facilitates the learning process
Training course	Takes place over a longer time, aimed at building skills in a specific area
Field visit	Participants visit a particular location to observe and analyze the events there that has relevance to a selected topic for a short period of time.
Demonstration	Explanation and demonstration by an expert display of skill in a particular area. Usually for a day.
Conference	Holding of formal discussions by people with a common interest

Boundaries are a necessary part of laying the groundwork to avoid an overload of content, unrealistic expectations and misdirected training

### **B.2.2.2 Effective Use of Self**

This refers to the way the trainer behaves in the relationship with the learner that engenders trust, openness and a willingness to participate actively, including those aspects of the training process that may be unfamiliar/uncomfortable to the learner.

Having superior knowledge of the subject matter is one of the attributes of an effective trainer. However, this knowledge should not be used to tell the participants what to do but rather to provide expert insights and “to guide the direction of a learning conversation and to provide expert insights while allowing the group to follow the path of its own curiosity.” (Shari Caudron, 2000, pp 52 – 57).

### **B.2.2.3 Values Clarification**

Self awareness is a pre condition, not only for personal growth, but enables you to deliberately and intentionally increase your capacity to help participants to feel validated and acknowledged, as they engage in the mutual sharing of experiences. Being able to maintain a nonaligned status while modeling respect for differing viewpoints in this interchange, conveys acceptance of participants as they declare themselves.

The trainer should spend time in prior reflection to explore his/her values, thoughts and feelings about the target group and the subject matter at hand. Participants should be reminded that values are neither right nor wrong, but are personal perspectives that inform their belief systems. Tendencies for stereotyping, personal bias and prejudice

can be potent barriers to successful training. Imagine what it feels like to be told what to do by someone who has not taken the time to listen and try to understand your feelings, how you see and experience the world.

### **B.2.3 Planning for Training**

It is often said that if you do not know where you are going, any route will take you there. Successful training therefore begins at the planning and preparation stage. Questions of who, what, where, when, why and how much need to be answered in this stage.

#### **B.2.3.1 Clarifying the Purpose of Training**

Training is carried out to attain strategic institutional goals, to affect and encourage changes in attitude and behaviour, fill gaps in work performance, or to solve problems that hinder efficiency and effectiveness. However, it is not a panacea. For example, solutions could lie in institutional re-structuring.

The impact of training will be weakened if the terms of reference for training are not well considered, appropriately focused and the expectations clearly stated. As part of the initial reconnaissance, trainers must exercise care to assume responsibility only for what training can be realistically delivered. Have discussions with the organizers about the following:

- What need is to be met or problem solved?
- How did the need or problem arise?
- Who does the need or problem affect and in what way?
- What is the perception of the training needs?
- Why is the training relevant at the particular time?

- Does training fit into any particular institutional strategy?
- Is training the solution or only a part of it?
- Given the resources and time available, what can be realistically achieved by training?

### **B.2.3.2 Clarifying Institutional Support for Training**

This refers to the level of commitment that is demonstrated by the responsible institution that requests the training. Feelings of insecurity, powerlessness and helplessness on the part of learners can affect their perspective of the need for training as well as restrict them in asserting their needs and preferences. Stereotypes and prejudice can throw up internal and external barriers to participation.

Three key indicators of a high level of institutional support are:

- (1) The provision of physical and financial resources. How the physical and financial resources for training are allocated are important indicators of support
- (2) Integrated development policies support participatory methodologies. Whether training is an element of an integrated development policy or a separate output of the organization/institution
- (3) Organisational culture is supportive of participatory methodologies. Whether the culture of the institution is compatible with participatory approaches that is, is it walking the talk?.

The following are offered as guidelines for clarifying institutional support before, during and after the training:

- Who is responsible for funding the training?
- Who is responsible for providing technical support during the training period?
- How will the training be used and how soon?
- If the training reveals new needs, is the institute able to provide for these needs in a timely and efficient manner?
- What type of collaboration is in place to support the changes expected as a result of the training?
- What advisory, monitoring, evaluation and control measures are in place?
- What are the perspectives about the need for training?
- Whose needs are preeminent, the institution's or the trainees?
- How much voice do the trainees have in respect of the type of training that is needed?
- How will the institution identify and support the new capabilities of the learners after the training?

