GUIDANCE ON PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENTS

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This guidance was informed by CRS staff's experience and challenges in using the CRS *Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal: A Manual for Field Workers and Partners* and implementing participatory assessments and community mobilization processes in Afghanistan, India and elsewhere.

Table of Contents

Introduction

This document gives guidance on how to use participatory methods to conduct needs assessments.

Why?

- A strong assessment is the key to good problem analysis and project design.
- The assessment gathers the information required to develop the program strategy and ProFrame, including the definition of indicators.
- Participatory methods are the best way to ensure that the project design is relevant to the people we serve, by giving a voice to the most marginalized and most vulnerable households and communities and helping us to understand how their needs may be different from others.

Definitions

Assessment: Exercise to gather information for the project design (not to be confused with a baseline survey—see below).

Rapid rural appraisal: Participatory assessment in a few (purposefully sampled but not statistically representative) locations as part of the project design.

Participatory rural appraisal: Method to raise awareness of key issues and mobilize and empower the community to make decisions for themselves as part of the project start-up.[1]

Baseline survey: Systematic collection of data required to measure project indicators in a (typically representative) sample of target locations at the time of project start-up.

How?

There are three steps in conducting a participatory needs assessment:

1. **Plan for the assessment.** Decide what information to collect, where to collect it, who to talk to and which methods to use by analyzing existing information.
2. **Conduct the assessment.** Use participatory tools such as transect walk, interviews, mapping, ranking, calendars and focus group discussions.
3. **Analyze the findings.** Refer to analysis tools, such as tables and matrices.

Each of these steps is discussed in more detail below.

[1] Use of the RRA and PRA tools (see Annex 5 or *RRA/PRA Manual*) alone does not make an assessment participatory. The tools could be used in a nonparticipatory way (e.g., if the facilitator discourages open debate, if more privileged community members dominate the discussion or if certain people are excluded).

I. Plan for the Assessment

Standard for assessment planning:
1. Conduct every assessment based on an assessment plan.

Assessment planning is the process of deciding what information to collect, and how, where, when and from whom. Good planning is the secret to a good assessment.

Tips and best practices

- Don't waste time and human resources. First think hard about what information you need and how best to collect it.
- Ensure you collect all the information needed, and remain flexible to hear what different groups in the community have to say.
- Plan for sufficient time to analyze initial results regularly, including a session at the end of each day to analyze data and adapt the plan.

1. Set your assessment objectives

Standards for assessment objectives:
1. Collect essential information only. 2. Thoroughly review secondary sources and existing information before designing the assessment.

Steps

- Identify gaps and further information needs.
- Define the objective by asking yourself why you are conducting this assessment and what you will use the information for.
- Enter this information under "why?" in the Step 1 column of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Tips and best practices

- It may be helpful to use tools such as the problem tree or integral human development (IHD) conceptual framework to analyze existing information.
- Focus on what you need to know, not what would be nice to know.
- Be very specific!

Example of a weak objective:

- To learn more about livelihoods in the geographic area.

Better examples:

- To understand the factors contributing to livelihoods vulnerability in the geographic area.
- To identify livelihood-related vulnerabilities that are specific to men and women in the household.
- To identify key entry points for supporting the livelihoods of more vulnerable households.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1*, 4 (broad objectives), *Volume 2,* 30–34 (setting objectives).
- Stetson et al., *ProPack I*, 51–56 (IHD), 66–68 (setting objectives).

2. Select your specific assessment questions

Standard for assessment questions:

1. Questions should specify the information needs under each assessment objective.

Steps

- Use assessment questions to structure the assessment, in outline assessment tools and in the participatory analysis of assessment data.
- Assessment questions can be used to understand how the situation or context varies between different types of individuals, households, communities or geographic areas.
- Enter this information under "what?" in the Step 2 column of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Tips and best practices

- Limit the number of assessment questions to three or less for each assessment objective.
- Include the words "why" or "how" in assessment questions to encourage staff to probe further during data collection and during analysis.

For the assessment objective "to understand the factors contributing to livelihoods vulnerability in the geographic area," examples of good assessment questions would be:

- Which livelihood strategies are most vulnerable to climate-related shocks and why?
- How do seasonal factors contribute to the vulnerability of common livelihood strategies?
- How does livelihood vulnerability vary between highland and lowland areas and why?

3. Decide what methods to use

Standards for participatory assessment methods:

1. Use participatory methods for assessments at the community level to give a voice to the most marginalized and most vulnerable households and communities, and to help us understand how their needs may be different from others.
2. Experienced and trained facilitators should use the participatory tools in the community.

Steps

- Become familiar with the full range of participatory research assessment (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) tools that can be used for participatory assessments.
- Choose the most appropriate set of tools for your information needs.
- Adapt the guidelines for the chosen tools to meet your information needs.
- Enter this information under "how?" in the Step 3 column of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Tips and best practices

- Select the minimum complement of tools to meet your information needs.
- Adapt the participatory tools for your information needs.

