**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

[SAMPLING METHODS 3](#_Toc349055142)

[EVALUATION METHODS 6](#_Toc349055143)

[ANALYSIS METHODS 9](#_Toc349055144)

[COMMON EVALUATION METHODS 9](#_Toc349055145)

[*PARTICIPATORY RAPID TOOLKIT 9*](#_Toc349055146)

[*REVIEWING AND ANALYZING SECONDARY DATA 11*](#_Toc349055147)

[*SKETCH MAPPING 12*](#_Toc349055148)

[*TRANSECTS 16*](#_Toc349055149)

[*HISTORICAL TRENDS AND TIMELINES 17*](#_Toc349055150)

[*SEASONAL CALENDARS 18*](#_Toc349055151)

[*GROUP BRAINSTORING 19*](#_Toc349055152)

[*RANKING EXERCISES 20*](#_Toc349055153)

[*SOCIAL MAPPING OR WELL-BEING RANKING 21*](#_Toc349055154)

[*MATRIX SCORING 23*](#_Toc349055155)

[*RELATIVE SCALES OR LADDERS 26*](#_Toc349055156)

[*RANKING AND POCKET CHARTS 29*](#_Toc349055157)

[*SWOL (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS) 31*](#_Toc349055158)

[*GENDER ANALYSIS 31*](#_Toc349055159)

[*FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS 35*](#_Toc349055160)

[*SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS 36*](#_Toc349055161)

[*RAPID SURVEYS 37*](#_Toc349055162)

[*MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE 38*](#_Toc349055163)

[*INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGE DIAGRAM (OR VENN/CHAPATI DIAGRAM) 40*](#_Toc349055164)

[*SYSTEMS (OR INPUTS-OUTPUTS) DIAGRAM 43*](#_Toc349055165)

**Purpose**

This handbook is designed for two audiences. It helps orient the evaluator to the quality of products and processes for which s/he is responsible by outlining LWR’s core values, strategic objectives, and expectations for stakeholder participation in the evaluation process. It also has basic descriptions of the most commonly used evaluation tools and methodologies that can be used to assist the evaluation manager in working with the selected evaluation team when determining the final evaluation methodology. However it is not meant to be an exhaustive guide. It is expected that the evaluator will use tools and techniques gathered from their professional training and experience yet, when in doubt, check with the M&E Unit about methods that are appropriate to LWR’s institutional evaluation objectives.

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| SAMPLING METHODS |

Purpose: Economize on the resources required to collect and manage the desired data and improve the quality of the data.

The sampling plan demonstrates the chosen strategy for selecting a smaller sub-group of the target population (intended beneficiaries) that will accurately represent the patterns of the target population at large.

**Key questions when thinking about sampling:**

* **Why?**

Why is the information being collected from these sources? What is the purpose of the study? Planning, monitoring advocacy, identification of vulnerable populations, etc.

* **About whom?**

For what population sub-groups are results needed? For example, is it specifically women farmers growing bananas on at least ¼ hectare of land or is it generally any farmers growing at least some bananas for commercial sale?

* **From whom?**

Who is in the ‘sampling frame’? i.e., what group of persons (or households or farms, etc.) are eligible to be drawn for the sample?

* **With what precision?**

What accuracy of results does the evaluation need? If comparisons are to be made, (e.g., by sub-group or theme), how large a difference is considered important and expected? Is important to know that 10 out of 100 people act in a certain way, or is it essential to know if 10 out of 10,000 people behave that way?

**Probability sampling for quantitative studies**Sometimes projects need to quantitatively assess changes (effects, impacts) that are widely distributed in the project area. In such circumstances, the M&E sample design should, if possible, use a ‘probability sample’ (see box below). This means that each and every unit of assessment (e.g., each household) in the target area has an equal and positive chance of being selected. Probability sampling relies on randomization among all of the eligible candidates, e.g., by numbering households and drawing numbers from a hat or a random number chart.

**Advantages of a probability sample for quantitative analysis**

* It allows you to measure the sampling error (the likelihood that your results are just due to the effects of the sampling)
* It allows you to test the statistical significance of the observed trends (the likelihood that results are purely due to chance)
* It reduces the risk of a biased selection of sampling units.

The graphic below illustrate major types of probability sampling methods:

a) Simple Random Sample b) Systematic Random Sample

c) Stratified Random Sample d) Cluster Sample

**Comparing methods for probability sampling**

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| **Method** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| **Simple random samples** (e.g., household numbers drawn from a hat)  | • Avoids bias • Relatively simple to implement  | • Requires sampling frame for full population • Samples may be very dispersed • May be unrepresentative for key sub-groups • Ignores differences among sub-populations  |
| **Systematic random samples** (e.g., every third household in a community)  | • Easier to select • More likely to represent sub-groups (depending on size of the sample)  | • Also requires sampling frame for full population • Samples may also be widespread  |
| **Stratified random samples** (e.g., a random sample among Female-headed households, or among households growing at least 30 banana plants)  | • Makes sure key sub-groups are represented in the sample • Can fix sample size for each sub-group to get representative sample  | • Need to know enough about complete target population to divide into sub-groups relative to interests of study • Need to use special analytical techniques when results are combined for different subgroups, especially when these groups are different sizes  |
| **Cluster samples** (e.g., random selection of 30 out of 100 villages in the target area, and then random selection of 7 households per village)  | • Savings in travel costs and time • Only need detailed sampling frame for selected clusters  | • May miss out on important sub groups• Communities selected may not be representative |

**Purposive Sampling**

Sometimes it is desirable to purposively (intentionally) choose the respondents in a study for a specific reason, e.g., adolescents attending a family planning clinic. The project is choosing who it is that should be interviewed or surveyed, a choice that should be made very carefully and thoughtfully. In other words, if this strategy is used, it will be very important to clearly define the selection procedures. Purposive sampling can be used with quantitative or qualitative studies.

Such selective sampling is quite different from the sampling based on statistical probabilities used in quantitative studies. Probability sampling depends on randomness for being able to confidently generalize results from a small sample to a larger population. The power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth analysis related to the central issues being studied.

**Purposeful Sampling in qualitative evaluation and research**
There are several different strategies forpurposefully selecting information-rich cases; the logic of each strategy serves a particular data gathering and analysis purpose.

* Extreme case sampling: focuses on cases that are rich in information because they are unusual or

special in some way. (Example: the only community in a district that has taken the initiative to prohibit pesticides.)

* Maximum variation sampling: aims at capturing and describing the central themes or principal

outcomes that cut across participant or program variations. (e.g., persons of different ages,

genders, religious groups and marital statuses in an area considering family planning interventions)

* Homogeneous sampling: picking a small sample with similar characteristics to describe some

particular sub-group in depth. (e.g., firewood cutters or charcoal makers in specific areas)

* Typical cast sampling: using one or more typical cases to provide a local profile. These cases

(individuals, families, households, communities. etc.) are selected with the cooperation of key

informants, such as partner staff or knowledgeable participants, who can help identify what is typical.

* Critical case sampling: looking for critical cases that can make a point quite dramatically or that

are, for some reason, particularly important in the scheme of things. (e.g., the life history of a poacher)

* Snowball or chain sampling:begins by asking people in the project, “Who knows a lot about \_?

Who should I talk to?” by asking a number of people who else to talkwith, the sample gets bigger and bigger. It’s useful for identifying specific kinds of cases, e.g., critical, typical, extreme, etc.

* Criterion sampling: reviewing and studying all cases that meet some pre-set criterion of

importance. (e.g., the economic strategies of women-headed households)

The skill in designing the sampling strategy is in assessing the degree of variation within the project area, and how the distribution of the sampled households can capture (or portray) this variation.

**Sample Size**

In a project environment, M&E activities and resulting sample sizes are determined by sampling and evaluation method used, but also by limitations of cost and time. If statistical methods will be used in the evaluation plan to determine the statistical significance of changes observed, a complex formula for determining sample size must be applied. Generally, for small changes that are anticipated (for example, a 5 or 10 percent increase or decrease) larger sample sizes are required than if the evaluation intends to detect a larger change (15 to 30 percent for example). The evaluator who chooses this evaluation and sampling methodology will presumably know the correct formula to use and how to apply it. In all cases, for specific questions about sample size, consult with LWR’s M&E manager.

In other cases, purposive sampling can be used and for best results, the sample size should generally be as large as the evaluation budget can afford. As a general rule, a sample size that is 10 percent of the total beneficiary pool can serve as the minimum required sample size. In addition, the application of ‘cluster sampling’ is particularly effective in being able to save valuable resources.

When applying Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools, another method of detecting sufficient sample size is the point when the responses given become repetitive and the evaluator is no longer getting new information with additional repetitions. Another approach is to use in-depth case studies of the target group. Qualitative methods are best used with small numbers of individuals or groups – which may well be sufficient for understanding the human perceptions and behaviors which are the main justification for qualitative research.

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| EVALUATION METHODS |

Purpose: Provide a guide for collecting data for use in answering the evaluation questions.

There are various data collection methods available, yet no single approach is going to be ideal for any particular situation. Instead using multiple methods will help validate monitoring and evaluation and ensure representativeness of the various perspectives usually present in communities.

**Using Primary and Secondary Data**

Primary data is data collected specifically for the purposes of this evaluation. Secondary data is information that is already available.

**Secondary Data**

Evaluate the adequacy and usefulness of secondary data

* Content: What is the available content of the data? Is it general information about the local context (e.g. political, history, general demography) or is it specific to the nature and needs of the project?
* Disaggregation: Is the information sufficiently disaggregated to be useful? (e.g. by age groups, gender or specific localities)? If not, are the original data accessible and was disaggregated information collected in the original study?
* Quality of the Data: What is the quality of the available secondary information? Is it from a reliable source? Are the methods of data gathering for the information explained? Is the information in particular resource also confirmed by any other independent source? Is the information timely, current?
* Accessibility: How accessible is the information? Is it easy to obtain copies or access for reading; or is it constrained in any way?

See Annex 2 for a checklist of questions to pose as you review the data.

**Primary Data**

If secondary data does not adequately answer the information needs of the project, then the project will need to gather new information.

What **types of data** are needed?  **Quantitative and/or qualitative?**

Quantitative data is numerical data: amounts and proportions. Qualitative is data that can best be described in words or diagrams and pictures (e.g. descriptions of events, observed behaviors, direct quotations, maps). Quantitative data is needed when a number, rate or proportion of the population must be estimated or a variable such as crop production must be measured. Qualitative data are needed when attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the target population must be known in order to understand its reactions and responses to the project.