### **B.2.3.3 Determining the Type and Duration of the Training**

In general, the type of training can be classified by the following considerations

- The subject and purpose of the training exercise e.g. building skills, encouraging change in practice or attitudes
- Type of persons to be trained e.g. community persons, leaders and managers, training of trainers, professionals
- Type of training event e.g. conference, workshop or training course
- The structure of the training i.e. formal or informal, structured or unstructured

Taking time out to attend training requires some sacrifice because it creates a backlog of work and possibly time away from family and home. If due consideration is not shown for the participants' time, it could have a negative effect on their motivation to participate in the training.

The amount of time that is available, is usually measured by a regular working day of eight hours

With each session averaging two hours each, it is calculated that in an eight-hour day, four sessions could be planned. These however must include the introductory and the daily end-of-session reviews as well as the appropriate break periods.

#### **B.2.3.4 Configuring the Training Group**

In the planning and design of training, it is helpful to know beforehand, who will be in the training together so that any anticipated internal or external barriers to training that may arise can be included in the planning, or avoided if possible. Below are examples of barriers to configuring a training group:

- Cultural stereotypes that form people's attitude to adult learning can inhibit or prevent participation.
- Where the participants have widely varying levels of literacy, numeracy and basic technical skills, which may be some of the basic prerequisites, it could be a challenge to configure the group in a manner to match individual needs.
- Income (bus fare), time constraints and childcare options are relevant considerations when configuring groups comprising poor women.
- In all male and mixed groups, a lack of awareness of, and insensitivity to gender issues

- In the case of leaders and managers, it may be advisable to put peers together as they could be particularly sensitive to being exposed and feeling that they are being tested in front of their colleagues.

Along with the barriers, the trainer should also identify the enabling factors that exist, in the context of a group, as these can be useful in dealing with barriers when configuring the group.

### **B.2.3.5 Understanding Training Needs of Participants**

A training needs assessment is a process of determining the specific needs and constraints that individuals and institutions have. It involves identifying from the stakeholders what gaps exist between what is desired and what is actually happening. Following which, to analyze the information, select the target group and decide what measures are needed to close the gaps.

Understanding training needs, is a critical first step in the training cycle before designing training that will give the participants what they need, when they need it, and in ways that they can understand it and use it. This process sets the stage for the actual training.

Carrying out training needs assessment means talking to participants. During these conversations there are two important areas for contemplation and analysis:

1. Participants' perception of their training needs. Needs may be felt or unfelt. Felt needs are those that the participants are aware of, but do not have the ability to determine the scale of it, or the amount or type of training that is needed to address it. By contrast, unfelt needs are those which are not

perceived as needs or that these needs exist because of a lack of training. Feelings of helplessness, insecurity and hopelessness contribute to unfelt needs. Such participants may not see how they can use training and therefore may make no effort to seek or use it.

2. Differentiating training from non-training needs. Some needs are not training needs but may arise for example an intuitional culture that is not attuned to participatory approaches or other causes of performance gaps.

The following is offered as a guide for assessing the training needs of participants:

- What do they already know?
- What do they need to learn?
- What are their attitudes, skills and competencies?
- What are the tasks that skills need to be developed for?
- Who conceived of the training?

### **B.2.3.6 Setting Training Objectives**

After assessing the training needs of the target group of the participants, setting objectives is the next event in the training cycle. Training objectives are specific statements that set out in a systematic way, what is to be achieved through training. Objectives are important because they serve as ways of controlling the outcomes of the training experience and to inform participants:

- a. Why they are attending the training
- b. What the new knowledge and skills can enable them to do
- c. The role they will be able to play afterwards.

The characteristics of objectives are summarized in the following easy formula:

S	Specific
M	Measurable
A	Attainable
R	Relevant
T	Time specific

When engaging adults in a training/learning experience, it is useful to bear in mind that it is impossible to predict the exact directions that their motivation and curiosity will lead. As the information in chapter one suggests, effective facilitation of adult learning means guiding participants to draw on their own experience, knowledge and expertise to arrive at their own conclusions about the topics presented. Unplanned directions are therefore part of the process.

It is very important however to develop both Programme Objectives and Session and Activity Objectives for training. Shorey-Bryan p. 15 explains:

- **Programme Objectives** provide the guidelines and the basis for deciding what particular activities will be scheduled and for which groups of participants. These also provide benchmarks by which the programme can be evaluated
- **Session and Activity Objectives** are the more specific behavioural objectives of the event. Session objectives should be stated in behavioural terms to indicate what a trainer should know or be able to do as a result of attending the course.