Sequencing

When deciding on the order of PRA or RRA activities and tools, the following considerations may be helpful:

1. Move from more general to more specific information.
2. Move from less sensitive to more sensitive issues.
3. Build on the information you have already collected to increase your knowledge as you move further into the assessment.

The same applies to the sequence of questions in an interview or FGD—move from general to more specific. (See *RRA/PRA Manual*, 45–46)

- Use maps, transect walks and calendars to collect general information and identify issues ("what").
- Use ranking, matrices and calendars to refine "who" (e.g., who is worst affected, who does what when).
- Use focus group discussions (FGD) to probe further into "why" and "how."
- Plan to cover multiple information needs with each tool, where possible.
- Sequence the tools, starting with those that collect more general information, then more focused (or sensitive) information. Start with those that involve the whole community, and then move to those that involve more carefully chosen subgroups. The order in which the tools are used can make them more or less effective.
- Ensure that participatory tools are well facilitated so they are truly participatory.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 42 (matching objectives and tools).

4. Decide who to talk to

Standards for assessing who to talk to:

1. Identify the groups and subgroups in the community whose perspectives are necessary to understand the given issue.
2. Give groups or subgroups who normally have little voice within the community opportunities to speak openly during the assessment.

Steps

- Identify the groups and subgroups who (based on existing knowledge of the context or secondary source analysis) may have different needs and different levels of voice so that you design the assessment to hear the needs of those with little public voice.
- Identify who to talk to at the national or provincial level (government officials, NGO or church representatives) as well as at the community level.
- Seek to understand the group or social dynamics within the community and issues that tend to divide, or bring together, various groups and subgroups.
- Enter this information under "how?" in the Step 3 column of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Triangulation

Triangulation is the principle of using three different sources or methods to improve the reliability of information.

Triangulation applies at different levels:

1. To gather a range of perspectives to see the full picture. For example, to establish the number of school dropouts, triangulating can mean asking the same information of three different sources, such as the government education officer, schools and local nongovernmental organizations.
2. To verify information provided by key respondents. For example, to understand why students drop out, triangulating can mean holding the same interview or FGD with three people or groups with the same characteristics. This helps verify whether responses are representative of the group, not simply an individual perspective.

Tips and best practices

- Identify all possible groups and subgroups with diverging needs, and target the specific subgroups, households and individuals who typically do not have much voice (i.e., who will not necessarily influence the results of tools done with the full community).
- Households are not homogeneous! Think of characteristics of households or individuals that may be relevant to your information needs: gender, age, positive or negative deviants.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 70–71 (selecting participants).

Definitions
Stakeholders: The individuals, groups and institutions who are likely to have some level of interest in or influence over a project. Stakeholder analysis is more applicable at the project design stage because there is not yet a specific project during assessment planning. **Respondents**: People who answer questions or take part in discussions during the needs assessment. **Key informants**: Individuals who are well informed on a particular issue due to their job, position in society, or success in a chosen field. They are invited to take part in the assessment to share their specialist knowledge.

5. Decide where to conduct the assessment

Standard for where to conduct the assessment:
1. The assessment is conducted where the problem is at its most severe, and gathers information from the people who are worst affected.

Steps

- Use secondary sources to conduct macroanalysis to identify areas of high risk, acute need and gaps in assistance. Relate back to the assessment objectives to develop criteria for the site selection.
- Decide which information will be collected through key informant interviews, and then focus on what information needs to be collected at the community level using participatory tools. With this information, it is possible to start deciding how many villages and sites will be appropriate and which selection criteria to use.
- Identify the districts and villages that are the worst affected, based on a breakdown of what "worst affected" means in the given context. Within a given village it may be useful to target the best- and worst-case households to understand the extent of variation or models of success.
- Enter this information under "how?" in the Step 3 column of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Tips and best practices

- More than one village or location with a given set of characteristics should be selected to reduce bias and increase our trust in the data (i.e., triangulation).
- Use purposeful sampling to understand the problem at its worst, its causes and effects, and select locations according to carefully chosen criteria. Random sampling is not appropriate for assessments (it is useful for baseline surveys where there is a need for quantitative as well as qualitative data).
- Make your sampling decisions based on whether you expect more variation between villages (or subgroups within villages).
    - Include more villages or sites if you expect significant variations between fairly homogeneous villages.
    - Assess few villages and take more time comparing groups and subgroups if you expect more variation within villages.

Tools and resources

- Stetson et al., *ProPack I*, 58–59 (gap assessment).
- Hagens et al., *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation*, 61 (purposeful sampling).
- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 36–40 (site selection).

