2011

PRA tools for PVCA – a short 'how-to' guide

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5/1/2011

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1. PRA TOOLS AS PART OF A PVCA

A Participatory Vulnerability & Capacity Analysis (PVCA) is an evaluation of the vulnerabilities and capacities of a community that integrates the knowledge and opinions of the local people and aims at designing emergency plans, therefore providing the best results and most trustworthy primary data in understanding the disaster risk profile of communities. These assessments are conducted in order to examine how local livelihoods might respond to disasters should they occur, or if any other social and/or physical changes take place that might affect the wellbeing and livelihoods of a community [1].

A successful PVCA is carried out by way of organising group meetings and exercises following the PRA (Participatory Rural – and urban – Assessment) methodology. PRA tools are designed to facilitate the process of communicating and visualising the various aspects of a community's life and resources with the aim of offsetting biases. Partners carrying out a PVCA within a community will act as *facilitators* only, and they will understand their role is that to simply *assist* in the process by moderating during exercises, act as a prompting channel between the various individuals of a group during discussions and equally integrating all people as well as making sure that everyone is allowed and able to express their opinions [2]. In other words, a facilitator's job is that to aid discussions and consensus by providing a structured and stimulating environment [3] whilst at the same time being susceptible to the differences people taking part in the PVCA have in preferences and visualisation of concepts. To accommodate all of these requirements the PRA tools have to be applied carefully and in an appropriate manner [2]. People need to feel inspired by the exercises, and not burdened.

The strength in using PRA methods in all PVCAs is that via the use of 'tools' such as mapping, diagramming, discussions, visualising, scoring and ranking the processes and results of the analysis will be *shared* between the team of facilitators and the community members, for this reason it is very important that questions and results should use locally comprehensible symbols [2; 4]. PRA tools are designed to generate discussions and facilitate participation of all people involved in the process including those that might, at other times, be marginalised. These exercises are very effective in highlighting key information that is not always clearly apparent, and they have been intended to *empower* people. As a result a community will become less reliant on external agencies by taking an active role and becoming responsible for improving their situation by means of collectively reflecting, analysing and acting on their capacities and vulnerabilities.

Tips for successfully using PRA tools:

The aim of carrying out a PVCA using PRA tools is for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) to be achieved by enhancing the skills, knowledge and capacities of local communities so that they can learn to analyse vulnerable conditions, find ways to solve hazard-related problems, develop strategies for DRR and establish an organisation to implement disaster risk management tasks [1]. The facilitator should *never* lecture, interfere or interrupt during exercises. He/She should look, listen, learn and *facilitate*. Once a task is initiated people should be left to get on with it and have time to think or discuss amongst themselves. All exercises should be carried out in a relaxed manner and should never be rushed. It would be preferable when possible to use three sources of information in order to triangulate (cross check) all the answers [5]. In group discussions and during exercises about the hazards a community faces people should be encouraged to answer these questions [1]:

- **WHO** is affected?
- **HOW** are they affected?
- **WHY** are they affected?
- **WHEN** are they affected?
- **WHAT** happens when they are affected?
- **HOW** do they currently cope with the hazards?

2. TRANSECT WALK

A Transect walk will often be the first thing that facilitators and members of the community do together, as it is a very useful way to become acquainted with the village and its inhabitants by way of informal talks. A walk will serve to create hazard awareness within the community and will provide the facilitators with useful information including the presence of any excluded inhabitants, how densely populated the community is, the historical development of the village, it will give you an idea about the type, location and distribution of the main resources, landscapes and main land-use and will help establish that everybody is informed about future gatherings [1; 6; 7]. As a tool however, it should ideally be supplemented with other methods of data collection to provide a better wealth of and more complete information, especially regarding the links between processes of vulnerability and specific hazards. During the walk data is collected along prearranged routes - the *transect* (Figure 1) - by the facilitator and one or more key informants.