Most projects will require the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. Projects need quantitative data about the nature of the results (e.g. beneficial or harmful effects, intended or unintended outcomes) and they also need quantitative data (e.g. about the distribution of intensity of the results) to ensure the accuracy and representativeness of the analysis.

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| **Data** | **Method** |
| **Qualitative** | * Review of project documents/ partner records
* Direct observation of project activities
* Individual interviews with project participants (structured and unstructured)
* Meetings with partner organizations
* Workshop with participants to discuss experiences and perceptions related to the evaluation questions
* Focus groups of project participants
* Case studies
* Some participatory (PRA) techniques/ activities (drama, drawings, charts, diagrams)
* Participatory video
* Oral history or oral testimonies
* Photography
* Theater
 |
| **Quantitative** | * Review of certain project documents/ partner records
* Some PRA methods (ranking, scoring)
* Questionnaires/ evaluation forms (Closed or open-ended questions)
	+ If doing a survey, do focus groups first to identify the questions that would work best in your survey before doing survey.
 |

\*See also Annex for additional instructions on selected methods.

**Main Methods for Collecting Primary Data**

**1. Observation**

* Can be done informally or formally
* Relies on physically observed phenomena
* It’s possible to generate mistaken conclusions based on the observer’s interpretation.

**2. Interviews**

Consist of asking questions and listening to people.

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| Interview StructureLess Structure More Structure |
| Informal and unstructured dialogue | In-depth interviews with a broad range of possible questions, perhaps based on a guide | Questionnaire with open-ended questions | Formal interviews with pre-coded and closed-ended questions |
| * More flexible, easily altered.
* Can generate enormous amounts of data and lead to information overload
* More skill required from facilitator to avoid getting diverted during the interview
 | * Less flexible, cannot alter mid-stream
* Easier for respondents to complete
* Yield little insight into how people feel
* Less skill required from data collectors
 |

**3. Groups- large and small**

Listening and asking questions to groups includes using methods and tools that range from formal to informal.

* Community meetings (Formal, best for large groups)
* Focus groups (semi-formal, best with 6-10 people)
* Natural groups or conversation (informal, best with small groups) e.g., talking with women while waiting in line at a well

**Validity and Reliability**

In striving for sustainable development, M&E results may be considered valid and reliable when their use can be linked to an actual improvement in the living conditions of the people, providing that the change can be replicated and sustained over time.

To ensure reliability, triangulate or use multiple sources and methods to assure the reliability and completeness of information.

**Two main modes of triangulation**:

External triangulation

Compares information generated by the M&E activity and data from external sources such as censuses, official statistics, aerial photographs or local research/technical studies.

Internal triangulation

This refers to strengthening validity within the M&E process itself, principally by the use of multiple methods and techniques for exploring the same topic.

**To meet the needs for representativeness, use these three simple solutions:**

* + - 1. Combine quantitative and qualitative methods

Either a) integrate two methods: i.e. semi-structured interviews with both open and closed-ended questions or b) use each kind of data collection sequentially i.e. open-ended questions first assess the range and nature of responses before collecting information from closed-ended questionnaires

* + - 1. Rating and ranking techniques

Semi-quantitative and participatory ranking can help individuals express values, opinions and preferences about different elements (discovered through interviewing and/or observation) in a democratic, visible way.

* + - 1. Open analysis and discussion of findings during data collection

Analytical discussion of findings can be held with groups that are representative of specific stakeholders, information users, and/or the community at large. These discussions can focus on the prevalence, interpretation and validity of the findings. The meetings can also explore the significance of emerging issues and elicit recommendations for identified problems or constraints on the project.

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| ANALYSIS METHODS |

Purpose: To ensure that data that is collected is converted into useful information

General Steps:

* Organize Raw Data.
	+ Assembling all the data, use a checklist of all your data sources if it’s helpful.
	+ Thoroughly check the data to be sure all the data have the adequate identifiers.
	+ Check the data for completeness
* Prepare descriptions.
	+ Write out lists of issues (themes, indicators) including the key ideas in each sub-category.
	+ Note any emerging issues, i.e., ideas that are repeating and substantive, but not included in the original plan of study.
	+ Where appropriate, do tabulations, i.e., counting answers or observed events.
* Generate Interpretations (most complex) .

Once validated, the data is considered factual. These facts need to be put into context and assessed in relation to each other as well as in relation to the project objectives. The process of extracting and putting meaning to the isolated facts is referred to as interpretation.

* + Check carefully on representativeness and reliability of data.
	+ Look for researcher effects on respondents and note any researcher bias.
* Discuss the findings and emerging analysis.
* Consider any limitations to believability.
* Make specific recommendations.

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| COMMON EVALUATION METHODS |

Purpose: To provide additional guidance on using some common evaluation methods.

* **Introduction: Participatory Rapid Toolkit**
* **Reviewing and Analyzing Data**
* **(Sketch) Mapping**
* **Transects**
* **Historical Trends And Timelines**
* **Seasonal Calendars**
* **Group Brainstorming**
* **Ranking**
* **Social Mapping Or Well-Being Ranking**
* **Matrix Scoring**
* **Relative Scales Or Ladders**
* **Ranking And Pocket Charts**
* **SWOL**
* **Focus Groups**
* **Semi-structured Interviews**
* **Surveys**
* **Most Significant Change**
* **Institutional Linkage Diagram (Or Venn/Chapati Diagram)**
* **M&E Wheel (Or "Spider Web")**
* **Systems (Or Inputs-Outputs) Diagram**

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| PARTICIPATORY RAPID TOOLKIT |

Purpose: To introduce the concepts behind participatory evaluation methods.

This toolkit emphasizes qualitative methods, including interviews and Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools, because most monitoring and evaluation efforts will need to use them for limited, non-random coverage of respondents.

These participatory tools can be used at various stages of the project cycle. They have multiple uses and make up a growing body of participatory methods. Some common features of these tools include the following:

**Local Focus:
*\* A strong link with local community-based development initiative****.*Participatory methodology aims at generating information and supporting decision-making processes useful for local project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation purposes.
***\* Involvement of local actors and development professionals in a joint learning process.***Participatory methodology promotes collective discussion and negotiation, on the basis of facts, between local actors’ and development professionals’ perceptions about the issue(s) under investigation.
***\* A focus on the felt needs of community members and local institutions.***Participatory methodology deals with issues directly experienced and explicitly acknowledged as problems by the people who are asked to participate.

**Action Orientation:
\**Minimal time-gap between data collection and feedback.***Timeliness of analysis and rapidity of feedback are meant to increase cost-effectiveness of the evaluation and promote the practical use of its results.
***\* Carrying results into planning and action***Participatory evaluation methods goes beyond just *recommending* changes based on the findings (as often happens with conventional evaluation). The participatory evaluation process generally incorporates methods for translating the knowledge gained into practical decisions and/or feasible courses of action.

**Participatory Process:**

***\* Equal concern for process and results.***Participatory evaluation consists of collecting “fairly quick and fairly clean information, but it doesn’t stop there. It also aims at making all participants aware of the implications of the issue (problem, situation, etc.) being investigated and supporting them in undertaking relevant action.
***\* Built-in communication and educational strategy to facilitate local involvement***While final written reports are useful for institutional or training purposes, participatory learning workshops are considered the most important means for providing feedback to local institutions and the community at-large.

***\* Re-definition of the role of the development professional.***The professional is expected to act more as a “facilitator” and less as an “expert’ in his or her field. Working methods are selected and assessed from the perspective of “appropriate technology” for the community. Precision and accuracy of findings are traded off against timeliness and user-friendliness of research and decision-making techniques.

Together with skillful and non-intrusive facilitation, creative use of visual aids is an important strategy for supporting group exercises in participatory evaluation. Some examples of visual techniques that can be used (for data gathering, for analysis, for dissemination and for planning) include the following:

***\* Graphic representations***by means of pie-charts or bar-charts (or better yet pictograms — graphs built of pictures) are suitable for conveying quantitative information even to non-literate participants. The pictograms (whose shape is often inspired by daily objects such as trees, animals, pottery or food) can be used to describe and analyze time trends, patterns of relationship among different actor or sequences of causes, problems and solutions.
***\* Sorting, counting and ranking exercises***may be done in written form, but if literacy is low, they can equally be carried out with everyday objects, such as seeds, stones or simple sketches on small slips of paper.
***\* Maps and transect representations***can be used very effectively in groups to describe and analyze the community’s spatial distribution of features of special interest (e.g., natural resources, types of soil, vulnerable families, water points, land tenure patterns, etc.).
***\* Drawings, posters, pictures, and slides as well as open-ended stories, popular theatre and community-directed videos***are widely used as an entry point for focusing group discussions.
***\* Analytical matrices (e.g., column and row, Venn diagrams*)** can be used to organize and analyze findings, including qualitative statements. They can also be used on flip-charts or chalkboards for assembling the ideas developed in a brainstorming session with a group.
[Taken from Barton et al, 1996)

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| REVIEWING AND ANALYZING SECONDARY DATA |

Purposes: Refine specific objectives, identify potential informants for interviews, further clarify target groups in the population, and summarize what is known versus what remains to be answered in the field.

A review of existing data has several potential benefits, such as refining specific objectives, identification of potential informants for interviews, further clarification of target groups in the population and summarizing what is known versus what remains to be answered in the field. Costs are very low, information can be gathered quickly and it can usually be done with a relatively small amount of local travel. Depending on its quality, existing data can also permit greater depth of analysis for the population and environment situation.

However, there are also some potential limitations. Data may be incomplete, biased or unreliable. The methods originally used to collect the data may not be described, access to the materials will vary and some agencies may expect a fee to respond to information requests, others may not allow access without several permission letters.

The exercise of extracting content and meaning from secondary data will be improved if a set of open-ended questions are systematically used with the data. Some potential questions are as follows:

Problems (nature, range, distribution)- What information do we already have about the population and environment? About problems that affect people in this region?
- What do we know about the distribution of leading problems among the residents in the study region? For example, what are the influences and relationships between age, gender, ethnicity, residence location, family structure, educational status, etc.?

Behavior patterns
What behaviors place the constituents at risk? Which behaviors are protective? What do we know about factors affecting behavior change among people in this region (social competencies, supportive attitudes, social groups, etc.)?

Context
- What do we know about external factors affecting the problems (social norms, religion, economics, etc.)?