The following words/verbs may be used to develop objectives:

- Develop
- Enhance
- Encourage
- Establish
- Facilitate
- Identify
- Build awareness
- Sensitize

### **B.2.3.7 Designing the Content**

The content of training involves refers to what the participants have to learn in order to improve their skill level. In order to avoid misdirecting the training the following aspects must be taken into consideration:

- It must relate to the stated training objectives
- The topics that are selected must be placed in order of importance/priority. It is helpful to break the content down into:
  - (a) What they need to know
  - (b) What they should know
  - (c) What is relevant but would not cause problems if it had to be left out
- The sequence of the topics must be consistent and valid.

- Consideration is given to the available time and resources
- Appropriate trainers and support persons are available

### **B.2.3.8 Mind Mapping: An Approach to planning**

Shorey-Bryan p. 16 advocates an approach to planning called Mind Mapping, which is used to decide what the major content for a particular topic should include. It assists in deciding what **must** be included, what **should** be included and **could** be included. Having decided on a topic, write this in the centre of a piece of paper. As each idea on content comes to mind, draw a line from the centre and write the thought at the end of the line. From the map one can decide key points related to the topic and issues to be covered.

### **B.2.3.9 Selecting Training Methods to Enhance Learning**

Shorey-Bryan p. 17, advises the matching of techniques to desired behavioural outcomes:

Type of Behavioural Outcome	Most Appropriate technique
<b>Knowledge</b> –internalisation of information	Lecture, debates, television, dialogue, interview, symposium, panel, reading, discussion
<b>Understanding</b> – application of information	Audience participation, demonstration, dramatization, discussion, case method, games, problem-solving, critical incident process
<b>Skills</b> - incorporating new ways of performing	Role-play, participative cases, skill practice exercise
<b>Attitudes</b> – adoption of new feelings	Experience sharing discussion, group-centred discussion, role-play, critical incident process, case method, non-verbal exercises
<b>Values</b> – adoption and priority arrangement of beliefs	Television, debate, dialogue, guided discussion, dramatization, experience sharing, role-play
<b>Interests</b> – satisfying exposure to new activity	Television, demonstration, video, dramatization, experience sharing, discussion, exhibits, trips

Bearing in mind the values of participation and the multiple diversities within a training group, the trainer/facilitator should know the characteristics and objectives of training methods and be able to combine them appropriately in order to maintain their attention and interest vary the pace of the sessions and boost learning. The following chart provides an example of training methods relevant to objectives developed:

<b>Training method</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Objectives</b>
<b>Group discussion</b>	Participants discuss a specific topic to generate opinions in the group	To achieve mutual understanding and reach consensus.
<b>Peer learning</b>	Participants learn from each other by sharing experiences.	To develop understanding, build confidence and establish rapport with peers
<b>Brain-storming</b>	Exhaustive discussion to consider all related ideas about a topic without rejecting any of them.	To discover new ideas and responses quickly.
<b>Exercises</b> e.g. songs and games	Fun activities that do not seem to be related to the training topic	Group formation, icebreaking, removing psychological barriers
<b>Simulation</b>	Participants play roles of different characters within a given context of a case study and then discuss/analyze it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get a sense of others' attitudes, feelings and roles.</li> <li>• To improve understanding of human behaviour according to gender roles.</li> </ul>
<b>Role play</b>	Participants play different characters based on their own real life experiences and then everyone engages in discussion and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To get a sense of other's attitudes, feelings and roles.</li> <li>• To improve understanding of human behaviour in discussion/analysis</li> </ul>
<b>Demonstration</b>	Enhance understanding of functional knowledge or skills by showing the actual skill or process in a close-to-life situation	To illustrate actual processes and skills.
<b>Practice exercise</b>	Participants actually perform the tasks or activities that they have to learn	To retain knowledge, develop skills and test the learning process
<b>Field visit</b>	Planned visit to a field with specific objectives.	To observe, understand and learn from real life
<b>Case studies</b>	Participants receive a described situation/problem to be analyzed and solved.	To learn lessons from a given situation
<b>Interactive lecturing</b>	Lectures incorporate dialogues between trainer and participants	To transfer knowledge effectively through active listening
<b>Visualization</b>	Communication through written idea/information on cards and flip charts	To obtain an exhaustive list of ideas in a short time. To encourage participants to express opinions in a clear manner
<b>Question and answer techniques</b>	Trainers give questions and the participants provide the answers either individually or in groups	To understand that more than one solution to a situation/problem is possible

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### **B.2.3.10 Training Session Design**

**Topic: What is your focus?**

**Objective:**

- Use mind map to develop objectives
- Link session objectives to programme objectives
- State objectives in behavioural terms to indicate what the learner should know or be able to do