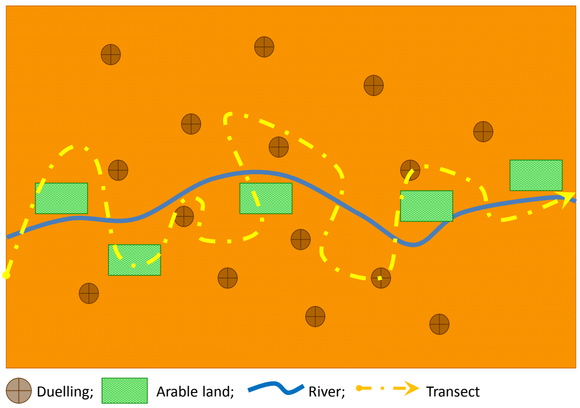


Figure 1: Transect walk though a village

The walk will allow for a direct observation of land uses, living conditions, and possible segregation of different groups. It can also easily become a mobile interview of all the people met along the way. Transect walks can also be carried out to provide temporal comparisons of the resources by changing it into an *historical transect diagram*, where trends (i.e. different climate, crops, livestock) are recorded on the same transect for different periods, so that changes in time can be recorder [1; 8].

Material needed:

Hardback notebook and pens to document the walk and interviews along the transect. Cameras and recorders could be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the walk if the participants are comfortable with the equipment.

How to do a Transect Walk:

This exercise should not be rushed and should last at least 90 minutes. Depending on the number of facilitators split the team into groups of at least 2 people (a moderator and a note/record taker) and ask some locals – *mixed in gender and age* - to guide you during the walk. It would be very useful to form at least one women's group with a female guide. The groups should walk in different directions and go beyond the village boundaries into the fields and questions relevant to the community and village should be asked to prompt talks and people sharing personal experiences (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Transect walk in Tanzania (Photo: CPAR©)

It is important to maintain an informal and relaxed atmosphere throughout the exercise and to avoid sounding as if people are being interrogated. During the walk attention should be paid to the surroundings, infrastructure (e.g. roads, paths, water pumps etc.), and people's activities, different styles of houses and so on. Discussions about those observations with guides are encouraged as well as talks with the local people that are met along the way, making sure that they have been informed about any future meetings. In cases when people are unaware of planned gatherings they should be briefly explained the purpose of the village forums and invited to participate.

Facilitators should let the guides draw a map of the area being walked, including all private and communal buildings, resources and potential hazards. At the end of the walks all the different groups should get back together to exchange observations and experiences, and integrate all the maps into a larger one. The facilitators *should not* draw the maps for the people, but should instead summarise and document all the information gathered, as it will be used for further analysis during future gatherings [3; 6], and should make sure that a*ll* participants to the exercise contribute to the construction of the transect maps. In cases where some groups of people don't feel comfortable or may not be accustomed to using pens and papers other materials such as stones and sticks applied on a map scratched onto the ground can be used. Again, the facilitator should not intervene in drawing the map, but should simply record separately all the information.

3. FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSIONS

A focus (small) group discussion is a data collection exercise that take places in instances when there is wide range of facts, experiences and opinions amongst the various participants, or when there may be sensitivity in openly divulging and/or discussing a group's information [7]. The focus group will take form in a carefully planned discussion between about 10 people and a moderator and aims at obtaining diverse ideas and perceptions on a topic of interest in an informal and tolerant environment where the expression of different views will be welcomed without the pressure for consensus.

These discussions are useful because dialogue triggers the sharing of one another's personal experiences and perspectives thus generating a wealth of information [9]. Furthermore, these gatherings provide first hand information from the individuals who have a personal interest the issues discussed and/or hold expert knowledge about a topic of which little is known by the facilitators. A limitation of focus groups discussions, however, is that they are very susceptible to the biases brought in by the facilitators, which can undermine the substance and authenticity of the information [9].