Institutional responses
- What policies exist that aggravate or solve any of the problems?
- What programs and services are currently addressing the problems?
- What is their coverage and how effective are they?
- Who is funding and who is conducting these activities and services?
- What future activities are planned?

At the conclusion of the documents review, there are two other useful questions:
a) What additional information about population and environment is needed but not available?
b) For whom would this information be useful and why?

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| SKETCH MAPPING |

Purpose: To provide a visual representation of information in a particular geographical context based on stakeholders’ perceptions of any focus issue or indicator that is being monitored and evaluated:

*-*Physical, such as available resources and their use, key problem areas, (proposed) innovations, where land

degradation problems are and where improvements have been noticed, or regarding a specific topic like

crop trials;

*-*Social ownership or gender-differentiated use of natural resources, etc.

**How to:**

1. Ask the individual or the group to draw the boundaries of the geographic unit being discussed. Participants can decide how they want to represent this – on paper with writing or using local materials such as sticks, stones or seeds. Remember that whatever material is chosen, you will always need a paper-based copy to enable comparative analysis.

If it adds to the discussion, three-dimensional elements can be added, transforming the map into a model that emphasizes landscape-level aspects of issues.

2. On whatever medium is chosen, ask the participants to draw the outline of the local area, for example, roads, towns, rivers and property boundaries. One way to do this, if you have the proper resources, is to project an overhead map onto a large sheet of paper and then to trace the required information.

3. Having prepared the map, which could be as large as a wall, people can then add their information either directly or by using sticky notes. Let them record what is most significant to them and then ask for more detail if something you are interested in is missing. One use of a sketch map is for social mapping of household levels of well-being.

4. Several modifications to the map may be needed before those involved are happy with the final result. Include additional written comments such as quantities of interest, if necessary.

5. Once a "base" map has been made, subsequent meetings can use it to make comparisons. Figure 1 next page shows such a comparison of a base map with a later monitoring event, recording the status of fields before and after soil and water conservation measures were taken in one project in India. To be most effective, at least some of the people involved in the map production should be involved in updating the map during the next monitoring event.

Alternatively, the same map can be used by color-coding indicators for each new year or monitoring event. While this option is much easier for direct comparison and analysis (as all the data are recorded on one map), it can become messy if too many indicators and years of data are stored on it.

**Tips on use:**

Remember that only those issues that have a geographic distribution are useful to analyze with maps. Maps are useful for obtaining a better understanding of an area being studied and for providing information and ideas on local perspectives of, for example, resources or access to services/facilities.

The larger the number of topics to be included, the more complex the maps will be. For this reason, it might be better to make several maps, with one issue/indicator per map. However, this is very time-consuming and storing such maps can pose difficulties.

Sketch maps represent how people see a physical area or a particular issue and its importance, and are, therefore, not as precise or scale-accurate as formal maps. Also, people will only show on a map what is of value to them. So, for example, where a mining company’s map of an area would emphasize the locations of ore deposits and navigable rivers, the local map of the same area but drawn by villagers may show communal areas, sacred places, pasture lands, burial grounds and agricultural lands.

**Figure 1. Status of fields before and after soil and water conservation measures, India**[11](http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexd/d.htm#11#11)



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| TRANSECTS |

Purpose: To undertake a structured walk through an area to observe particular indicators (such as the incidence of weeds or soil erosion, variations in quality and quantity of natural resources or the use of innovations in different zones).

**How to:**

1. Based on the topics or indicators to be observed, decide who could provide relevant and varied information for participating in the transect route or who might be interested in participating. Different stakeholders should be involved, such as local primary stakeholders, community leaders, farmers and also those holding relevant expertise, extension agents, etc. If the group is too large, thought should be given on how to divide the group to participate in separate walks along the same route.

2. If a map of the area is available, use it to decide together what the route will be. The same route should be taken each time to keep the basis of observing changes stable. Transect routes can vary greatly in time needed – from one hour to a whole day, depending on the size of the area, the type of transport and the detail needed.

3. Indicators that people want to observe, measure, record and analyze will already have been identified and these form the basis of observations and measurements during the walk.

4. As the walk proceeds, participants can use their curiosity to probe for and include other unexpected observations. Indicators do not have to be visual but can also include topics such as land ownership or which solutions have been tried where for which problems. Keep a good record of what emerges from the discussions.

5. Draw what has been seen and discussed on a schematic diagram and use that as the basis for subsequent monitoring transect walks.

6. The frequency of walks will vary considerably, depending on the indicator(s) that are being monitored and the rate with which the monitored changes are likely to change. If monitoring pests, this might require a daily walk, whereas monitoring soil erosion would perhaps require a walk every four to six months.

7. Comparing the different observations for each zone serves as the basis for discussing why changes might have occurred. You can walk with any notes or diagrams from previous monitoring events to trigger your memory and to make immediate comparisons possible.

**Tips on use:**

This is a relatively inexpensive method that provides many valuable insights. It can be used for quantitative and qualitative information gathering.

The drawing of a transect walk is usually a cross-sectional view of the path taken, with the findings below it in table format. However, if this is too abstract, then it might be more useful simply to draw the walk as a bird’s eye view line on a map, with the related information written alongside.

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| HISTORICAL TRENDS AND TIMELINES |

Purpose: To obtain a historical understanding of sequential changes that have occurred, relating to particular points of interest. From an M&E perspective, this could focus on specific indicators, be used as triggers in discussions to assess if certain changes can be attributed to project activities and list changes in the context that help explain possible effects of the project.

**How to:** There are three ways to record discussions that focus on historical data – in written form, as a matrix or as a graph.

To develop a matrix summarizing historical trends:

1. Agree on what indicators/events are important to the situation at hand.

2. On a large sheet of paper draw rows and columns to make a matrix. List dates going along the top. For example, write at the head of three columns: "Today", "10 Years Ago" and "20 Years Ago" (see [Box](http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexd/d.htm#bd_13#bd_13) 1 below).

3. Write in the topics of interest along the side such as key local events, key external events, influence of local personalities/groups, major changes (social, environmental, economic) and key trends – as pertaining to the agreed performance questions or indicators or simply to understand specific aspects of the context in which change happened.

4. Work either with a representative group of people or with different, more homogenous groups to fill in the table, using seeds, stones, numbers, etc. The discussion focuses on how people view changes with respect to the issues listed. The quantities indicated are not absolute numbers but are a relative comparison of how the aspect has changed from one time period to the next.

5. You can add a fourth column – "the future" – in which people identify what they would like to see change and what targets they have related to the aspects being discussed. The changes recorded can then be sorted into positive, neutral or negative events, depending on their impact on the organization or community.

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| **Box 1. Historical trend analysis of renewable natural resources** Ask participants to list all the natural resources used by the community to support local livelihoods. Once they have been placed along the vertical axis of a matrix, ask them to use ten seeds or stones and determine which time period enjoyed the healthiest natural resource base (in terms of its abundance and/or quality). This must be done for every period (using up to ten seeds each time). See the matrix below for a hypothetical example.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| *Resources*  | *Today*  | *10 Years Ago*  | *20 Years Ago*  |
| Food security  | XXX  | XXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Rainfall  | XXX  | XXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Crop production  | XXX  | XXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Soil fertility  | XX  | XXXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Water for animals  | XX  | XXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Drinking water  | XXX  | XXXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Pasture land  | X  | XXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Grass for roofing  | XX  | XXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Cattle  | XXXXXXXXXX  | XXXXXXX  | XXXXX  |
| Fruit trees  | XX  | XXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Firewood  | XX  | XXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  |
| Trees for fencing  | XXXXXXXX  | XXXXXXXXXX  | XXXXXX  |

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**Tips on use:**

Historical trend lines show changes from one year to the next and, therefore, provide a good means of tracking longer-term changes. This method can stimulate a valuable discussion about the speed and extent of positive and negative changes, why a situation is as it is and why different groups or individuals hold the views they do. This method provides a human dimension to data. However, it only provides general insights and details will need validation.

Historical trends/timelines differ from seasonal calendars in that they show a sequence of activities or progressive change, while seasonal calendars illustrate cyclical changes.

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| SEASONAL CALENDARS |

**Purpose**: To explore and record data for distinct time periods (per season, year, month or even week) to show cyclical changes over time. From an M&E perspective, calendars can help, for example, to assess if bottlenecks that occurred regularly are being resolved or not, whether these are attributable to the project and when certain performance questions or indicators are best monitored or evaluated.

**How to:**

1. It is important to clarify with those involved whether calendars will monitor changes between weeks, months, seasons, or years. This will depend on the indicators that have been selected and the rate at which they change.

2. Construct the calendar either to depict one or several years, or the minimum number of months or seasons over which monitoring is intended to occur. The calendar can be represented either horizontally or as a circle, though the latter can become messy to read if many indicators are being monitored. Circular calendars are not suited for multi-year trend analysis.

3. The calendar itself can be used to gather the data in some cases. For example, at weekly or monthly staff meetings, when the tasks completed in the past month are discussed, these can be recorded immediately onto the calendar. Alternatively, if data are gathered through other means, then for each time interval for which data is gathered, the correct amount can be filled in, thus using the calendar as a recording format.

A group discussion variant on this process is to divide participants into groups. Each group selects one or two "key informants", who may have relevant expertise, to be interviewed by the rest of the group. Based on this information, each group then makes a diagram to illustrate trends and changes in those activities and/or events over the time interval of interest. These are then presented to the whole group for discussion.

4. After several data entries, the calendar will show variations over time which will stimulate discussions to understand what the changes are and why they are occurring. By monitoring various types of changes simultaneously in one seasonal calendar or trend chart, certain patterns may become apparent such as how heavy work periods may occur during periods of indebtedness, illness and lower attendance at group meetings. Data can also be differentiated according to age and gender. However, the relevance of such variations will depend entirely on what it is that you want to monitor.

***"Daily Routines" Variation***

A variation on this method is to depict daily routines (or "how do I spend my 24 hours"), thus looking at daily patterns. This is useful for assessing key bottlenecks in daily tasks and how they can be overcome or for making quantitative assessments of labor and inputs needed for daily tasks. Comparisons are made between the current situation and previous diagrams to identify how changes that have been introduced affect routines.