**Introduction:**

- Include key points, which put the session in context
- Link directly to interests and needs of participants

**Presentations:**

- Be clear on the content and focus
- Use mind-mapping to develop ideas
- Use a structure with a beginning, middle and end

**Individual/Group Activities:**

- Select training methods appropriate to the topic and group

**Training Aids:**

- Identify training aids and resources and material needed for presentation and group activities
- Prepare, adapt or select handouts and resource material

**Summary:** Recap key issues and learning points

**Review/Assessment:** Review objectives and expectations such as session topics and activities (Shorey-Bryan p. 20)

### **B.2.3.11 Training Aids**

Training aids enhance learning and may include the use of:

- Flip charts
- Power point presentations
- Videos
- Camera and photographs
- Charts
- Audio cassettes
- Transparencies and overhead projector

### **B.2.3.12 Planning Feedback for Evaluation**

Feedback may be described as an immediate or delayed, verbal or non-verbal, response/reaction to a communication message. Jenny Rogers (1989) in Pretty et al, agree that the quality or quantity of feedback can affect the success or failure of learning.

Feedback is fundamental to evaluation because it lets a trainer know what impact the training is having and how effective it is before during and after the training. Evaluation can be formative or summative. The former describes the assessment of the training process to improve it. This type is largely based on the reactions of the participants. The latter type of evaluation assesses the results of changes in knowledge, attitudes and skills behaviour after the training to determine if the training has achieved the expected results.

Some topics that may need further explanation, or the methods and content need to be more relevant or appropriate, a feedback mechanism should be included in the design and planning of training. This will provide a loop of continuous learning from the data and outcomes and be used for improvement. The following are some tips for planning feedback for evaluation:

- Always design a feedback loop mechanism so that there can be continuous learning and improvement based on the feedback This should include daily reviews by participants, participant peer reviews, trainers' reviews and long term reviews.
- Stress the importance of feedback to the success of learning at the outset of training
- Include guidelines for giving feedback in the ground rules of the training events
- Feedback should be descriptive and not judgmental so the receiver can make an independent assessment of the information given. This means that the person giving the feedback must own their feelings and not present it as a general view that is shared by the groups. Bear in mind that peoples feelings are important to fostering relationships in any learning experience.
- Feedback should be given as soon as possible to avoid repeating mistakes
- It should be specific, clear and usable.
- It should be directed at the behaviour and not the person
- Stimulate feedback by asking questions as well as encouraging them

### **B.2.3.13 Planning the Reporting Format on the Training**

Reports both written and verbal are an important part of the logistics of any training exercise and as such adequate time should be set aside for preparing them. The way the report is structured will depend on who will use it and for what purpose. The following are offered as a checklist for reports:

- Ensure that someone is has the responsibility for securing all outputs of training events e.g. maps, diagrams, photographs.
- Determine how much time is available for compiling the report to allow for design, layout and editing,
- Ascertain how the report is to be disseminated so the writing can be directed to the particular readers/users.
- Identify who should receive what type of report. For example, persons responsible for logistics and support services during the training will expect/need frequent status report so that relevant changes can be made for the smooth running of the training.
- Ensure easy access by electronic mail/ mobile telephone or secretariat services are accessible.

### **B.2.4 The Training Setting**

The training setting includes the location and venue in which the training will take place, the facilitators and supports that go together to make the training experience and should be as comfortable as possible, whether the training is to be formal or informal.

### **B.2.4.1 The Importance of Venue and Setting**

Adult learners are usually mindful of their physical comfort and several may have special physical needs. In a training setting if these not planned for, could result in a level of discomfort that could distract their attention from the learning tasks.

- Logistic and administrative arrangements should be made in advance in the event that last minute changes need to be made.
- If possible, locate the training away from the usual environments of the participants where they are not confronted with the daily routines and demands of work and family.
- Accommodation should be quiet, pleasant, clean, secure and with access to leisure time activities.
- The space at the venue should be adequate for the number of participants to avoid crowded conditions in the training rooms.
- Space should be available for break-out group activities to be conducted in comfort and a measure of privacy.
- Ensure the venue is secure, clean, well ventilated and have adequate lighting.
- It should have adequate and comfortable
- Audio-visual equipment should be checked and in good working order before the training commences
- There should be adequate training supplies e.g. flip chart, markers, push pins, tape, pens etc.
- Toilet facilities should be nearby, clean and well supplied to maintain proper personal hygiene.
- Meals, drinking water and refreshment for coffee breaks should be adequate and well prepared, with variations in the daily offerings

### **B.2.4.2 Maximizing Learning and Group Interaction**

Learning by doing, having fun, experiencing mutual support, being inspired should describe the general tenor of the training. The trainer should know the background of the participants, so their experience can be combined with new principles to be presented in the training and to accommodate the diverse learning styles as far as possible.