6. Make the assessment gender sensitive

Standards for gender and assessment:

1. Include comparison of data from women and from men.
2. Collect data from women in culturally appropriate ways.

Steps

- Adapt the tools to assess men and women's roles and responsibilities and differing needs and priorities.
- Decide which information requires use of the tools with men and women separately.
- Ask about:
    - Women's and men's roles within a household;
    - Women's and men's access to resources and services;
    - Women's and men's roles in household and community decision-making;
    - Women's and men's needs and interests; and
    - How and why they view situations and challenges differently.
- Enter this information under "other considerations" in the Step 4 column of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Tips and best practices

- It is not necessary to use every tool with men and women in separate groups. For example, gather more general information using tools at the community level; and use some tools with subgroups based on other characteristics (gender not being relevant).
- Conduct most tools (such as FGD, calendars and household interviews) in separate male or female groups, in order to compare results and because in many cultures women feel inhibited speaking in front of men. For example, general assessments of need, prioritization or ranking exercises should be done separately with men and women and then the results should be compared.
- Gather information that is specific to men or women in single-gender groups.
- Do not generalize women-headed households to women in general; women-headed households are a special case.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 2*, 34–35, 41–42, 46, 50, 53, 62–63, 72, 86–87, 90–93, 101 (examples of RRA/PRA tools adapted to disaggregate information on men and women).

7. Reality check and time management

Standards for time management assessment: 1. Review assessment plans before finalizing them. 2. Include daily analysis sessions in assessment plans.

Steps

- Schedule time for daily analysis in the assessment plan.
- Review the plan and check whether the complement of tools and comparison groups in each village is realistic given available human resources, time and proposed number of sites to be assessed.
- Ask whether the complement of tools will meet your information needs.
- Enter this information under "other considerations" in Step 4 of the assessment planning table (Annex 1).

Tips and best practices

- Save time by investing in good planning.
- Plan accordingly for a thorough assessment, which can involve teams staying in each village for a number of days.
- A longer assessment is not necessarily better; the quality depends on how well the tools and exercises are conducted.
- Insufficient assessment planning (or weak implementation) can cause difficulties in analysis.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 44–49 (managing time in the field), 107–108 (illustrative scope of work), *Volume 2*, 108–109 (illustrative program of activities).
- Annex 6: Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology (next steps).

8. Develop the tools

Standards for assessment tools: 1. Use an accompanying checklist for each tool, which helps to use the tools in a systematic, structured way.

Steps

- Based on the assessment questions, decide what you need to know and frame your information needs as questions you want to answer (not simply "data").
- Develop a checklist for each tool, using open-ended and probing questions to meet your information needs.
- Refer to existing checklists and conceptual frameworks to avoid reinventing the wheel.
- Field-test the tools and allow time to finalize them based on feedback.
- Refer to the assessment questions in the assessment planning table (Annex 1) to create an outline and accompanying methodology of the assessment tools in the assessment tool outline table (Annex 2).

Interview the diagram
The principle is to use the activity or tool as a mechanism for provoking discussion around the issues or questions on your checklist. The tools (map, calendar etc.) are not the end product, rather they are a means to increase understanding and to listen to different community opinions.

Tips and best practices

- Design the checklist so that it can be used with different groups and subgroups, which allows for comparison of results.
- Checklist questions usually focus on what, who, where or when. The questions "why?" and "how?" are better answered using the method "Interviewing the Diagram"[2] (i.e., discussing the results of the RRA activities).
- Avoid closed and leading questions.
- Keep in mind the program design and implementation—be specific and focus on what you need to know.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 68–69 (preparing the checklist and interviewing the diagram).
- Sphere Project, *Sphere Handbook*, 89–92 (WASH), 176–182 (food security and nutrition), 238–243 (shelter), and 295–297 (health).
- Annex 6: Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology (social mapping exercise, seasonal calendar, focus group discussion and problem ranking).
- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 42 (interview the diagram).

[2] Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual.*

II. Conduct the Assessment

Conducting the assessment is set out below in four steps: training and field testing; introductions; feedback; and daily analysis and reviews.

Tips and best practices

- Be creative and flexible. During an activity you may realize that you need to probe further into something that has been said before continuing according to the checklist. Or the daily analysis of information may reveal the need to adapt the plan and add a new tool, change the way it is used or talk to a new subgroup.
- Wear simple and appropriate clothes that do not set you apart from the people you will be working with. Avoid signs of wealth or urban life (sunglasses, for example). Body language, mannerisms and seating arrangements should create an atmosphere where everyone feels relaxed and equal.

1. Training and field testing

Standards for training and field testing assessments:

1. Train the assessment team on the objectives and tools before starting the assessment.
2. Field-test the tools before starting the assessment.