**Tips on use:**

The calendar method is ideal for monitoring over specific time periods, such as per season. Seasonal calendars that include a range of indicators can reveal how different patterns of change are linked and can be good for discussing causality of certain changes. Seasonal changes are particularly important for rural areas. They may significantly affect labor, water supplies, disease, food and income. However, as with historical trends/timelines, seasonal calendars do not necessarily present accurate data. Cross-checking through direct measurement of, for example, time used to fetch water or incidence of diseases may be needed, depending on the accuracy you need.

If using this method with a group of people, it may be difficult to reach consensus on a "typical" or "average" calendar (particularly when it comes to daily routines). It might be best for each person to do one individually and then analyze the different routines together, or to select one or two individuals in the group as laid out in the second part of Step 3. Care must then be taken to limit biases in the sample.

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| GROUP BRAINSTORING |

Purpose: Brainstorming can elicit multiple perceptions of a given issue. The group discussion which follows can help find the basis for a consensus among group members.

* Brainstorming is a basic idea gathering technique employed in many group exercises. It is based on freewheeling discussion started by an open-ended and somehow provocative question forwarded by the facilitator. At the same time, avoid opening statements that are leading, i.e., ensure that they do not promote or overemphasize a particular point of view that can bias the ideas of the participants.
 **Steps in using the technique**\* The issue to be discussed is introduced by the facilitator.
\* The key-question is written on the blackboard or on a flip-chart.
\* Participants are asked to provide short answers. No speeches at this stage.
\* An important point to stress at the beginning is that ‘all ideas are good ideas’; if anyone does not agree with someone else’s point, they should give what they think is a better idea. Accept only additional contributions during the brainstorming, not disagreements or arguments; defer them to the discussion afterwards. Encourage fresh ideas rather than repetitions of earlier items.
\* Each participant is allowed to express his/her view. Over-talkative participants will need to be quieted and silent participants need to be explicitly asked for ideas.
\* The facilitator picks the basic point out of participant statements and ensures that it is written (or portrayed with a picture) on large cards tacked to a bulletin board or wall. Appropriateness of the summary is checked with the concerned participants.
\* Keep the brainstorming relatively short. 15 to 30 minutes is usually sufficient to obtain most of the ideas on a specific topic without tiring the participants.
\* Review the results with the participant group. Remove duplicated items and cluster groups of similar ideas. (Having the ideas on cards facilitates rearranging them.) Highlight differences of opinion and discuss until a consensus is achieved.
\* Results of the brainstorming can then be summarized and kept for future reference.

**Strengths and weaknesses****+** A properly conducted brainstorm can facilitate participation of all group members in the idea-building process.
**+** It helps to understand and, if needed, consolidate the degree of consensus and homogeneity within the group.
**+** It is a good introduction for more structured and focused exercises.
**-** Solid experience in dealing with group dynamics is needed by the facilitator to keep the discussion on track as well as good mediation and summarizing skills.
**-** Setting and dynamics may hide conflicts existing within the group and affect the reliability of the brainstorming results.

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| RANKING EXERCISES |

Purpose: Ranking exercises have been used for a variety of specific purposes, such as:
- identification of needs, priorities and preferences
- quantification of opinion and preferences as elicited through interviewing or brainstorming;
- comparison of preferences and opinions as expressed by different social actors.

Ranking exercises, which may be done with groups or individuals, are a way to enable people to express their preferences and priorities about a given issue. The technique may generate insights about the criteria through which different individuals, groups or social actors make decisions on the kinds of issues under investigation.

**Steps in using the tool**\* Make a list of items to be prioritized (these could come from a brainstorming exercise);
\* Recruit appropriate participants to be involved in the exercise;
\* Define a simple ranking mechanism. This may be based on a pair-wise comparison of items in the list; on sorting cards representing items in order of preference; or by assigning a score to the different items.
\* Prepare a matrix on which preferences identified by participants could be jotted down (e.g., on the ground, with a flip chars, on a chalk board)
*\** Explain the ranking mechanism to each participant and ask them to carry out the exercise (e.g., give them three stones to place on any categories they want in response so a specific guiding question — which crop is the most difficult, which type of health provider is the most effective, etc.);
\* Ask participants to explain the criteria on which their choice has been made
\* Carry out a quantitative analysis of the ranking series and interpret the findings on the basis of qualitative statements about the criteria of choice.

**Strengths and weaknesses****+** Ranking is a flexible technique which can be used in a variety of situations and settings.
**+**Whenever categorical judgments are needed, ranking is a suitable alterative to closed- ended interviewing.
**+**Ranking exercises are generally found to be amusing and interesting by participants and are helpful to increase their commitment to participatory assessments and evaluation.
**+** Information is provided on both the choices and reasons for the choices.
- Pre-testing is needed for the ranking mechanism and the tools to be used to facilitate it.
- Choices may be affected by highly subjective factors. In order to generalize results to the whole community, a proper sampling strategy is needed.

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| SOCIAL MAPPING OR WELL-BEING RANKING |

Purpose: To identify households on the basis of predefined indicators related to socio-economic conditions. This method concentrates on a relative ranking of people’s socio-economic conditions (e.g., relatively well-off and worse-off), rather than making an absolute assessment. From an M&E perspective, this method can help assess which households are benefiting from the project and if these belong to the intended target group.

**How to:**

1. First, clarify what "household" means locally, since local definitions of terms like "household", "compound" or "extended family" vary considerably. Then discuss what constitutes well-being locally. Ask if there are differences between households and what types of differences these are. This usually leads to some discussions about broad groups or levels of well-being in the community.

***Option 1: Social mapping***

a. Prepare a base map on which all the households of the area being analyzed are located (e.g., a village, a neighborhood, a rural zone, etc.).

b. Ask the participants to code each household according to its level of well-being in comparison to others. Each level can be given its own symbol or color code. Make sure you crosscheck the coding of each household by ensuring there is consensus about the code. In this way, a base map can be made in which households are clustered according to different rankings of well-being. Include a legend on the map that explains the symbols and codes.

c. Now focus on the indicators in which you are interested (for example, "school attendance of children", "involved in a certain project activity", "member of a micro-credit group"). Code each household according to its status.

d. The base map can then be used to monitor the well-being of each household from year to year and to relate the households to changes introduced by a project. This makes it possible to examine whether there are any impacts occurring on well-being or other socio-economic indicators in focus and, if so, how the impacts may affect different social groups.

***Option 2: Well-being ranking with cards***

a. Each household name is written on a card.

b. The cards are then sorted into different piles of similarly ranked households. Start with any two households, asking people to compare them in terms of which is better off than the other. If they have different levels of well-being, then they are placed in different piles of cards. If they are more or less the same, they go in one pile.

c. One by one, other households are compared to the first two. This can lead to the identification of new levels if they are worse-off or better-off than the households already classified. They may be identified as having a similar level of well-being of an existing group of households and thus go to an existing pile. Keep track of which household is in which pile. You may do this by numbering each pile per informant, so that you know in which pile each household was placed.

d. This needs to be repeated three times and then an average score calculated, to remove interviewee knowledge biases. Calculations are done as follows. Write the score for each household for each informant as follows (with Pile 1 being the best off pile):

pile number of households x 100
total number of piles.

Compute average scores for each household as the total of its scores divided by the number of its scores. Households must have two scores to be included, so if only one person knows how to place a household there is insufficient information on them to be included. Write the average score for each household in large numbers on index cards. Put the index cards in order from lowest to highest average score (best off to worst off). Divide the ranked cards into groups where there is a clear cluster of scores. It is these groups that you can then use for your sample.

**Tips on use:**

Social mapping can provide an overview of any socio-economic aspects, such as leadership, professions, skills and experiences in a community, as well as its well-being. However, well-being ranking focuses on a community’s perceptions of well-being, such as status, size of land and family, income, etc. In both cases, with your base map and your clustered households, you can focus on any monitoring issue such as "access of poor/middle/higher-income households to water supply and sanitation facilities".

Both methods are also useful for a purpose or quota sampling procedure, by making a selection from different well-being classes.

By discussing what well-being means at each monitoring event, it is also possible to track changes in the criteria of well-being to see if people’s aspirations are shifting.

This method is most useful when ranking in groups of a limited size. You can use it in larger communities, focusing on neighborhood-specific rankings, but it will be difficult to compare results between sections.

**Table 1.**

**Example of a well-being ranking exercise in an IFAD-supported project (International Fund for Agricultural Development) in a village in Laos**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RICH = 2 people**  | **MEDIUM = 33**  | **POOR = 18**  | **VERY POOR = 7**  |
| Enough rice for 12 months  | Enough rice for 8-12 months  | Enough rice for 3-6 months  | Enough rice for 3 months  |
| Large amount of paddy land in valley (up to 5 ha)  | Little paddy land (up to 0.5 ha with 2-3 ha upland cultivation)  | Small extent of land to cultivate in upland (0.5-1.5 ha)  | Little upland rice cultivation (less than 0.5 ha)  |
| More than 10-15 cows and buffaloes and 50-60 poultryElephant or hand tractorEnough bullock power  | Around 5-10 cows and buffalos, 5 pigs and 20-30 poultrySometimes elephant Bullocks for land preparation  | Less than 2 cows and buffalos, 1 or 2 pigs, and 15 chickensSometimes an elephant (inherited)Usually no bullocks for land preparation  | A few chickens, occasionally pigsNo plough/bullocks for land preparation  |
| Permanent brick house with field roof  | Wooden house with galvanized iron or aluminum sheet roof  | Bamboo house with thatched roof  | Poor condition bamboo house with thatch  |
| Owns two- or four-wheel vehicle  | Owns two-wheel vehicle  | Sometimes owns bicycle  | Has no assets  |
| Sometimes rice mills  | Occasional rice mill  | No rice mill  | No rice mill  |
| Able to hire labor  | Does not work as labor and occasionally hires labor  | Cannot hire labor  | Mainly sells labor  |
| Has no deficit  | Makes up deficit by sale of livestock and businessOccasionally goes to forest  | Always has deficitDepends on forest and sale of labor  | Always depends on selling labor and forest  |
| Good health  | Occasional health problems  | Sick often  | Poor health  |

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| MATRIX SCORING |

Purpose: To make a relative comparison between different options of a specific issue or solutions to a problem, and to make a detailed analysis of how much and why people prefer one option above the other. Matrix scoring shows how well options meet predefined criteria. From an M&E perspective, this method can be used to understand people’s opinions on, for example, different service providers, on different types of project activities that are aiming to reduce a problem, on different technologies (such as seed varieties, water sources).