The learning environment should one in which participants feel emotionally safe, respected, supported and comfortable enough to try things that are unfamiliar and even uncomfortable

Bear in mind that the initial session is the most important because it sets the overall tone of the training experience. It is also important to select appropriate techniques and to use them in the right sequence to achieve the objectives.

### **B.2.4.3 Enabling Full Participation**

Every session must provide an opportunity for the participants to practice something new and discuss it in an environment that is non-threatening and respectful. It should also allow them to analyze new material against the background of their own experience. To this end, the trainer must establish a responsive two-way process of communication at the outset of the training events and maintain it for the entire duration.

Less vocal members of a training group should be invited, but not pressured, to participate. However the extent to which they do should be acknowledged with genuine affirmations as positive experiences may encourage greater involvement.

By the same token, while the most vocal should not be allowed to monopolize the proceedings, they should be accorded equal respect and their pronouncements used to draw out similar and differing viewpoints among the participants.

Training games and structured learning activities are good tools for engaging participants and reinforcing learning. They also help to reduce anxiety as the participants become engrossed in them. Games have pedagogical significance as they can be used to improve communication, bond participants and help them to work out solutions for problems that might seem impossible.

Energizers and icebreakers can help to vary the pace and mood in the setting

### **B.2.5 Aiding the Preparations for Training – A Summary**

Shorey- Bryan p. 12-13 identifies considerations for training:

- Needs Assessment for the training – What are the training needs?
- Develop training objectives
- Design training
- Conduct training
- Monitor and evaluate training

Lessons from past training events could prove beneficial. Think about one or more training sessions that you have attended:

- What did you enjoy most?
- What did you least enjoy?
- What made it successful or not?
- What would you do differently?

In Planning identify:

- Things you should do
- Things you should avoid

Planning and organizing the training event:

For every training event, trainers must develop a specific training design which includes a written step by step plan. The following questions are intended to aid the design:

**Why?** – Why are we focusing on certain issues, Why have we selected these programme objectives? Why are we trying to achieve these objectives?

**What?** What are the topics to be addressed with within each objective? What will the trainee learn? What is the issue to be covered, task to be performed or activity to be undertaken? What resources will be used to implement the activity? What material or equipment will be needed?

**How?** How can we best deal with the topic to meet the objectives? How can we design activities or techniques that will be most effective and appropriate for this group? How do we plan to carry out each activity and what are the procedures or steps we must go through? How much time will each activity require? How will we evaluate our activities? How will we know when we have achieved our objectives?

**Who?** Who will be responsible for organizing or facilitating each activity? Who will participate?

**When?** When will the training take place? When will it begin and when will it end?

**Where?** Where will the training be conducted? What facilities will be available and how will the room be arranged? What transportation arrangements will be necessary?

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### **B.3. Understanding and Working with Groups**

Training is a participatory activity which happens in a group setting. Participatory research itself, involves working as teams in groups. It is therefore critical to have an understanding of groups and group processes if both the trainer and the trainees are to perform optimally as team members or as a group on a whole.

There are basically two types of groups; natural groups such as a family and formed groups. Formed groups come together for a purpose and at the insistence of some external force. The participatory research team is an example of a formed group. It is also called a task group since its major function is to perform a task.

#### **B.3.1 Features of Groups**

Each group has a purpose to which its membership is attracted and groups afford meaningful experiences through positive interaction and reciprocal relationships established. The group has the potential to influence the identity of its members and collective action if necessary.

Your group of trainers has been composed for the purpose of learning how to carry out participatory research. Composition of the group is based on the multiple disciplines of group members, which is a requirement for participatory research.

Interaction and communication is focused on the discussions around the tasks involved and additionally roles are also developed or assigned through group interaction. Identity with the group is as a result of the bonding, which takes place as the group works on the task at hand.

### **B.3.2 Group Dynamics**

Group dynamics also called group processes refers to the “forces that result from interactions of group members”. Included are: the communication and interaction patterns which develop in groups, the attraction that the group holds for its members or group cohesion, the social controls established for behaviour and the culture of the group which emerges over time. (Toseland and Rivas 1995 p. 69-70)

An understanding of group dynamics is important as the use of group dynamics by the trainer can lead to positive group and individual experiences and outcomes. Lack of attention on the other hand may lead to damaging effects for individuals and the group as a whole.