Steps

- Involve the assessment team leaders in the assessment planning workshop. Then train the assessment team members in:
    - Assessment objectives, background context and results of review of secondary source;
    - Participatory methods and principles; and
    - Detailed assessment plan.
- Test the tools in an area with similar characteristics to where the assessment will take place, and not too far from the office. Evaluate the quality of the information collected and revise the assessment plan and checklists to improve effectiveness. Use the field testing as a practical training opportunity, and give staff the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and develop recommendations for best practice.

Tools and resources

- Hagens et al., *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation,* 64 (training and field testing).

Draft training session outline for participatory assessment tools

Workshop agenda: Assessment objectives, what we know already and the assessment plan (what, where, who, how, when); RRA principles; facilitation skills; and participatory assessment tools (see Annex 5).

Session objective: For assessment team members to be capable of facilitating the RRA tool in a fully participatory way during the assessment.

Participants: All members of the assessment team.

Draft facilitation guide

a) Distribute instructions for how to conduct the participatory tool. Ask participants to read the instructions out loud. Allow time for clarifications. Ask participants to review the assessment objectives and discuss in pairs how this tool can be used to meet assessment objectives. Does it need to be adapted to meet the specific information needs? (20 minutes)

b) The trainer asks the participants to sit on the ground and pretend they are community members. The trainer facilitates the exercise, step by step, as it is written in the instructions. (45 minutes)

c) The participants give feedback by responding to questions: Was it clear? What could the facilitator have done better? What challenges do they foresee when implementing this in the community? (15 minutes)

d) Conclude by reviewing the assessment plan again. How will they select or invite the community members to take part in this activity? How can the participation of the most vulnerable be encouraged? (10 minutes)

2. Introductions

Standard for introductions assessment:

1. The assessment team is transparent and explicit about the assessment objectives and methods.

Steps

- Introduce the team members and get to know your respondents.
- Explain the assessment objectives and methods. Be transparent and explicit about the assessment and about future commitments.
- Raise awareness within communities about the need to give a voice to those who usually have little chance to speak out.
- Listen to comments and questions and respond to people's concerns.
- Explain that participation is purely voluntary and that future support is neither dependent on the answers given nor participation in the exercise.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 71–72 (conducting the activity).

3. Feedback

Standard for feedback assessment:

1. The assessment team invites and listens to feedback from community members.

Steps

- Allow time and space for the community to reflect and to discuss the findings of RRA exercises.
- At the end of the assessment present a summary of key findings and invite feedback.

Tools and resources

- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 112 (how to be a facilitator).

4. Daily analysis and reviews

Standard for daily analysis assessment:
1. The assessment team conducts daily analysis of information collected.

Steps

- Schedule time for daily analysis of assessment information when conducting participatory assessment in the field:
    - Identify preliminary findings;
    - Conduct initial comparisons while they are fresh;
    - Identify gaps in information (probe, complement, focus); and
    - Record "why" and "why not" for some of the findings and discuss differences and similarities between subgroups and areas.
- Adapt tools and questions as needed, moving from general to more specific data collection tools and questions.

> Daily analysis may provide insights which require the assessment plan to be adapted. For example, the assessment may start with a transect walk and some key informant interviews which reveal a previously unrecognized group within the community whose needs and interests must be taken into account. Assessment methods, questions or subgroups also need to be adapted accordingly.

Tips and best practices

- Difficulties in analysis are often due to insufficient assessment planning (or weak implementation).

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 46–47 (dividing time between information gathering and analysis).

III. Analyze the Findings

Standards for analysis:

1. Conduct the analysis of all data collected.
2. Select the appropriate tool from the range of analysis tools available and use it to assist the process of analysis.

Steps

- The assessment teams sit for an analysis workshop when the field assessment is complete.
- From the range of analysis tools available, select the appropriate tool according to the purpose:
    - First use matrices to compare information across villages or sites and across subgroups and types of respondents;
    - Use problem trees to identify the root problem and analyze its causes and effects;
    - Use conceptual frameworks, such as the IHD framework, or livelihoods/malnutrition/food security conceptual frameworks to inform the problem tree analysis;
    - Use gap analysis to identify the gaps in government service provision and other NGOs programs.
- At the end of each day of data collection, bring team members together to share findings. Use a matrix (refer to Annex 3: Matrix for Assessment Analysis) to record the results from each of the tools and respondents in each location.
- Summarize key findings for each objective and identify remaining information gaps. Document this process in the daily analysis and review of assessment plan table (Annex 4). Review the next day's assessment plan based on each day's findings.
- Follow the ProPack steps for project design based on the assessment.

Tips and best practices

- The entire assessment team should participate in the analysis of the findings.
- It is helpful to structure the analysis session according to the assessment objectives.
- Comparison matrices are useful for analysis of all qualitative data (not just FGD).
- Think about what, where, who, when, how and why.
- Ensure that the assessment information is adequately documented in the problem analysis section of the proposal, and try to tell the story of the issue or community to justify your project.
- Ensure the assessment informs the program design (i.e., the definition of the results framework).
- It is never too early to start thinking about theories of change or other steps in the development of a results framework.