**How to:**

1. First be clear about what you are comparing and place these options/issues in a row, along a horizontal axis. The more there are, the longer the scoring will take so, if necessary, prioritize items to be scored.

2. The group next discusses the advantages and disadvantages of each item/ solution/issue to generate the criteria that will be used to compare each of the options. Each criterion is placed along the vertical axis to create a matrix. If you find that the number of criteria is very large, either ensure you have enough time to finish the discussion or ask the group to prioritize key criteria on which to focus. Ensure that the criteria are all worded in the same way, all either in positive terms or in negative terms. Mixing the two types of criteria will cause confusion in the next stage.

3. Then start the scoring. The items are compared for each criterion. Decide how much will be the maximum score. There are different ways to establish the number of points to use for scoring. You can allocate a maximum of points per box – for example, 15 as "the best" – or specify a total number of points to allocate per criterion across the boxes, for instance, 25. Participants can use stones, seeds or numbers for the scoring, with more stones indicating higher scores and therefore better ability to fulfill that criterion. Usually, consensus is reached through discussion. Avoid individual voting in the matrix scoring exercise as this defeats the purpose of stimulating discussion to reach consensus on preferred options and understand the reasons for preference.

**Table 2. Transfer of Tasks And Responsibilities Matrix**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Tasks**  | **Past (2005)**  | **Present (2010)**  | **Future (2015)**  |
|   | VillageGroup  | Local NGO  | Local Govt  | Village Group  | Local NGO  | Local Govt  | Village Group  | Local NGO  | Local Govt  |
| Fundraising  |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   |
| Choosing trainers  |   | XXXXXX  | XXXX  |   | XXXXXX  | XXXX  | XXXXX  | XXX  | XX  |
| Scheduling trainings  |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   | XXX  | XXXXXXX  |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   |   |
| Follow-up  |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   | XXXXX  | XXXXX  |   |
| Organizing participants  | XXXXXXXX  | XX  |   | XXXXXXXX  | XX  |   | XXXXXXXXXX  |   |   |
| Designing training tools  |   | XXXXXX  | XXXX  |   | XXXXXXXX  | XX  | XXX  | XXXXX  | XX  |
| Evaluation  | XXXXX  |   | XXXXX  | XXXXX  |   | XXXXX  | XXXXX  | XXX  | XX  |
| Totals  | 13  | 44  | 13  | 16  | 43  | 11  | 38  | 26  | 6  |
| Percentages  | 18.5%  | 63%  | 18.5%  | 23%  | 61%  | 16%  | 54%  | 37%  | 9%  |
| Per cent change from 2005  | 0  | 0  | 0  | +4.5%  | -2%  | -2.5%  | +35%  | -26%  | -9.5%  |

**Tips on use:**

Besides the resulting matrix, one of the greatest values of this method comes from the discussions that are provoked as participants come to a decision about the final score of each option (as well as on settling on the criteria for scoring). In the discussion, the reasons for preferences and rejection of options emerge.

Matrix scoring can also be useful to identify key indicators that can then be monitored regularly using other methods. The indicators are selected from among the criteria (i.e., the advantages and disadvantages of each option) that have been identified.

***Variations on this method:***

*Variation A. Transfer of Tasks And Responsibilities Matrix* (see [Table 2](http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/guide/annexd/d.htm#td_5#td_5) above for an example)

This application helps identify the degree to which tasks and responsibilities have been transferred from a project to the community group(s). It can help identify indicators for this transfer of responsibility (i.e., capacity-building) and is essential for clarifying the phasing-out strategy.

**How to:**

1. For each program sector addressed by the project, ask participants to name all the major tasks and responsibilities necessary for running an effective and viable program.

2. Write each response (on cards if you like) on the vertical axis of a matrix.

3. Have participants name all the major actors or interest groups who are directly involved in running the project (donors, village group, government extension agents, technical support, etc.). Write these actors in along the top horizontal axis of the matrix.

4. For each task, ask participants to distribute ten beans (or stones) among the various actors according to how much responsibility they have for a task, with ten representing total responsibility.

5. Repeat the process to reflect the situation in the recent past. Decide together on the time period for assessing change (e.g., five years). Move the task cards to the left in order to create space for another matrix section.

6. Duplicate the actor cards and place them in the same order at the top of the second section of the matrix (see diagram).

7. Have participants place the beans under each actor to reflect the past situation.

8. If time permits, repeat the process to allow participants to envision what the situation will be like in the future. Create a third section on the matrix and repeat the above process, distributing the beans according to what hopes are for future distribution of responsibility.

*Variation B. Community-Level Support/Self-Reliance Matrix*

This method helps with reflection on community self-reliance upon phasing-out. It can assess the effectiveness of the project’s strategy to promote self-reliance and to strengthen the capacities of the community groups with which it works. It fosters understanding of the connection between creating self-reliance and the ability of the project to achieve a wider impact.

**How to:**

1. On cards, write the names of the different stakeholder groups involved in a project and the date they started working with the project.

2. On each card, write using symbols or letters to represent which project activities they undertake (e.g. management training, loan disbursement in the case of credit, etc.).

3. Sort the cards into one of three categories indicating the level of support each has received (high, medium, low). But make sure you are clear about what you mean by "support" (e.g., number of support visits, training or funding provided, etc.).

4. Introduce the concept of self-reliance and ask the participants to list characteristics of group "self-reliance". For example: able to cover core operating costs, able to plan, monitor and evaluate program, able to access external resources, able to form partnerships, able to mobilize group members for collective action, able to implement development programs, able to elect representative leaders, etc.

5. Write these characteristics down on another set of cards (different color, one characteristic per card).

6. Then identify criteria for distinguishing between high, medium and low levels of self-reliance at this time. Ask participants to sort the cards into these three categories.

7. On the vertical axis of a matrix, label three rows: "high", "medium" and "low" support; on the horizontal axis, designate three columns as "high", "medium" and "low" self-reliance.

8. Place the cards in the appropriate boxes in the matrix.

9. Have a discussion on why groups fit into one category or another, whether/how the project can support the development of self-reliance better, what will happen when the project phases out, etc.

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| RELATIVE SCALES OR LADDERS |

Purpose: To make a relative qualitative comparison of "before" and "after" situations related to specific indicators. This method can result in a diagram (as in a ladder drawn with indicators represented by symbols) or as written questions/indicators if they are difficult to depict. From an M&E perspective, this method can be used to assess qualitative aspects related to, for example, women’s self-esteem, the participation of marginalized groups or capacity-strengthening, which are otherwise hard to assess.

**How to:**

1. First, the group must choose its indicators. These can be formulated either as statements or questions.

2. There are two ways to compare changes in these indicators over time.

a. The visual way, using a ladder for each indicator, where each rung - from bottom to top – represents an improvement:

* At the first monitoring event, an assessment is made of where stakeholders think they stood before the intervention started (written to the left of the ladder at the rung that best represents the level). Then they should indicate on the right side of the ladder – at the appropriate rung –where they think their level is now as a result of the project or activity.
* At each monitoring event, a new assessment is made of where the activity stands with respect to the rungs of the ladder for each indicator being monitored.
* This forms the basis for discussing why changes have occurred and what action(s) might be required to reinforce positive changes or limit deterioration. The ladders can be used for individual stakeholders’ assessments of change and then discussed collectively, or the group can discuss the ladders until a consensus is reached about the status of the changes being monitored.
* See Figure 2 for an example of the result of a ladder exercise.

b. Using a sliding scale to measure variation:

* Start by coming up with a set of statements about an indicator. For example, if a group of farmers is interested in identifying "efficiency of meetings" as an indicator of the group’s success, then group members can revisit this indicator, for example, every 6 to 12 meetings, using the following points system.
	+ 3 points – Our meetings are always efficient: we use our time well, make clear decisions, and our decisions are implemented.
	+ 2 points – Our meetings are usually efficient: we use our time well, make decisions that are usually clear, and our decisions are often implemented.
	+ 1 point – Our meetings are sometimes efficient: we sometimes manage to avoid unnecessary discussion, and can make decisions but they are not always clear to everyone, and our decisions are sometimes implemented.
	+ 0 points – Our meetings are never efficient: we always talk without making any decisions and therefore are not implementing changes.
* At each monitoring event, see how the answers to the same set of questions vary over time, for example on a sliding scale of 1 to 5 (or 0 to 3 in the example above).
* Ask the group to reach consensus or for each person to vote, for example, choosing between: "strongly agree", "agree", "don’t know", "disagree" and "strongly disagree" (or "most satisfactory", "satisfactory", "unsatisfactory" and "very unsatisfactory").
* They can also choose between a range of points or a range of more or less happy looking faces.

3. Final numbers or positions on the ladder are not the main outcome of this method. The most important parts are the discussion that occurs as group members reach agreement on whether the general direction of change is positive or negative and, of course, the analysis of why changes in the numbers/positions might be occurring.

**Tips on use:**

While this method also involves ranking, it differs from matrix scoring in that it only looks at one indicator at a time and gives it a rank by comparing past and present conditions relating to that single indicator.

**Figure 2. The ladder exercise undertaken by women to assess the impact of a training program**



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| RANKING AND POCKET CHARTS |

Purpose: To assess changes or patterns in people’s general opinions about a list of options, through a single overall ranking process. From an M&E perspective, this method is valuable to assess people’s opinions on a list of comparable options, for example, related to decision making in a local organization or personal practices in relation to any topic, such as land management or personal hygiene (see Box 2).

**How to:**

1. Make a complete list of all the options for the topic being monitored (maize varieties, sources of credit, erosion control measures, etc.).

2. When conducted with a group, you have a couple options for the ranking:

* One option is that each participant can make his/her own ranked list and then an average ranking can be calculated for each option, to arrive at a collective ranked list.
* A second option is to have the group reach consensus on the relative ranks, through group discussion, and make one collective ranking.

The second option will clearly provoke more discussion than the first and be open for domination from the more assertive participants.

A third, more visual and more general option is to ask people to give a relative weight or "value" to each option using a number of stones, a pile of sand or a segment of a pie chart. This approach clearly generates only a very general idea of preferences and priorities, but in some cases it is sufficiently accurate. If pie charts are used to gather the actual data, then they will usually only represent very approximate perceptions of people’s rankings. However, a pie chart can also be used to record precise findings as segments of a pie chart can represent exact percentages based on data that have been gathered through other means.