#### **B.3.2.1 Communication and Interaction**

Communication forms part of social interaction and can be described as a process of transmitting meanings through the use of symbols. Communication is said to be circular, it involves the person sending a message which is informed by thoughts and feelings, the channel for transmitting the message, the receiver of the message and the way it is interpreted and the feedback to the sender or inferences made once the message has been sent back. (Toseland & Rivas 1995 p. 70).

Communication allows people to interpret the world around them and it is important to note that communication is always taking place verbally or non-verbally, whether persons are conscious of it or not. One does not have to say anything yet one is communicating a message to others. Verbal communication involves the use of words and tone of expression to convey the psychological message while non-verbal communication conveys the social message delivered through physical appearance,

body language or other social behaviours such as gestures and facial expressions.

When both the psychological and social levels of communication converge, the communication is said to be authentic and genuine.

Toseland and Rivas state that people communicate for several reasons, some of these are:

- To understand others and to get an idea of where they stand in relation to others
- To influence others decision
- To attain power
- To defend and protect themselves
- To incite a negative response
- To impress others
- To acquire relationships
- To support a unified decision

As all of this will occur from day to day in the training and in the research process, the trainer needs to be aware of these multiple reasons for communication.

As trainer, one may not even be conscious of the message you are sending and as the use of self is so critical in working with others, participants of the trainer of trainers workshop will be faced with many instances when they will need to analyse how they are communicating with each other.

Further in realising some of the reasons why people communicate, it is important for trainers to pay full attention to the trainees, observing and assessing their

communication in order to be helpful to both individuals and the group as a whole.

For example a silent member may be communicating a sense of being intimidated or feeling fear. In realising this, the trainer may help the group to be more sensitive in the type of language used or to be more accepting of the opinions of others so as to give trainees the confidence to express their opinions freely. Trainers should also encourage open and free communication between group members, that is, individuals must not feel pressured to communicate whenever they are moved to say something.

It is crucial also to understand how messages are received, Toseland and Rivas assert that persons can be selective in what they want to hear rather than receiving the message sent in its entirety. This selective perception of the communication may be due to:

- Experiences of childhood which results in the adoption or perception of a life position about self and others
- Stereotypes held
- The status (real or imagined) of the person communicating
- Past experiences
- Perceptions, assumptions and values

Selective perceptions have hidden meaning for both the sender and the receiver, which may have very negative effects on individuals in the group or the group as a whole. The trainer in understanding the occurrence of selective meanings will be able to intervene to prevent any conflict or damaging effects this type of communication may have on the groups' ability to work together. Feedback from the trainer may include an interpretation of the message selected and/or a clarification of the content intended. For example the trainer may respond to a communication that demonstrates stereotyping by saying, "Am I hearing you say that all persons from that area are criminals?" or "If I understand correctly, Jean said ....."

### **Interaction**

Group-centred interaction as opposed to leader-centred interaction is encouraged in order to increase the participation and commitment of group members in decisions taken regarding group goals. However there may be times when the trainer's intervention is necessary to help the group to focus or solve problems.

Trainers may encourage the development of effective interactional patterns, by understanding the factors which influence them. To cite a few of these:

*Factors which influence interaction*

- **Reinforcement** – Verbal (use of words ) or non-verbal (use of body language ie gestures, facial expression) messages by the trainer may help group members to realise that a particular behaviour is approved of or not approved of.
- **Emotional attachments** – The interpersonal bond established between group members is likely to increase interaction and task performance. Persons attracted to each other because of similar values, personality and interests will be able to work well together. The trainer should therefore allow trainees to select those they wish to work with in the team. In so doing the trainer should remind the group of the necessity to ensure that each group should be made up team members from various disciplinary backgrounds. On the other hand the formation of groups through emotional attraction may be destructive to the larger group's performance. For example a group may develop into a clique, which may prove disruptive to the efforts of the larger group of trainees. Intervention by the trainer will be necessary in dismantling this sub-group, this can be done by assigning members of the sub-group to other groups.
- **Size** – The size of a group impacts the level of communication, interaction, involvement and production expected. In composing the group, the trainer should consider having groups comprised of between five or six team members to aid full participation, learning and satisfactory performance of tasks.
- **Physical Setting** – The physical setting also affects communication and interaction patterns, the suggestion is for group members to sit in a circle in order to encourage face to face interaction.  
(Toseland and Rivas)

### **B.3.2.2 Group Cohesion**

Whenever individuals are recognised for their contribution to a group **or** a group is recognised as credible **or** a group satisfies the expectations of its members **or** a group provides for bonding and identity, group members are likely to experience an attraction to the group. This attraction is referred to as group cohesion. Group cohesion affects the performance and functioning of the group. The trainer must therefore ensure that group attraction is maintained or the benefits of being a member of a group may exceed "the costs of participation in the group". Failure to give attention to group cohesion may result in dissatisfaction and lack lustre performance of the group's membership (Toseland and Rivas 1995 p.80).