Tools and resources

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 59–64 (analysis and report writing).
- Hagens et al., *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation,* 91 (data analysis and interpretation).
- Stetson et al., *ProPack I,* 74 (tools of analysis and their purpose).

Annex 1: Assessment Planning Table

<table>
<tr><td colspan="4">Budget for assessment:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Time available or required for the assessment:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Logistical support required:</td></tr>
<tr><th>Step 1: Why?</th><th>Step 2: What?</th><th>Step 3: How?</th><th>Step 4: Other considerations?</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Assessment objectives</td><td>• Specific assessment questions</td><td>• Assessment methods
• Who to talk to
• Where to conduct the assessment</td><td>• Gender sensitivity
• Staffing needs and timeline for the assessment
• Other considerations related to stakeholder information needs, ethical considerations, data quality, etc. as needed</td></tr>
</table>

*Adapted from Stetson et al., *ProPack I,* Table 3.5.

Annex 2. Assessment Tool Outline Table

Name of assessment tool	**Information needs:** Assessment questions to be covered in tool	**Who:** Who will respondent(s) be for tool	**How:** Number and perspectives needed for purposeful sample	**Notes:** For selection of respondents, etc.

Annex 3. Matrix for Assessment Analysis

Tool and respondent	Question / Topic 1	Question / Topic 2	Question / Topic 3	Question / Topic 4
Female focus group Location A				
Female focus group Location B				
Male focus group Location A				
Male focus group Location B				
Elderly focus group Location A				
Elderly focus group Location B				
Etc.				

Annex 4: Daily Analysis and Review of Assessment Plan Table

Assessment objectives and questions	**What we know after Day 1** (fill this in after Day 1)	**Revised information needs for Day 2**	**What we know after Day 2** (fill this in after Day 2)	**Revised information needs for Day 3**

Annex 5. Participatory Assessment Tools

Calendars

Calendars are diagrams that focus on seasonal issues and how things change throughout the year. They are particularly important when working on issues like disaster risk reduction, community-based disaster preparedness, food security, agriculture and health that often involve significant seasonal changes. Calendars also help assessment teams to avoid seasonal bias and allow teams to consider how realities change during different seasons as conditions change in the community.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 88–91, *Volume 2*, 11–13, 28–29, 92–93.
- Annex 6: Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology, Seasonal Calendar.

Historical profile

An historical profile collects historical information and identifies trends. It can be done through a group discussion or semistructured interviews, using cards to represent events and organize them into a chronology. It can provoke a discussion on the recurrence of events (e.g., useful for disaster risk reduction) or it can be used as the first step in an historical matrix, putting the historical events along one axis and practices to be analyzed along the other.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 94.
- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 50.

Ranking

Wealth or vulnerability ranking is a tool used to investigate contextually specific characteristics of "wealth" or "vulnerability" in a given location. It can be done by placing beans representing families (extended or nuclear) into piles so that all the families who have similar wealth are in the same pile. In the process, participants discuss what "wealth" or "vulnerability" means for them in their own context. These groupings can then be used as one axis in a matrix (see below) to compares practices, resources or other relevant information between wealth or vulnerability groups.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 92–93, *Volume 2*, 45.
- Annex 6: Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology, Social Mapping Exercise.

Matrices

Matrices are used to organize information according to two sets of criteria or characteristics. One axis usually involves one or more socioeconomic criteria (e.g., gender, age, livelihood activities, location within village, wealth and vulnerability), allowing participants to explore variations in practices or access to certain resources or services between groups and subgroups in the community. The two sets of criteria may be predetermined or may be defined or refined by the community group. For example, asking what categories of people practice which Natural Resource Management practices could start by asking the group to identify the socioeconomic groups and the NRM practices to be discussed. Note that the comparison groups in the matrix need not be the same as the respondent groups. Doing and discussing the matrix (i.e., using the Interview the Diagram method) sheds light on the different practices or situations within a community and the reasons for these differences.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 95–99; *Volume 2*, 14–15, 34–37, 45–46.
- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 81–83.

Transect walk

A transect walk is an assessment tool that involves a team of practitioners walking through a village with community members to learn more about the community through direct observation and informal interviews and discussions. During the walk, practitioners talk to their "guides" and the people they meet along the way, asking questions based on their observations and their checklist (a series of short, informal semistructured interviews). Based on the assumption that the situation in a community is different on the edges than at the center, the walk should be plotted to "transect" the entire community, and observation and questions are used to understand the differences.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 82–84.
- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 46–49.
- Emergency Capacity Building Project, *Good Enough Guide*, 44.