A fourth option involves a pocket chart, which is a chart that has a pocket for each option. First identify the different options you want to assess. Write or symbolize each option at the top of a column. If you want to monitor the rate of occurrence, for example, of certain health or land-use practices, place three or more rows (each with a pocket) below the columns, headed by "always", "sometimes" and "never". In this case, ask each person to place a vote per practice/habit in the right pocket. If you want to monitor, for instance, the participation of different groups in decision making, these groups are symbolized at the top. Then decide which aspects of decision making you want to monitor. These aspects become the vertical axis of the matrix, the column. Each cell in the chart has a pocket in which votes are cast.

3. If privacy is necessary, collect votes by turning the pocket chart around and having people come up one by one to cast their vote with a piece of paper or a stone or seed.

4. Count the votes and discuss the outcome together.

5. If you want to have analysis differentiated by gender or another categorization, use different codes on the voting cards for the women and the men.

6. Alternatively, the group can discuss each question until they reach consensus.

7. A new ranking is made at each monitoring event and compared with previous rankings. Use the comparison with the results from previous events to discuss the changes and their possible causes, and what future action or adjustment of the activity is required.

8. A variation on this method is known as "one hundred seeds". It helps an individual or group indicate an approximate percentage distribution, as represented visually in a pie chart. Give the person or group 100 seeds, beans or stones. These represent the sum total of the topic being discussed (e.g., sources of income, main expenditure items, types of health services, sources of fuel, etc.). First discuss the topic so that you list all the items, for example, all the sources of income or all the types of health services used. The person or group then divides the seeds across the items to indicate the relative distribution. For example, how much of the total (100%) of income comes from each income source, and how much of all health needs (100%) are covered per health service? These percentages can be shown as a pie chart, if desired.

**Tips on use:**

This method is useful particularly in situations where the subject being assessed is sensitive and people are inhibited about stating their views publicly.

This method is similar to matrix scoring and relative scales or ladders. However, the matrix compares how a range of different options rate in terms of many criteria and the scales assess one option at a time, whereas ranking and pocket charts involve making a single overall ranking of a list of options. While matrix scoring is ideal for selecting the best among various options, from a monitoring perspective, a ranking exercise helps assess changes in people’s general opinions about options.

A pocket chart is more complex than a simple ranking as it is used to make a series of overall rankings. The pocket chart is also more accurate since it allows assessment of the percentage of people with certain opinions. Filling in a pocket chart is usually done on an individual basis and may therefore provoke less discussion than matrix scoring. However, analyzing the results afterwards with the group of participants will encourage collective reflection and will help give meaning to the data.

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|   | **Box 2. Example from the World Bank’s Water and Sanitation Program**For hygiene behavior patterns in a water and sanitation program, people are asked to provide information (behind a voting screen) on where they defecate, using a range of pictures to depict sites used on the horizontal axis and pictures of different household members (women, men, girls, boys, toddlers and babies) along the vertical axis. This can be carried out "before" and "after" a sanitation project has been introduced to assess if personal hygiene has changed and how.  |   |

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| SWOL (STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS) |

**Also referred to as SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats)**

Purpose: SWOL analysis is especially useful for evaluating activities carried out in the community. It can be focused on services provided by external agencies, as well as using it for self-evaluation of the interest group’s own performance.

SWOL analysis is a powerful tool for group assessment of the issues of concern, particularly interventions or different potential courses of action. It is based on a structured brainstorming aimed at eliciting group perceptions of the positive factors (strengths), the negative factors (weaknesses), the possible improvements (opportunities) and the constraints (limitations) related to the issues

**Steps in using the tool**\* A four column matrix is drafted on the blackboard or one flip-chart and the four judgment categories are explained to participants. It will help to phrase the four categories as key questions, to which participants can respond.
\* The facilitator starts the brainstorming by asking the group a key question about strengths. Responses from the group are joined down on the relevant column of the matrix.
\* For each strength, the related weaknesses, opportunities and limitations are also identified by the group
\* Participants may have different opinions about an issue, and contradictory statements may be forwarded. In such cases, the facilitator can work toward a consensus, which may require a point to be discussed at some length. Each entry is left on the final matrix only after achieving a group agreement.

**Strengths and weaknesses+** The technique stresses consideration of different sides (positive and negative) of the issues. It therefore helps to set the basis for negotiations and trade-offs.
**+** SWOL is a good means to build a consensus within the group and to prepare the group to discuss with outsiders.
**+** SWOL can promote group creativeness- It helps to link perceptions of things as they are with realistic expectations about how things could be.
- Sensitive topics and differences of opinion may arise during the discussion.
- Some group members may dominate the discussion.
- Summarizing long discussions in short statements requires that the facilitator have good synthesizing skills.

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| GENDER ANALYSIS |

Purpose: Gender analysis focuses on understanding and documenting the differences in gender roles, activities, needs, and opportunities in a given context. Gender analysis involves the disaggregation of quantitative data by gender. It highlights the different roles and learned behavior of men and women based on gender attributes.

**Description**The concept of gender analysis arose from the need to mainstream women’s interests while at the same time acknowledging that women could not be treated as a homogeneous group. It was realized that women’s needs were better understood when viewed in relation to men’s needs and roles and to their social, cultural, political, and economic context. Gender analysis thus takes into account women’s roles in production, reproduction, and management of community and other activities. Changes in one may produce beneficial or detrimental effects in others.
Gender analysis is important in the formulation of country economic memoranda, country sector strategies, structural adjustment, country portfolio management, poverty assessments, environmental assessment, and in sector-specific project planning, monitoring, and evaluation; thus, many variants of policy and sector-specific gender analysis tools are available.

**Key Principles**Because gender planning is part of the overall planning process, the composition of the planning team, timing of data collection, tabling of issues, and integration of gender concerns into overall objectives is critical early in policy and project formulation.

*• Planning as a process.* Programs that intend to be gender responsive depend on flexible planning processes that are interactive, adjust objectives based on feedback, and enable beneficiaries to be active

participants in the planning process.
*• Gender diagnosis.* Data collected should be organized to highlight key gender problems, underlying causes of problems for men and women, and the relationship between problems and causes.
*• Gender objectives.* Objectives clarify what gender problems will be addressed and what the practical and strategic goals are. It is important to negotiate consensus on objectives at policy, managerial, and working levels.
*• Gender strategy.* Clear operational strategies, which will be used to achieve stated objectives, must identify the incentives, budget, staff, training, and organizational strategies to achieve stated objectives.
*• Gender monitoring and evaluation.* Flexible planning requires gender monitoring and evaluation to enable adjustment to experience and to establish accountability of commitment to achieve gender-specific priorities.

**Gender Analysis Framework**Five major categories of information comprise gender analysis:
• Needs assessment
• Activities profile
• Resources, access, and control profile
• Benefits and incentives analysis
• Institutional constraints and opportunities.

The extent to which information is collected on particular issues depends on the nature of the problems being addressed and the quality and depth of information already available.

Gender Analysis helps to determine:
• How the project will have a differential impact on women and men
• What the constraints or barriers are to women’s and men’s participation
• Recommendations for measures which may be needed to ensure women and men fully benefit from the project

Gender Analysis Components

1. Develop an understanding of the local project context:

A Gender Analysis:

o Acknowledges that any intervention operates within existing social, cultural, economic, environmental, institutional and political structures in any community, institution, region or country.
o Reveals the varied roles played by women and men, girls and boys in the household, community, workplace, political environment and economy.
o Includes details on the socio-economic status of women and society in general and an examination of the various factors that need to be addressed in order to facilitate gender equality.

2. Collect Sex-disaggregated baseline data:

* Data is collected to provide an accurate indication of the situation before any interventions have taken place. This data is later used to compare with the results of future analyses in order to indicate any progress that has occurred.
* Sex-disaggregated baseline data indicates the ratio of men and women in the data collected
* A strong link between the overall project goal and the gender strategy helps determine what information would be useful to collect as sex-disaggregated baseline data.

Examples:

Related Gender Goals and Sex-Disaggregated Baseline Data:

Goal: Increase enrollment and course completion rates of girls in schools

Baseline data**:** Female / male enrollment and course completion dates

Goal:Promote gender equity in staffing
Baseline data**:** Female / male staff income and promotion rates

Goal: Increase of the number of females receiving scholarships

 Baseline data: Female / male participation and recipient rates in scholarship programs

Goal: Increase in number of girls enrolled in non-traditional programs

Baseline data: Female /male enrollment and course completion rates in non-traditional
programs

**How to conduct a Gender Analysis:**
Referring to the gender goal, determine what kind of information is needed as baseline data in order to provide an accurate indication of the situation before the initiation of project interventions.

Begin collecting the baseline data:
o The data should be sex-disaggregated and can come from a number of sources such as census, statistics, surveys, national reports, qualitative interviews, social, cultural, political and economic information, etc.
o The data can be collected from individuals and community representatives from the project pilot areas, local institutions, ministries, publications, etc.

The baseline data compiled is used to:
o Analyze the overall situation at the onset of the project.
o Provide a baseline for which future results can be compared, and,
o Provide further insight into the need for and scope of gender equality measures within the project.

Based on analysis of the data, write a report that provides recommendations on gender equality measures, which will then be used to identify gender equality results in the next step of the process.

**Tools for gender analysis**
Many participatory (PRA) tools can be adapted for gender analysis, particularly at a community level. These are useful in eliciting qualitative data that can be used for planning or for policy influencing. The following table illustrates some PRA methods used by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) for gender analysis in agricultural development planning in Nepal.