Material needed:

Notebooks and pens will be used by the note taker to record the discussion. Flip charts and markers of different colours can be used by the facilitator to aid the discussion by writing down or drawing some of the salient points. Tape recorders to create backup copies of the results may be used in circumstances where the participants feel comfortable with such equipment. The location for focus group discussions should be convenient, comfortable, and quiet. It should provide a degree of privacy (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Focus group discussion in Booma Village, Uganda (Photo: Schistosomiasis Research Group)

How to do a Focus Group Discussion:

The individuals invited to take part in the exercise will be those people possessing important knowledge about particular experiences, needs and perspectives and that at the same time will be representative of the whole community. It is usually preferable to have more than one facilitator in those discussions, so that while one person can facilitate communication amongst the participants, one or more people can make a record of what is being said. Groups that are made of less than 7 people might results in a narrow range of ideas and opinions, while groups that are made of more than 10 people could be difficult to moderate and record [9]. Before the focus group discussion can start the facilitators should conduct separate sessions with each different interest group of the community in order to familiarise, understand and record their concern. These separate sessions will also be of help with those groups that may find it difficult at first to work together with the whole community. These small consultations will provide a background of the critical issues affecting the community and basic awareness of sensitive issues that may cause offence if openly discussed in larger groups.

Once the separate sessions have concluded, all the participants will meet in order to communicate and discuss their problems, opinions and ideas with each other. Because participants often will not know what to expect from these group discussions and they will be made to feel more at ease if the facilitator outlines the format and purpose of the exercise before it starts. People should be told that the exercise will be carried out in an informal manner, that everyone will be expected to participate and that divergent views are welcome [9; 10]. The aim of group discussions is not to create an ideologically homogenous community, but to increase people's tolerance, understanding and cooperation across the whole village. It is the facilitator's task to help with this process [3; 9].

During these gatherings it is not uncommon for a few individuals to be more dominant in the discussion than others (for example in mixed gender groups one gender might be more dominant than the other). In cases when an individual has spoken for an extended period of time it is ok for the facilitator to politely intervene, give a summary of the point and then refocus the discussion. Also, to even out the participation of all people the moderator might decide to address question to those people that seem more reluctant to talk.

The focus group discussion should last at least 1 to 1 and half hour, but can often run a little longer. Hand written notes should be accurate, extensive and should also include observations of non verbal behaviour such as facial expressions, hand movements and general group dynamics [9].

4. TIMELINES

A timeline (or historical profile) is an interviewing tool that relies on the knowledge of some members of a community to describe the history of the village and record the important historical events as perceived by the community themselves [11]. By drawing a timeline, which in effect is a linear picture of past events, the community can learn to temporally trace the disasters they have experienced, but more importantly they can track the frequency with which each different disaster affects their lives, changes in their environment and its behaviour, understand the causal links of the disasters and the links with the community's vulnerabilities, and how the people have adapted and developed specific response mechanisms over the years [12; 13].

Material needed:

Pens, large pieces of paper, markers of different colours are used to draw the timelines following the recollections of disasters by the participants. Alternatively a chalkboard and chalks of different colours or readily available local materials can be used. Cameras and recorders can be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the timeline if the participants are comfortable with the equipment. Otherwise the facilitators should make sure they have paper and pens to draw a record of the finished timeline.

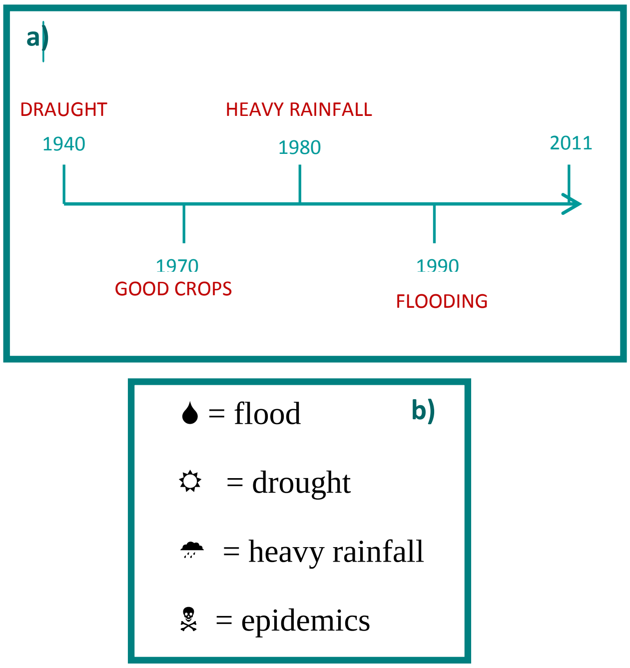
How to do a Timeline:

The facilitator should begin the exercise by clearly defining the topics for which information needs to be collected, i.e. hazards, food security etc. and should then be able to maintain the focus of the participants on the selected topics. A timeline, or historical profile, is created by the community as a chart showing the key aspects of their lives that have contributed to their changed over time. These changes may be in the way and places where housing are constructed, changes in the density and types of trees, river levels, differences in the number and type of livestock and/or hazard [7].

The tool aims at helping people think about how susceptible to certain risks they are and may continue to be in the future. To make the information gathered solid and relevant to the exercise the participants should have lived in the community for sometimes, and are therefore aware of its history, and should comprise a selection of people to represent all members of the community. A group discussion should be planned so that people can be asked to consider all the major events that have occurred related to the topics selected. All the information has to be captured chronologically on a large piece of paper or chalkboard (Figure 4 a). Alternatively, a timeline can also be drawn on the ground with sticks if the participants feel more comfortable using local materials. In the case where a chalkboard or local materials are being used a copy of the finished timeline should be recorder on paper by the facilitators.

Depending on the literacy level and requirements of the people talking part in the exercise, symbols might be more appropriate than writing. Participants should agree and be clear about what item each symbol will represent (house, people, trees etc) and which value of that item (1, 10, or 100) it will represent (Figure 4 b). All the information should be triangulated with other sources in order to ensure its validity.

Figure 4: a) Simple example of a chronological timeline; b) Examples of symbols that could be used during the making of a timeline



Once the timeline is finished the results should provide an insight into the development of the community over time in terms of past hazards and changes in their nature, intensity and behaviour as well as changes (or lack thereof) in the response mechanisms of the people. This is a good stepping stone for encouraging discussion on what projects would be relevant for the future and on how to improve the community's capacities in the event of future disasters [11; 13].

5. SOCIAL MAPPING

Social mapping takes the form of a visual representation of a community in terms of, for example, resources, demography, ethno-linguistics, health patterns and wealth [3; 12] and one of the best tools used to understand some of the less sensitive aspects of the social interactions within a community. Once discussions about the social relationships present in a community are completed and a final map/diagram is drawn, it will be used to facilitate further discussions about how to improve those aspects of everyday life that might hinder improvements in the community resilience and collaboration when affected by external factors such as hazards [8].

Material needed:

Pens, large pieces of paper and markers of different colours are used to draw the maps. Alternatively a chalkboard and chalks of different colours or readily available local materials can be used. Cameras and recorders can be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the discussions during the exercise and of the finished social maps if the participants are comfortable with the equipment. Otherwise the facilitators should make sure they have paper and pens to draw a record of the finished timeline. Some participants however might prefer to use materials that best suit the way they visualise things or their level of literacy (e.g. objects/stones on ground etc).

How to do a Social Map:

Like in the case of all the other exercises the participants that will work on the social mapping of the community should be representative of all the people the map will describe. Once again, the facilitator should only act as a catalyst for discussion amongst the participants and should not take part in the making of the map. A second facilitator should be present in the role of note taker to document not only the finished map, but also the discussion that will lead to it being produced.

One way of mapping the social interactions of a community is to construct a Venn diagram. This can be done on a chalk board, scratched onto the ground, on paper or in any manner that is preferable to the participants and that will be understood by the community as a whole, as long as the note taker documents the final map on paper or on camera. A Venn diagram helps identify and establish the relationships between a community and its environment by describing them as a simple collection of circles that denote the different groups existing in the community, and that overlap according to those groups' interactions with each other. The size of the circles represents the importance of each group in the eyes of the participants, while the amount of overlap between two circles indicates the amount of collaboration between the two groups (Figure 5) [3; 6]. In cases where illiteracy is high amongst the community social mapping can be carried out by using objects or symbols instead of words and numbers, like in the case for producing Timelines [8].