Focus group discussion

A focus group involves 6 to 12 people with specific characteristics ("focused participant profile") who are invited to discuss a specific topic in detail ("focused content"). Participants should have something in common depending on the focus group topic (e.g., a particular problem, they are all marginalized, or they share a social status or sectoral interest). The discussion should be planned and facilitated to ensure maximum participation and in-depth discussion. It is best not to have leaders or people of authority present and rather to interview them separately.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 74–76 (semistructured interview).
- Hagens et al., *Guidance on Monitoring and Evaluation*, 75 (tips for facilitator and notetaker).
- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 41–42, 116–117.
- Emergency Capacity Building Project, *Good Enough Guide*, 40–41.
- Annex 6: Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology, Focus Group Discussion.

Venn diagram

A Venn diagram is a participatory map that represents a community's social relationships rather than physical ones. It looks at how a community is organized, both in terms of its internal organization and its relationships with the larger community and other institutions or structures beyond its borders.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 85–87; *Volume 2*, 52, 85–88.
- Annex 6: Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology.

Participatory mapping

Participatory mapping is an exercise that uses spatial representation to gather information about a range of issues and concerns. Community members themselves do the drawing and the primary concern is not with cartographic accuracy, but rather with allowing discussion, raising awareness and gathering useful information that sheds light on the particular situation being assessed.

For more information:

- Freudenberger, *RRA/PRA Manual Volume 1,* 77–81; *Volume 2*, 24–27, 81–82.
- Dummett, *Community Based Disaster Preparedness*, 46–49, 51–56.

Key informant interviews

Though not strictly a participatory tool, key informant interviews are an essential tool for gathering information from individuals (rather than groups). The individual is selected based on particular characteristics (e.g., technical knowledge or position of authority) and may be at the national, provincial or community level. The interview is normally semistructured, based on a checklist, possibly the same checklist as the FGD.

Annex 6. Khandamal Livelihoods Assessment Methodology

Introduction

This draft methodology should be further discussed with the project team and a monitoring and evaluation team member before it is finalized. The proposed methodology will require direct support from an M&E team member during the assessment to assist with preliminary analysis and interpretation of findings and to determine how these findings influence subsequent phases of the assessment. Draft tools are included in this annex.

Further discussion with the M&E team and project team is also needed to determine if a further stakeholder analysis is needed. Guidance on the stakeholder analysis is not provided here.

Objectives of assessment

- To identify leverage points for improving livelihoods systems and security in communities affected by the violence.
- To identify and characterize vulnerable groups and households according to livelihood systems.

It is imperative that through methodology or questions, the assessment does not fuel conflict or further support structural violence. Additional input from the team will be required to ensure the methods are appropriate given the project context.

Phased approach

A phased approach will allow the assessment team members to learn as they go and to focus on the key groups and issues identified by the community. The assessment will begin with community-level discussions to identify the key issues affecting livelihoods in the community and to identify the different livelihood groups in the community (Phase I). After the community-level discussion, the assessment team will analyze the findings and determine how to tailor the livelihood group discussions to ensure they address key issues and include appropriate households and community members.

Following the livelihood group exercises (known as Phase II), the assessment team will analyze the findings and determine if additional data collection (Phase III) is necessary to investigate specific themes that may arise during the assessment. It is anticipated that a small-scale market study will be required after the livelihood group exercises, but this will be confirmed through preliminary analysis of the findings.

Phase I: Community level

Phase I will consist of community-level discussions to identify the livelihood groups in the community and key livelihood issues affecting the community. Further discussion is needed with the project team to clarify which types of communities should be represented in this phase. Two communities should be included in the assessment to represent each perspective. The assessment team is interested in representing the following types of communities:[3]

- Hindu general communities;
- Tribal non-Christian communities;
- Christian general communities;
- Christian Dalit communities; and
- Tribal Christian communities.

The assessment team will meet with the peace committee in the community to conduct a social mapping exercise. The exercise will cover the following information:

- What are the main livelihood groups in the community?[4]
- Which livelihood groups are most vulnerable now and why?
- Which livelihood groups were most vulnerable before the emergency and why?

The mapping exercise will identify the proportional size of each group in the community through a proportional piling exercise. Further descriptions for livelihood groups and vulnerable groups should include household demographics (including religious and ethnic background), location of households in the community, type and number of physical assets owned by the household, regular food consumption patterns of the household and other characteristics as relevant.

In addition, Phase I will include a resource map and identify which groups do and do not have access to different resources. This discussion will begin with a question about what resources are available in the community. This list should include but is not limited to markets, agricultural land, forest produce and government schemes. Next, the group will identify which types of households have access to each type of resource (and why) and which households do not (and why not).

➔ The main outputs from Phase I are to a) identify and characterize the livelihood groups in the community and b) identify and characterize the more vulnerable livelihood groups in the community. Based on these findings, the data collection tools will be refined. These findings will also determine which types of focus groups should be held.