**PRA/GA tools from Nepal**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Social and resource mapping  | * Indicate spatial distribution of roads, forests, water resources, institutions,
* Identify households, their ethnic composition and other socioeconomic characteristics/variables.
 |
| Seasonal calendar  | * Assess workload of women and men by seasonality
* Learn cropping patterns, farming systems, gender division of labor, food scarcity, climatic conditions and so forth.
 |
| Economic well being ranking  | * Understand local people’s criteria of wealth.
* Identify relative wealth and the different socio-economic characteristics of households and classes.
* Facilitate formation of focus groups to work with other PRA/GA tools
 |
| Daily activity schedule  | * Identify daily patterns of activity based on gender division of labor on an hourly basis and understand how busy women and men are in a day, how long they work and when they have spare time for social and development activities.
 |
| Resources analyses  | * Indicate access to and control over private, community and public resources by gender.
 |
| Mobility mapping  | * Understand gender equities/inequities in terms of contact of men and women with the outside world.
* Plotting the frequency, distance, and purposes of mobility.
 |
| Decision making matrix  | * Understand decision making on farming practices by gender.
 |
| Venn diagram  | * Identify key actors and establishing their relationships between the village and local people
 |
| Pairwise ranking  | * Identify and prioritize problems as experienced by men and women
 |
| Community action plan  | * Assess the extent to which women’s voices are respected when men and women sit together to identify solutions for the problems prioritized by the latter
* Understand development alternatives and options, and give opportunity to men and women to learn from each other’s experiences and knowledge
 |

Stakeholder disaggregation is clearly important for gender analysis, to ensure that women as well as men are actively involved in processes of analysis. Depending on local circumstances, this may require separate meetings with women at times and in localities that are appropriate to them. It is important to recognize divisions amongst people not only on the basis of gender, but also on the basis of class, ethnicity, age and family composition, and other factors

**Three tips:
1.** Work with women and men as separate stakeholder groups
**2.** Also specify stakeholder groups which include both women and men
**3.** Recognize, where appropriate, different stakeholder groups amongst women (and men)

**(a) Other sources of tools and methods for gender analysis are listed here.**

Matrix calendars and diagrams forroles and responsibilities analysis
http://www.siyanda.org/docs\_gem/index\_sectors/natural/nr\_tools22.htm

Two sorts of matrix and map for control and decision-making
<http://www.siyanda.org/docs_gem/index_sectors/natural/nr_tools23.htm>

Gender Toolkit

<http://www.sdc.admin.ch/index.php?navID=22049&>

 **(b)** **example of use of tool**[http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\_ID=11340&URL\_DO=DO\_TOPIC&URL\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID%3D11340%26URL_DO%3DDO_TOPIC%26URL_SECTION%3D201.html) for gender mainstreaming tools
http://www.prb.org/pdf/ManualIntegrGendr\_Eng.pdf http://www.prb.org/pdf/GuideIncorpGendrConsid.pdf

**(c) list of websites with further examples and information**http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/lib/resource/subject/annotated.pdf
http://www.ciat.cgiar.org/ipra/annual\_report\_2004/ipra\_2004\_output\_3.pdf
http://www.livelihoods.org/info/tools/pas-GENDER.rtf

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| FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS |

Purpose: Focus groups have been increasingly used in participatory assessments and evaluations to identify’ and describe insider perceptions, attitudes, and felt needs.

Focus groups are semi-structured discussions with a small group of persons sharing a common feature (e.g., women of reproductive age, shareholders in an irrigation system, users of a certain service, etc.). A small list of open-ended topics, posed as questions, is used to focus the discussion.

**Steps in using the technique**\* Design a discussion topic guide (interview framework).
\* Decide on the number of focus groups. In a small community, two groups of l-12 persons each and representing key opposing categories (e.g., men and women, peasants and herders, wealthy and poor. etc.) may be sufficient. Be ready to hold additional sessions if the discussion does not succeed (e.g. people don’t show up, the facilitator can’t keep the discussion on course, etc.)
\* Select appropriate facilitators; which may involve matching by age, gender, or language ability (focus groups are best done in the local vernacular). The interviewer acts as a group facilitator, and a second person acts as a reporter (note- taker). The reporter needs to write rapidly to capture people’s expressions as exactly as possible. It may be useful to tape record the session, but only if the community and the group give permission.
\* Conduct practice focus groups with members of a similar nearby community; in small communities, this helps prevent people coming with pre-set answers.
\* Before starting, explain the purpose of the session to the group. After posing topics, be sure each person has at least one opportunity to provide his/her ideas. Over-talkative participants need to be controlled and silent ones stimulated.
\* As with semi-structured interviews (see Annex 7), the facilitator is free to use a variety of probing questions to help extract ideas and to keep the talk focused. Limit the length of the session to about an hour (including introduction).
\* Notes and recordings of interviews should be carefully reviewed immediately after the session (and tape recordings transcribed as soon as possible).
\* Analysis consists of extracting key statements from the discussion. These statements should be reported in the matrix exactly as phrased by the participants.

**Strengths and weaknesses*****+*** Group interaction enriches the quality and quantity of information provided.
***+***Focus group discussions are quite good at disclosing the range and nature of problems, as well as eliciting preliminary ideas about solutions.
- Practice and experience in qualitative research procedures are needed.
- Large amounts of information are easily obtained, necessitating skills in extracting and summarizing for the analysis.

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| SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS |

Purpose: Semi-structured interviews can be used to obtain specific quantitative and qualitative information. Household features, gender-related issues, use of natural resources, household economics, and many other topics can be effectively explored.

Semi-structured interviews are lists of broad, open-ended questions to be addressed to knowledgeable individuals in a conversational, relaxed, and informal way. The interviewer is left free to rephrase these questions and to ask probing questions for added detail (e.g., “Who?”, “Where?”, “When?’, and “How?”) based on respondents’ answers and conversation flow. This form of interview is more likely to yield in-depth opinions and perceptions than can be done with a rigid closed-ended questionnaire.

**Steps in using the tool**\* Design an interview guide and a results summary form.
\* Decide who is going to be interviewed (purposeful sampling procedures); and select

appropriate interviewers. (This may mean matching respondents and interviewers by age or gender, although it will depend on the topic and local cultural values.)
\* Pre-test the questionnaire guides with several individuals who are representative of the types of persons to be interviewed in the actual study. (Make sure the questions are comprehensible, that the answers are relevant, etc.)
\* Conduct a training for all persons who will be doing the interviews (i.e., the interviewers); be sure the training includes a number of practice interviews with other interviewers or community members and a subsequent review to improve performance.
\* Teach the interviewers to make relatively brief notes during the interview, filling-out the summary form immediately after the interview; this will require practice to capture exact words and phrasing for quotations
\* Arrange for daily (or nightly) editing of all forms for completeness, errors, etc.
\* Hold daily discussions about problems encountered during the interviews and to review the preliminary results with other members of the team.

**Strengths and weaknesses+** Less intrusive than questionnaires; can be paced to fit the needs of the respondent
**+**Encourages two-way communication.
**+**Administered in an atmosphere that makes respondents feel at ease, which may include privacy and confidentiality, depending on topic.
**+**Can obtain very detailed information and richly expressive quotations
- Practice and experience are needed for appropriately using this tool; requires sensitivity and the ability to recognize and suppress one’s own biases.
- Interviewers should have good literacy, communication, and summarizing skills.
- Interviewers will need some grasp of the general topics covered in the interview.
- Facilitator support is needed for analyzing data

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| RAPID SURVEYS |

Purpose: Useful for baseline studies or to get a broad perspective on issues affecting the target area.

**Methodology notes:**

• Select 20 questions (or less), fitting on one to three sheets of paper with room for answers
• About 2/3 of questions should be pre-set, the rest to be contributed by or specific to the concerns of the given community
• It should be designed so it can be administered by local people (e.g., local volunteers) in collaboration with trained supervision (e.g., divisional staff)
• It should be designed so it can be analyzed rapidly in the field and raw results given to the community during the field phase
• The survey design should be able to generate reasonable prevalence data for the community (e.g. based on visits to every household, or a sample of households which has been identified and numbered on the social resource map).

**Alternative strategies for identifying information to gather**

• Community-generated: what do community leaders want or need to know that would help them to better serve the needs of their community? Begin with qualitative techniques (focus groups, key informant interviews, etc.) to get community input into what should be included in a survey questionnaire.
• Project-generated, exploratory: what range of activities would the project like to consider for this area? ; what indicators would help in deciding where to focus their efforts?
• Project-generated, specific: based on a selected group of anticipated activities, what indicators would be likely to be measured at the outcome stage (and therefore need to be collected at the baseline for later comparison)?
• Service-related: based on services reportedly available in the area, how often have the individual households received or made use of any services from these various providers and if so, what services?

**Other data considerations**

• Data to be gathered should be useful (i.e., not just collected because at is ‘nice to know’).
• Data should be anticipated to be more accurate (exact) or more accessible through a survey approach than would be possible in group sessions.
• Information to gather at the community level might already be available at a larger scale, but not for the micro-environment of the community, e.g., employment patterns, reasons for school drop-out, nature of disability, adolescent health (sexual and reproductive), latrine quality and usage, etc.

**QUESTION DESIGN FOR SURVEYS AND** **INTERVIEWS
Avoiding inappropriate questions**
To make sure our questions are appropriate, we must become familiar with respondent groups — their knowledge of certain areas, the terms they use, and their perceptions and sensitivities. What may be an excessive burden for one group may not be for another. And what may be a fair question for some may not be for others. For example, in a survey of the handicapped, those who were not obviously handicapped were very sensitive about answering questions while the converse was true for the obviously handicapped.

Questions are inappropriate if they:

• cannot or will not be answered accurately
• are not geared to the respondents’ depth and range of information, knowledge and perceptions
• are not relevant to the evaluation goals
• are not perceived by the respondents as logical and necessary
• require an unreasonable effort to answer
• are threatening or embarrassing
• are vague or ambiguous
• are part of a conscious effort to obtain biased or one-sided results.

The best way to avoid inappropriate questions is to know the respondent group and not rely on stereotypes. A brief story may bring this point home. A researcher was pre-testing a questionnaire on people who used mental health services. During the test, the researchers expressed surprise that this group of respondents could handle certain difficult concepts. Annoyed, one of the respondents rejoined, “I may be crazy, but I’m not stupid.”
[GAO, 1986]

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| MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGE |

Purpose: To identify cases of significant/critical changes – both positive and negative – relating to key objectives, rather than looking for trends related to a certain phenomenon. From an M&E perspective, this method can help track stories of changes related to less easily quantifiable issues, such as "capacity strengthening" or "gender equity".

**How to:**

1. Ask those involved to identify what aspects and types of changes they feel they need to track. These are the "domains" for which critical changes are tracked. This first step in itself is valuable, as it asks the group to identify the issues that they consider critically important for them to achieve – this requires clarity and consensus. These changes can relate directly to the goal and purpose of the project but might also be cross-cutting issues, such as "gender equity", that the implementing partners wish to track. Some examples of domains are:

* changes in people’s participation in credit groups;
* changes in the sustainability of people’s institutions and their activities;
* changes in the use of participatory approaches by partner staff with primary stakeholders;
* changes in the project’s contribution towards influencing government policy.

2. The frequency for discussion also needs to be decided and will depend on the likely rate of change in meeting the objectives. Some changes will take longer to be observable while others may occur on a weekly basis. A simple question is then developed, such as: "Since our last meeting, what has been the single most significant change related to… [INSERT THE DOMAIN]?" or "During the last three months, in our opinion, what do we think was the most significant change… [INSERT THE DOMAIN]?"