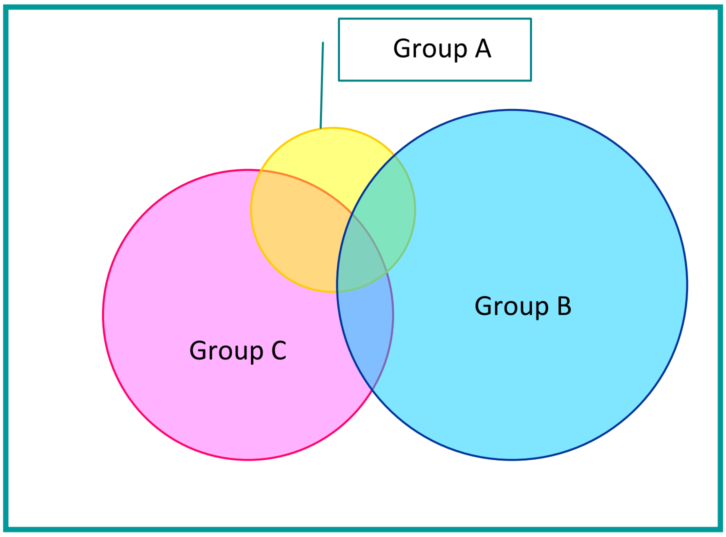


Figure 5: Simple Venn diagram showing the interaction between three groups of a community and their importance.

The use of Venn diagrams provide participants with a powerful tool that can help identify and visualise all institutions (local or indigenous, formal or informal) such as communal work groups, village councils etc, and can to discover the relationships between them. More importantly, this exercise highlights the local perceptions about how important or influential such institutions are. The complete diagram should then be used to focus further discussions to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the various institutions and their contributions (or constraints) to the development of the community [6]. Maps will be revised many times in order to include those resources that might have been forgotten at first, therefore the facilitators should only make a copy of the map once all discussions have terminated and a final map has been agreed by all participants.

6. RANKING; SCORING & WEALTH RANKING

Ranking means placing something in order so that a group of similar things (e.g. hazards) is evaluated according to a set of criteria (e.g. occurs every year, impact on livelihood, impact on houses) and assigned a value (e.g. 1 to 5). The degree to which different hazards affect people, property, resources, infrastructures and other elements is demonstrated by asking those people to set a criteria for scoring, and then to rank the different disasters that they experience. The result will show the kind of hazards people feel affect them the most, and will also provide a tool to assess the importance of different activities in the community's livelihoods, although Ranking can also be used to assess the differences in wealth amongst a community [7; 8].

This tool is used to quickly identify problem areas and preferences as individuals see them and compare them with the assessment of others. It is also a useful guide to rank problems in terms of:

- What can be ***changed*** about the situation?
- What can be ***influenced*** about the situation?
- What must be ***accepted*** about the situation?

Ranking and scoring help the community decide themselves what is a priority to be addressed and assign a value to a wide range of variables. The benefit of this tool is that it accentuates people's expectations, beliefs; judgement, attitudes, preferences and opinions. It takes the participants one step further in their critical thinking, as well as in the analysis of their situation [13].

Material needed:

Pens, large pieces of paper and markers of different colours are used to draw the ranking grids. Cameras and recorders can be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the discussions during the exercise and finished ranking tables if the participants are comfortable with the equipment. Otherwise the facilitators should make sure they have paper and pens to draw a record of the finished product. Some participants however might prefer to use materials that best suit the way they visualise things or their level of literacy (e.g. readily available local materials such as stones, seeds, beans etc.)

How to do Raking & Scoring:

The ranking/scoring tool involves the assigning of relative importance of different items on a grid. The first step in this exercise will be to select a number of participants that will be representative of the whole community. These participants will then be asked to agree on a criterion they feel is important and need to be compared with the list of things to be ranked against (e.g. a list of main hazards against what they are more likely to disrupt). During this exercise it is better to define the criteria positively e.g. "prevents water pollution" instead of "pollutes water". The participants will at this point need to place the items in order of importance (1st; 2nd; 3rd etc) by using numbers or if preferred counters such as seeds, stones, nuts etc. (Figure 6 a & b).