[3] The discussion with the project and M&E team should try to identify ways to represent these perspectives with minimal data collection. Note that at least two communities should be selected to represent each type of community included in the assessment.

[4] Here it is proposed to begin the social mapping exercise with a discussion of different livelihood groups (and to describe the relative vulnerability and poverty of these different groups). However, if wealth groups are closely aligned with livelihood groups, it may be more logical to begin the social mapping by identifying the different wealth groups and then to ask about their livelihood activities. This should be discussed with the project team.

Phase II: Livelihood group level

In Phase II, the assessment team will collect qualitative data from different livelihood groups (and from males and females separately). The following exercises are suggested for the assessment but the choice of methods and actual tools should be revisited after the analysis of the community-level data to ensure that they will capture the livelihood issues emerging from preliminary analysis:

- The seasonal calendar should include livelihood opportunities for primary and secondary livelihood activities, months with less or no income, migration and big household expenses. After developing the calendar, the group should reflect on which are the best months for livelihoods or income and why; and which are the worst months for livelihoods or income and why.
- Focus group discussions:
    - Describe the livelihood situation and challenges a) before the emergency, b) immediately following the emergency and c) currently.
    - Describe the plans and conditions for livelihoods that the group hopes for in the future.
    - Describe current coping strategies (asking specifically about levels of debt).
    - Determine if they are receiving any support from the government, other households in their community or other sources.
    - Identify which households in their community (with the same livelihood activities) are doing very well, why these households, and what has helped them to improve their situation; and what households (with the same livelihoods) are doing least well, why these households, and what has prevented them from improving their situation.
- Problem ranking: Ask the group to list all of the problems they face in their livelihood activities. Make sure that each problem is explained. Ask the group to rank these problems a) according to severity and then b) according to which they would like to change first. Discuss how and why these rankings are different if at all.

Information collected during Phase I will determine the number and types of groups to be held. Eight to 12 members of each livelihood group should participate in a seasonal calendar, FGD, and problem-ranking exercise.

➔ The main outputs from Phase II are to a) identify more about the livelihood challenges and opportunities faced by the different livelihoods and b) understand plans and priorities for improving livelihoods by each group.

Phase III: Other information

Phase III is optional and will be determined by the findings from Phase I and II. Phase III will provide an opportunity for the assessment team to conduct a focused survey regarding specific information needed to design livelihood interventions. For example, the assessment may include a market survey for key crops; however the crops to be included in the survey will be identified through discussions with the community and livelihood groups. Phase III may also consist of household-level information in the form of a semistructured interview or case study to triangulate the findings from Phase II and understand more about how the livelihood dynamics are affecting individual households.

Suggested timeline

Day 1	Train assessment team on methodology and tool
Day 2	Collect Phase I data at the community level
Day 3	Analyze Phase I data and revise Phase II tools and methods
Day 4	Collect Phase II data at the group level
Day 5	Continue Phase II collecting data
Day 6	Analyze Phase II data and plan for Phase III if needed
Day 7	Collect Phase III data (if needed)
Day 8	Analyze Phase III data
Day 9	Share findings with participating communities or groups

Next steps

The following next steps are suggested in chronological order:

1. **Discuss and revise the methodology with the project team.** After sharing a draft, an M&E team member should discuss it with the project team and make any necessary revisions. The team should ensure that the choice of methods (i.e., group formations) will in no way be perceived negatively by the community or contribute to negative dynamics in the community.
2. **Revise the draft tools**. The M&E team and project team should determine if the content in the tools is appropriate and sufficient, paying particular attention to how the questions will be perceived in the community given the history of conflict. Several resources exist to support tool revision including: *ProPack I* (section on assessments), *RRA/PRA Manual*, and the *CRS India Assessment Guidelines* (developed by Ian de la Rosa 2009).
3. **Planning for the assessment.** The project team and M&E team should work together on identifying the a) data collection team for the assessment, b) person to provide training to the assessment team on the tools, c) M&E team member who can provide direct support to the assessment during data collection and analysis and d) project team members who should participate in the analysis sessions during the assessment.
4. **Structure the analysis sessions.** The key analysis questions for each phase of the assessment should be based on the expected outputs for the phases; however, the analysis sessions should be structured to ensure that the participants are able to engage with all of the data and produce preliminary findings in a timely manner.

Khandamal Social Mapping Exercise

The social mapping exercise will be held with the community peace committee members.

Village name:________________________________
Type of livelihood group:________________________________
Date of exercise:______/________/______
Name of facilitator:_______________________
Name of notetaker:_______________________
Circle if female or male participants: male female

Part A: Livelihood groups

1. We'd like to identify the different types of livelihoods in your community.[5] What are the main livelihood activities in your community?

   Discuss further to identify the livelihood groups instead of just a list of livelihood activities. Create names for each group so they can be clearly identified in further discussion. If possible, create a visual cue for each group (perhaps an item that represents their livelihood activity) so the participants will remember which group you are referring to during the discussion.