3. If discussions take place with a group, as will usually be the case, the need to reach consensus on the single change or event will provoke a rich and detailed review of the experiences of group members over the past period, and much debate about why one change is more significant than another.

4. The answer needs to be verifiable and so should be documented in two parts: (1) a description of what happened, with sufficient detail to allow another person to verify it if necessary (what happened, with whom, where, who was there, when did it take place, etc.), and (2) an explanation of why that particular change has been selected out of all the others that will have been suggested.

5. The findings will relate to positive or negative changes or events that occur as a result of project activities. It is possible to explicitly include both types of change – negative and positive – per domain. Where negative changes are identified, actions can be decided on to prevent or redress the problem. If a positive change is selected, then actions can be agreed to strengthen or spread these.

**Tips on use:**

It is a good idea to do a trial run of the domains before finalizing them, to make sure that the wording of the change domain is clear to everyone.

This method explicitly does not try to identify the average. The selected changes are not representative but are the most significant changes. If someone, from a coordinating committee for example, wishes to know the extent of a particular change, then this change becomes an indicator that is tracked for a defined period of time by everyone.

The original version of this method was used in a hierarchical organizational structure, in which micro-credit groups identified four types of changes. Field staff in turn selected the key changes – per domain – at the project-office level and sent them to headquarters. At headquarters, the stories of change were also selected from those coming from the different project offices and then passed to the biannual meetings of the funding agencies. All the stories of changes (24 in total, 4 domains x 6 months) were collated in the form of four chapters in a report. This shows the ease with which this method managed to synthesize a wide set of experiences into a manageable reporting structure and documentation.

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| INSTITUTIONAL LINKAGE DIAGRAM (OR VENN/CHAPATI DIAGRAM) |

Purpose: To illustrate the extent to which individuals, organizations, projects or services interact with each other and the relative importance (i.e., power dynamics) of each to the issue being evaluated. From an M&E perspective, this method can be used to monitor the quality of relationships and how these relationships are changing and to identify problem areas where corrective action is needed.

**How to:**

1. Start by ensuring that the topic is completely clear for everyone – that you are discussing the relative importance of groups/people/organizations and their interactions. The term "importance" can be interpreted in different ways. It can refer to the nature and quality of relationships, the diversity of linkages, the reasons for contact and the frequency of contact. In addition to discussing organizations, you might also focus on services and programs so agreement must be reached beforehand on what "importance" means.

2. Have a general discussion during which the different groups, people and organizations that relate to the topic are identified. If participants are including many organizations (more than 15-20), it may be necessary to limit the scope in order to have enough time to finish the exercise. You can do this by prioritizing the most relevant groups/people/organizations and focusing your discussion around these.

3. Represent each of the entities identified with a separate circle. First represent the central element to which the others are relating (e.g., a community of primary stakeholders, the project unit or a micro-credit group). You can use paper circles of different sizes or ask participants to draw them. The size of the circle is critical: the larger the circle, the more important the group is for the topic being discussed. And the closer the circles are to each other, the more interaction there is. Overlapping circles represent

groups/people with shared functions and a small circle within a larger circle represents a unit within the larger group/organization.

4. If working with more than one group, compare the diagrams and discuss any differences. Further discussions may focus on areas where problems need resolving, such as conflict resolution or organizational capacity building.

5. Subsequent monitoring events can be tackled in one of two ways:

a) Make a new diagram at each monitoring event that can then be compared with previous diagrams to analyze changes and their causes.

b) Use the first diagram to discuss how the current situation is different and why this is the case.

These changes can be symbolized, for example, with arrows pointing up to show increase, or down to show a decrease, eliminating a circle, adding others, etc.

Whatever approach is used, discussions should focus on the quality, frequency, appearance or disappearance of linkages between the groups.

**Tips on use:**

This method, if facilitated well, provides valuable insights into power structures and decision-making processes. It may help to highlight contrasting perceptions of different roles, responsibilities and linkages, pointing to areas of conflict and dispute and also pointing to ways of resolving these. This method can help identify ways to improve their working relationships with other organizations or groups.

The method works well early on in a self-evaluation process, helping people to locate themselves in relation to other groups or institutions regarding a particular issue.

An institutional linkage diagram can be followed by a ranking exercise by having participants rank relationships and compare these to the recent past.

* Ask participants to identify all of the organizations or groups with whom they have had significant working relationships (past and present). Write these on a card.
* They should then rank these relationships in order of importance (according to performance and viability). Write these rankings on the cards and place them in descending order of importance along the vertical axis of a matrix.
* Define the relationships of the organizations (funding agency, community organization, technical training support, etc.) and write down these classifications along the horizontal axis of the matrix. Fill out the matrix by placing an "X" in each box that matches the organization with the relevant type of relationship.
* Decide on a scoring system (e.g., from 1-5, 1 = "poor, significant improvement required" to 5 = "excellent, almost no improvement required"). Score as a group or individually, the quality of the current relationship with each organization. Write the score to the right of each X.
* Then score each relationship as it existed in the recent past. Write these scores to the left of each "X" in the matrix, using another color. This then shows how the pattern of relationships has evolved over time. See Table3 for an idea of how an institutional matrix would look.

**Table 3. Example of an institutional matrix**

(Note: scores to the left = three years ago, scores to the right = present)

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Donors (Grant Funding Only)**  | **Community Organizations**  | **Technical Training Support**  | **Networking (Peer Organizations**) | **Competition/Rivalry**  |
| Organization 1  | 3 X 5  |   |   |   |   |
| Organization 2  |   | 3 X 4  |   |   |   |
| Organization 3  |   |   |   | 4 X 3  |   |
| Organization 4  |   |   | 3 X 3  |   |   |
| Organization 5  |   |   |   |   | 3 X 1  |
| Organization 6  |   | 2 X 3  |   |   |   |

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| M&E WHEEL (OR “SPIDER WEB”) |

Purpose: To provide a visual index that helps in assessing the issue being monitored or evaluated in terms of its ideal, or in comparing two or more monitoring sites and how they change over time. This method can also be used to measure how well a project is meeting anticipated targets, or how an organization’s capacities change, over time. From an M&E perspective, the spider web provides a visual means of measuring changes in ratings on chosen indicators.

**How to:**

1. Make sure that the topic being assessed is clear. For example, the idea of "the capacity of an organization" (see Figure 3) must be very clear and understood by all of the participants. Have the participants agree on which criteria to use to assess the quality of the topic. These are, in fact, the indicators. For this, you can brainstorm.

2. The selected indicators are arranged in the form of a wheel, with each indicator being one "spoke" as on a bicycle wheel. The spokes are spaced equidistant to one another. The indicators can be represented by words or symbols.

3. Next, participants agree on how to rank each indicator – from 0 as the lowest/worst level to 100 (or 25, 10, etc.) representing the highest/best level. It does not matter if 0 is on the outer edge of the wheel and 100 in the center or the other way around, as long as all the spokes on the wheel are the same.

4. Once the wheel has been made, assess each indicator. If doing this with a group, then there will need to be consensus on the final score (or an average figure). Indicate the place on the spoke that corresponds with the final score given. Then join all the scores, which are marked as points on the spokes, to show what ends up looking like a spider web. A look at the spider web gives a quick overview of key weaknesses and key strengths. The weaker aspects of the issue being assessed are those that have scores closest to 0.

5. Previously made wheels can be revisited at subsequent monitoring sessions in order to compare how the situation changes over time.

**Tips on use:**

The spider web can be used to help represent different organizations’ capacities by grouping the organizations according to sector, for example, in order to assess their overall status or training needs within that sector. However, it only gives an indication of perceptions and direction of change, not precise measurements.

If the wheels are made on overhead transparencies with a standardized size of wheel, the evaluations of several organizations/project areas/etc. or of the same situation over time can be overlaid to see very clearly how they differ or have changed.

Changes in the average opinion or points per indicator form the basis of discussing why such changes have occurred. The larger the point system is, the more complex it can become and also the more meaningless the discussion, as people may not be able to indicate exact numeric differences, for example deciding between 28 or 29 points within a range of 0 to 50. On the other hand, if people are scoring on a scale of 1 to 3, then it will be much easier to reach a general consensus, but then the answer will only serve as an extremely general indication.

**Figure 3: A comparison of two spider webs representing the capacities of two organizations in Nepal at a certain point in time.**



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| SYSTEMS (OR INPUTS-OUTPUTS) DIAGRAM |

Purpose: To allow for a detailed analysis of flows of inputs and outputs in a system (such as a farm, a forest, an organization or even a larger geographical region). Systems diagrams can help to analyze the inputs needed to make the system work, as well as its outputs. From an M&E perspective, this method can help assess, for example, if blockages are being alleviated or new ones emerging, where quantitative gains are being made in terms of output increases, where inputs are preventing progress, etc.

**How to:**

1. Start by representing the system topic at the center of the board, flip chart, sheet of paper, etc.

2. Ask the participant(s) what main activities take place within this system. These are then symbolized around the central topic on the diagram and linked with arrows. If the activities are symbolized or written on loose cards, then it is easier to adjust the diagram as the discussion develops.

3. Ask what inputs are needed for each activity to be possible and what outputs emerge from each activity. These inputs and outputs should be placed on the diagram to show the linkages.

4. As the discussion progresses about the inputs and outputs for each activity, each activity becomes a subsystem and linkages emerge between these subsystems. For example, an output from the activity of crop production, like fodder, will be an input into the activity of livestock management. If useful, numerical properties of flows can also be written in, for example, how many labor days are being invested in the home garden or how much organic fertilizer is being applied in different plots.

5. At each monitoring event, changes in the inputs and outputs are noted either on the systems diagram itself or on a flip chart next to it. Comparing changes in the types and quantities of inputs and outputs is the basis for discussing why such changes might have occurred.

6. If several systems diagrams are made with different stakeholders/groups and aggregation is required for a community or geographic area, these can be compiled and linked within a single diagram. However, you will lose the specificities of individual conditions.

**Tips on use:**

Particular inputs and outputs can be focused upon for greater detail, for example, a commodity flow diagram, which looks at the movement of commodities between areas.

Gender/Age/Well-being-differentiated analyses of systems diagrams allow for detailed insights into how different members of a household or different types of households view changes and bottlenecks in the system.

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