Scoring methods will require the assigning of a value to a specific item. The proportion of counters, or the numerical value, placed next to each item is then used to assess the relationship between 2 or more given variables [11]. This can be done on a scale (e.g. 1 to 10) or by allocating a fixed number of stones for each criterion and then dividing it between all of the items being ranked. Before people start ranking, all have to agree which number on the scale, either the 1 or the 10, represent the positive assessment.

Figure 6a): Ranking using local materials (Abebe©) and b): Ranking of food sources (FIC©)

During the exercise one facilitator should take notes on the discussion taking place and document the final product of the exercise, while another facilitator should prompt people to give details by, for example, asking the participants which problems they think are the biggest and carry on until all combinations have been exhausted. All the results should then be entered into a table (Figure 7).

	FLOODING (CRITERIA)	FIRES	EARTHQUAKES	EXTREME WEATHER
HOUSES	2	5	5	5
FOOD STOCK	3	5	4	5
WATER SUPPLY	1	2	4	1
LIVESTOCK	4	3	5	4
EPIDEMICS	5	1	3	2

Figure 7: Table showing the ranking of possible hazards against a list of things they are most likely to affect.

Finally, all the participants should analyse and interpret the results by trying to identify which criterion is more dominant, which is less important, and what should be given priority [13].

Wealth ranking is used to identify the local perceptions of wealth, well-being and inequality and to find out the socio-economic groups present in the community.

The participants must agree in advance on a wealth 'scale' (criteria) to use when ranking the different households present in the community. A list of these households should then be compiled, with the names of each house-head written on a separate card. A group of participants (which will know the community and its inhabitants very well) should sort the cards into as many piles of wealth there are in the criteria. All participants should then discuss their perceived differences amongst the piles. The discussion, local criteria and indicators of wealth derived from the ranking exercise should be recorded in detail by the note taker [7].

7. POWER STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

A Power Structure Analysis is similar to a Social Map but, as the name suggests, it focuses more on the social and institutional hierarchy of the community rather than the less sensitive issues such as the distribution of resources, health patterns and demography that are found on the social map [3; 7; 12]. The analyses should also emphasizing the social and economic differences between the households and the perceptions of significance that each group and organisation have of each other. The exercise consists in the making of a table or map that will show key institutional organisations and all community groups as well as the nature of the relationships between them. The final results of the analysis should stimulate discussions on the role that each group and institution play during disasters [7; 13]. Wealth Ranking should also be integrated in this analysis to help participants learn about their perception of wealth differences and inequality within the community and to identify and understand the indicators of wealth and well-being [7].

Material needed:

Material: Pens, large pieces of paper and markers of different colours are used to draw the map and the ranking grid. Cameras and recorders can be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the discussions during the exercise and of the finished map if the participants are comfortable with the equipment. Some participants might prefer to use materials that best suit the way they visualise things or their level of literacy (e.g. readily available local materials such as stones, seeds, beans etc.). This exercise should take place in a large open space where everyone can see the map. If the map is drawn on the ground the facilitator should make sure to have paper onto which a copy of the finished map can be recorder [6; 7].

How to do a Power Structure Analysis:

This exercise will take approximately 2 hours to complete, but participants should not be rushed to finish within this timeframe. Two facilitators should be present: one to moderate during the discussions and another to take notes and document the exercise. It would be useful for the facilitator acting as the moderator to be familiar with the various groups and institutions of the community in advance. The first step is for participants to develop set criteria for determining the importance of each group and organisation in the community. They should think about the extent to which each of these groups are linked to each other and note the kind of relationships amongst them in order to provide information on how well they function and work and coordinate with each other (a Venn diagram - Section 5 - could be used to help visualise those relationships). This stage of the exercise will help understand who plays an important role during disasters and in community-level decision making processes, as well as giving the opportunity to improve relationships. The participants should draw a map of all the households in the village/community as well as roads and important spots and changes in the layout of the village in recent years should be discussed (e.g. has the number of households changed and how? Why did these changes occurred and what problems, if any, did they cause?). The map should also include institutions, buildings and places that offer social services (schools, churches, health centres, and traditional healers) and show the location of all the groups in a community (ethnic, religious, gender...). Each group should be assigned a symbol to indicate their location on the map (Figure 8) [7; 13].