2. *For each livelihood group identified, discuss and record the following:*
   a) Describe these households (religion, ethnic background, other descriptive information)
   b) What other livelihood activities are practiced by these households (in addition to the primary livelihood activity)?
   c) Are these households better off, poor or very poor? Why? How do you know?
   d) What types of physical or household assets do these households generally have?
   e) How would you describe the general food consumption of these households? How is it different from households in other groups?
   f) What are the current strategies that these households are using to cope with their current problems?

3. *Hold a brief proportional piling exercise with stones or other items to determine the relative proportion of each group in the community.*

4. Which of these livelihoods groups are the most vulnerable? Why these groups?
   a) Were these same groups the most vulnerable before the emergency?
   b) Why or why not?

Part B: Access to resources

1. What are all the resources available in your community? *Probe for natural resources like access to land and water for irrigation, forest produce, infrastructure, government schemes and other support.*

2. *For each resource identified ask:*
   a. Which types of households have more access to this resource? Why these households?
   b. Which types of households have less access to this resource? Why these households?

[5] Consider whether it would be more relevant to start the discussion by identifying different wealth groups.

Khandamal Seasonal Calendar

Create a calendar that will cover the past 12 months and future 12 months (with the current month right in the middle). Make sure that the calendar is visible to the participants. Ask the group to identify the months when the following events or activities happen:

1. *Note: include specifics about this group's primary livelihood activities over the last year. Ask what they anticipate for the next year.*

2. *Note: include specifics about this group's secondary livelihood activities over the last year. Ask what they anticipate for the next year.*

3. Ask the participants when they had less income (or no income) during the last year. Ask when they anticipate having less income (or no income) during the next year.

4. Ask participants when they had the most expenses during the last year (and note what these expenses were). Ask what expenses they anticipate during the next year (and when).

5. Ask when household members have migrated away for work during the last year and when they plan to do so during the next year.

6. *Note: include other information as needed.*

Reflection questions:

1. How are the two years (last 12 months vs. next 12 months) different?
    a. Why are they different?

2. Which months are the most difficult for your households?
    a. Why these months?

3. Which months are the best for your households?
    a. Why these months?

Khandamal Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion should include 8 to 12 members representing the same livelihoods group. Explain that you want to learn about how livelihoods have changed for their households before and after the emergency.

*Village name:*___________________________________
*Type of livelihood group:*___________________________________
*Date of exercise:*______/________/______
*Name of facilitator:*________________________
*Name of notetaker:*________________________
Circle if female or male participants: male female

1. Please describe your livelihoods situation before the emergency. What were your main livelihood activities? What was good about your livelihoods then? What were the problems you faced related to your livelihood activities then? Were you using any coping strategies? If so, what were they?

2. Now let's talk about your livelihoods situation immediately following the emergency. What were your livelihood activities following the emergency? *If these changed, ask why.* What were the problems you faced at that time? How were you coping after the emergency? *Please be specific about the actual coping strategies used.*

3. Thinking now about your current situation: What are your main livelihood activities? What are all of your other activities? Are you currently relying on any coping strategies? Which? How often (*if these are the type of strategies where the frequency is relevant*)?

4. Referring again to the current situation: Are there any households that practice your same livelihood activities that are doing very well? If so, why? Why these households? What are they doing differently than other households?

5. Are there any households that are practicing the same livelihoods that are having more difficulty than others? If so, why? Why these households? What are they doing differently than other households?

6. Thinking ahead to the future: In one year, what do you hope will have changed for your household regarding livelihoods. *Please be specific.* How are you planning to make these changes occur?

Khandamal Problem Ranking

Arrange a discussion among 8 to 12 individuals who represent the livelihood group. Explain that you would like to discuss the common problems related to their livelihood activities.

*Village name:*________________________________
*Type of livelihood group:*________________________________
*Date of exercise:*______/________/______
*Name of facilitator:*_______________________
*Name of notetaker:*_______________________
Circle if female or male participants: male female

1. Ask the group members to share the common problems affecting their livelihood activities. *Considering asking the group members to go around in a circle to answer the question to ensure that all group members participate. Be sure each problem is explained if it is not clear. If participants do not agree on the list of problems, state this clearly in the notes and follow up by asking which types of households are affected by the different problems.*

2. Ask group members which of these problems are most severe for them. Ask the group to pick no more than three severe problems from the list. For each problem that is noted as severe, ask why this is severe. *Note if not all participate are in full agreement of the answers.*

3. Ask group members which of these problems they hope to address or change first. Limit this to no more than three problems. Ask why these problems should be addressed first. *Again note if this is not agreed upon in the group.*

4. If the answers provided for #2 are different from #3, ask the group why these lists are different.

Resources

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