*A high level of interaction, the accomplishment of group tasks, inter-group (not intra-group) competition, small group size of five or six members and the identification and achievement of group members' expectations all auger well for group identity and cohesion.*

### **B.3.2.3 Social Controls**

Social controls in groups refer to the factors that ensure conformity to behaviour established by the group. Expectations regarding the behaviour of group members are dealt with through participation of members in deciding on rules, procedures, norms and roles. It would be wise for the trainer to assist trainees to develop rules for the group at the beginning of the training. Additionally with attention to team contracts, prior to engaging in fieldwork, the expectations regarding member and group behaviour would have been established.

### **B.3.2.4 Group Culture**

As a group develops the culture of the group also develops. A group's culture is influenced by the culture or values of individuals who are from either similar or diverse backgrounds or different ethnic, religious or class groupings of society of which they are a part of. In homogenous group settings group culture is likely to emerge early however in diverse group settings the development of group culture may take time as members learn of each other's beliefs and values before establishing a common ground for work. The trainer is critical in ensuring that communication and interaction facilitates the development of a group culture that will benefit the purpose for which the group is formed. The trainer must attempt to assist groups in

recognising the value of "self-determination, openness, fairness and diversity of opinion" to benefit both individual and group goals (Toseland and Rivas 1995 p. 85).

### **B.3.3 Group Development**

Success of the group is based on performance or the accomplishment of tasks.

However, when individuals come together initially as a group, there is no guarantee that initially they will perform and function well together. Knowledge of group development states that groups go through stages of development characterised by: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning, it therefore becomes necessary for the trainer to understand these phases of development in order to assist trainees in reaching the performing phase if they are to function effectively. (Baker 1998).

#### **Forming**

The group is not yet a formed group but persons are motivated to identify with the task at hand and to begin addressing plans necessary for carrying out for example the field exercise. Participation may be limited to a few vocal individuals however individuals nevertheless begin to discuss the purpose of forming. As persons all come with their own expertise they may have their own agendas and perspectives about what needs to be done and this is likely to lead to the next stage of group development – the storming phase.

#### **Storming**

Since members of the training group are just coming together as a group, people are beginning to find out about each other and personal values and agendas are challenged. This stage is characterised by conflicts as individuals begin to express

their individuality. Nevertheless it is the time when ideas are discussed and people are deciding whether or not they are truly interested in working with each other in teams. If handled well persons can learn how to manage conflicts and to begin work on plans for the field exercise. If conflict goes unresolved however, the group may fall apart.

### **Norming**

As a group overcomes its conflicts, as individuals are able to accept each other, and as a group allegiance, spirit and harmony begin to develop, it is now fair to say that a group exists. The group has arrived on some consensus about what its purpose is and it has also established a group culture or behaviour or it's own way of doing things that is accepted by its members. At this stage it is a good time to decide on roles and procedures and to make the necessary plans for the fieldwork.

### **Performing**

This stage can only be reached if the previous stages were successfully addressed. During this phase the group gets on with its work and plans are made and implemented as members take on roles to fulfil the purpose for which the group was formed. Members also begin to experience the benefits of being a member of the group.

### **Adjourning**

The phase of termination is sometimes difficult for group members who have bonded well and who have developed team relationships to benefit the completion of an assignment. It is the phase when feelings of loss over adjourning are likely to surface. However if the group's purpose has been achieved then the group needs to come to closure. A challenge for the trainer is to help the group to " adjourn" in a positive and productive way.