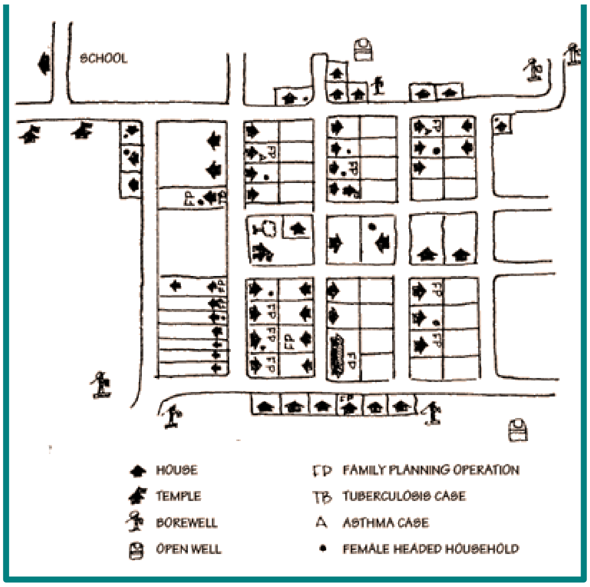


Figure 8: Village map showing households and social institutions (Picture: Tearfund©).

A wealth ranking (Section 6) should be integrated in the map, and a copy of the finished result should be documented. The note taker must make sure that all the important points of the discussion are documented. To help moderate the exercise the facilitator could think of the following key questions for the participants:

- What are the approximate boundaries of the village with regards to social interaction and social services?
- How many houses are in the village/community and where are they located?
- Is the number of houses shrank or grown in recent years?
- What are the social structures and institutions found in the community/village?

- What religious groups are there? And where are they located?
- What ethnic groups are there, and where are they located?
- Are there female Headed Households and where are they located?

[7; 13]

8. SEASONAL DIGRAMS AND CALENDARS

The drawing of seasonal diagrams and calendars offer a visual representation of the temporal distribution of a community's resources such as economic activities, production activities, epidemics, migration and natural phenomena. At the same time it allows people to plot their strategies, such as diversifying livelihoods, in order to cope with the recurring hazards [7].These diagrammatic representations of the various activities and problems can also be used to show when different resources and products are most used, and therefore how disaster management activities can fit in seasonally with the other livelihoods activities [8].

Material needed:

Materials needed: flipchart paper, markers of different colours or alternatively a large area of bare ground, a stick, and local material such as many small stones, seeds, beans, nuts or other small objects. Cameras and recorders can be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the discussions during the exercise and of the final diagram if the participants are comfortable with the equipment. The ideal workplace is a large enough place for participants to see and add to the diagram [14].

How to do a Seasonal Calendar/Diagram:

At least two facilitators should be present during this exercise: one to moderate the discussion, while the other will be the note taker recording and documenting the event and the final diagrams. Gatherings for drawing seasonal calendars should be mixed gender in order to document gender-specific workload. A successful seasonal calendar will indicate information such as the busiest months of the year, when the food become scarce, yearly variation in the gender-specific income, variations in rainfall, drinking water availability and all other information that is pertinent to the community's livelihoods. The exercise should start with the facilitators describing how the activity will take place and its purpose and emphasising there is no necessary for people to agree on everything but that respect should be prominent during the discussions: participants should not judge, interrupt, or ridicule others.

The participants should start by agreeing on the issues they believe are important for the wellbeing of the community and that should be discussed. The calendar can be drawn on the ground or on paper and should have 12 columns, each indicating a month of the year by their names or by recognisable symbols, and enough rows to accommodate the issues that have been agreed upon. If the participants are more familiar with the idea of seasons rather than months local seasonal descriptions can be used instead. Also, if literacy is low within the group, symbols can be used rather than words to describe the topics of discussion.

A good way to start the calendar is by recording rainfall patterns: choose a symbol for rain and place/draw it in the row that will now be used to illustrate rainfall. Ask the villagers to indicate the month (or season) in which rainfall is most prevalent. Depending on how dominant the issue is during a given month, the participants can chose to either rate it on a scale of 1 to 10 (0 = no prevalence; 1 = very low prevalence and 10= very high prevalence) or use local material instead (e.g. stones, beans etc) with the higher number of stones representing the higher rainfall levels (Figure 9). The participant will repeat this stage for all the issues present of the diagram until all have been covered. The facilitators should allow plenty of time for the people to think and discuss amongst themselves their answers, while the note taker should listen for points of disagreement, and note any theme that emerge during the exercise [6; 14].

Figure 9: Table showing a seasonal calendar. The months are on one axis and issues relevant to the well being of a community on the other. Symbols are used to depict these issues. The number of symbols used indicates the prevalence of each of the issue in a particular month.

	Rainfall	Flooding	Drought
January	🌧 🌧 🌧	💧💧💧💧💧💧💧💧💧	☼
February			
March			
April	🌧 🌧	💧💧💧	☼☼
May			
June			
July			
August	🌧	💧	☼☼☼
September			
October			
November			
December			

Once the diagram is completed further discussions should be facilitated. The following questions can be used by the facilitator as a guide:

- Was the group able to easily agree on the high and low prevalence for each season/month? If there were any sources of disagreement, what were they?
- Can the group see any patterns in the diagram?
- Can the group see any causality in the reasons for high prevalence during a period?
- Can the situation be improved, and how?
- Do problems affect different groups in the community (gender, wealth, age etc.) indifferent ways during certain seasons? Can these differences be explained?
- What can people do, as individuals, to address these problems and what can other community members do?

[14]

9. ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The development of an action plan is the culminating point of the PVCA. All the exercises carried out so far will have equipped the participants and facilitators with a range of information about people, their environment and resources that can be collated together to establish the vulnerabilities and capacities of the community as a whole. The developing of an action plan is a consensus-building tool aimed at identifying the environmental and/or livelihoods problems and to solve them with the input and support of the community [7]. The aim of this tool is to increase the level of understanding of risk and disaster risk reduction (DRR) by all the participants and to help reach a consensus on proposed new activities that would help improve the resilience and development of a community [16].

Material needed:

Very few materials are required for an action plan at community level: flipchart paper, markers of different colours or alternatively a large area of bare ground, a stick, and local material such as many small stones, seeds, beans, nuts or other small objects. Cameras and recorders can be used to provide visual and audio documentation of the discussions during the exercise and of the final plan if the participants are comfortable with the equipment. However the intention is to focus on discussions rather than the written word, especially if literacy amongst the participants is low [15].

How to do a Seasonal Calendar/Diagram:

This exercise should be carried out by at least two facilitators plus a note taker. The ideal workplace is a large enough place for participants to see and add to the diagram and where discussions can take place comfortably (Figure 10).

Figure 10: The making of an Action Plan. (Practical Action©)

The participants will be representative of the whole community and the plan should aim at answering questions such as:

- Will the proposed actions bring the desired reduction of vulnerability?
- How can resilience be improved?
- What predictions can be made in regards to what vulnerability to disasters is likely to be in the future?
- What new threats are likely to arise? And how would people be affected and cope?

It may be useful for the facilitators to encourage people to think in terms of protection, empowerment strategies and actions, to summarise existing vulnerabilities, hazards, causes, capacities and community actions. The exercise should involve the drafting of a feasible action plan and the drawing up of all the roles and responsibilities to be shared during disasters. The *purpose* of an action plan development is to provide support for the local people whilst at the same time empowering the community and rendering it more self reliant by finalising a working plan and taking the first steps towards implementing it. The *approach* of the exercise consists in setting up discussions and negotiations between all the participants in order for a detailed work plan proposal to be made. The *process* involves the facilitators encouraging the participants to identify realistic schedules and stages implementation. Unlike for the other exercises, in this case it is important that an agreement is reached on the specific roles and responsibilities regarding the implementation of the plan [15; 16].

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