### **B.3.3.1 The Trainer's Tasks in Benefiting Group Development Forming**

Knowing the fears and uncertainties that characterises this phase of group development, the task of the trainee at the forming stage is to use any opportunity that presents to assist persons to get involved in discussions and to encourage the development of group cohesion. To do this the trainer will encourage dialogue about concerns of group members in order to be able to establish common interests and challenges faced. Coulshed and Orme 1998 p. 198-199, suggest the following tasks and skills for the trainer:

#### **FORMING**

- The trainer will give a short presentation of himself or herself acknowledging feelings of uncertainties in understanding and utilising new knowledge and in working and learning in a group for the first time
- Trainees will be asked to do the same
- A review of information given about tasks is important in order to modify aims and agreements
- Allow persons to express their expectations of the group experience
- It is a good idea to clarify and summarise issues
- Seek to have norms for listening, speaking, accepting and behaving established
- Facilitate group interaction by asking questions such as: Has any one else experienced or felt the same? Or Does anyone else know have any information on that?
- Observation of body language and facial expression is important in anticipating what persons are thinking and may want to say but have not yet developed the confidence to do so. The trainer may put this observation into words "I get the feeling that some persons may be uncomfortable when one person seeks to dominate the discussion"
- Demonstrate genuine concern for each person

## Storming

This stage is characterised by “Do I belong? Or Do I have any influence?” where competition for power and control may result in persons taking sides around issues. It is the stage also when persons need to feel a sense of security as they question whether their expectations of the training will be met. This stage needs careful attention and skills and tasks recommended by Coulshed and Orme are:

- The trainer must keep calm when conflicts occur
- The trainer must not retaliate if/when their authority is challenged as this may be as a result of ambivalence about the training or group setting or it maybe evidence of transference
- The trainer needs to be a good model of behaviour expected of group members. For example demonstrating acceptance and openness to diversity
- The trainer should refrain from highlighting quiet or problematic individuals
- The trainer have a sense of good timing ie when to facilitate interaction and when to remain quiet
- The trainer may begin to hand over responsibilities to the membership of the group

It is useful for the trainer to get a sense of the cause of the conflict. Conflicts, which occur due to differences in opinions between trainees or between trainees and the trainer, maybe easily resolved during the training by accepting opinions and agreeing on common objectives. However conflicts

which are more complex and which are due for example to personality and or professional differences or to political, religious or ethnic affiliation may not be so easy to resolve during the training workshop and may require negotiation and settling outside of the training setting (Pretty et al p.43).

Conflicts are not all negative but can be viewed as an opportunity for growth since it opens up evidence of misunderstandings, difficulties and challenges encountered by

group members which, if resolved amicably will no doubt have positive effects on group functioning and performance.

**Tips on dealing with difficult individuals**

- Address a conflict or problem as soon as it arises, talk to the individual privately
- If this is unsuccessful and there is another group member who relates well to the individual ask for that member's assistance. Ask the person to be sensitive and sympathetic in the helping situation
- Give the individual a leadership responsibility to redirect their focus for example: taking charge of selecting persons to facilitate icebreakers before each workshop or planning a social event for participants
- Ask persons to identify complaints or ideas to benefit training. They should do this anonymously and place in a suggestion box, sort these under themes and select the most common theme/s for discussion. The trainer should participate in the exercise giving comments

Pretty et al p. 43

**Norming**

Coulshed and Orme state that at the norming phase, group cohesion has been established, affective relationships indicate acceptance and persons are more comfortable in expressing opinions with each other. A group spirit of “we –ness” develops as persons begin to identify with the group. At this stage there is sharing, cooperation and consensus in decision-making. The tasks and skills of the worker include:

- Helping persons to assume various roles including listening, observing and co-leading as opposed to directing
- Observing group activities as it relates to process and content and facilitating group interaction and involvement, asking questions of what is observed and offering ideas if necessary

## **Performing**

When a group begins to perform the group has developed a culture of working well as a collective. The “we-ness” demonstrated at the previous stage is even more evident at this stage as group members set goals and objectives, implement plans and support each other in getting the job done. The trainer appears no longer to be central to the group’s performance as they seek to tackle tasks with confidence and may even appear to be in competition with other groups, wanting “our group to be the best”.

The task at this stage for the trainer is to:

- Encourage the performance by showing interest and by expressing praise of efforts made
- Observe how the group works and how issues are dealt with
- Offer support or ideas if asked

## **Adjourning**

At the end of training the group has accomplished its tasks and there is need to adjourn. Acknowledging the feelings of loss as well as the feelings of accomplishment is critical to accepting termination. Helpful tasks include:

- Attention to evaluation and feedback by the trainer and the trainee
- A review of experiences by facilitating group members in acknowledging feelings at this stage, in identifying what has been learnt, what has been useful and not so useful, what they plan to take with them from the training and how they plan to use it

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