LEGS PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES TOOLKIT

LEGS Participation Mini Module

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1. Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGD), like Key Informant Interviews (KII), are not strictly considered a participatory methodology. However, it is impossible to do any effective participatory research without FGD. After every scoring or mapping, there is always the second phase that requires a discussion. It is these discussions, formal or informal, that bring out the solid reasoning behind the choices and graphs generated by participatory processes. Focus Group Discussions are guided by the scoring done and provide very interesting results behind the choices. The arguments and insights that arise when listening to a community negotiate their historical timelines or geographical boundaries should not be ignored, but well recorded as part of the bigger body of evidence that is reported. It is therefore important that the facilitator remains alert and engaged with the participants to take note of the discussions.

How to do it:

1. Develop an FGD Guide/semi-structured question checklist, with open-ended questions that allow for discussion.
2. It is ideally administered to between 5-12 respondents all sitting together.
3. Ideally the respondents should be same category and social status - common bond, avoid mixed groups (staff, managers, females, males, youth) etc.
4. Gather the team and have them introduce themselves.
5. Explain the objective of the discussion and assure that no answers will be traced to an individual.
6. State the estimated length of time you will use.
7. Get on with the questions - you can either record the responses or jot them on a notebook.
8. Encourage the quieter members of the group to talk while managing the more talkative members in order to get a balanced view from the entire group.
9. Thank the group once you complete the discussions.

2. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews (KII), like focus group discussions, are often not treated as participatory tools, although they should be. Once participants have done any scoring, ranking or other process, it is always important to find out the reasoning behind their responses. Sometimes such reasoning is provided informally in conversation with officers of government or agency staff. In formal research, such answers are noted as anecdotal evidence. In participatory research, both informal and key informant interviews are treated as part of the bulk of information that helps in forming opinions on the subject of the research.

Key informant interviews are used for gathering information from specific respondents such as local government officials, NGO project staff, community leaders etc.

How to do it:

1. The assessment team decide what the key questions are that they need information on. For example, villages or number of households usually affected by floods: Who are they? Where are they located in the flood area? What is the impact on livelihoods? (lost livestock, grazing area flooded, watering points cut off etc.)
2. Each key informant is interviewed separately.
3. Responses are documented and then compared.

3. Proportional Piling

Proportional piling is useful if a large number of items need to be compared. As the name suggests, proportional piling is done to establish understanding of the relative value of various indicators in comparison with each other.

The method starts with a large number of counters, usually 100. This means that the results can easily be converted into percentages.

The method does not ask informants to physically count out the number of counters for each item, but rather to distribute the counters to show a visual pattern that illustrates the relative importance of each item. Therefore, proportional piling is a type of visualization method where the results are recorded numerically.

How to do it:

1. Give participants counters.
2. Ask them to discuss and allocate counters to certain criteria (indicators).
3. Map the results on a table in terms of percentages, based on the number of counters: e.g., if there are 50 counters, then 5 counters scores 10%, 10 counters scores 20% etc.
4. The idea is not necessarily to "count" the counters but rather to assign proportionate value

4. Simple Ranking

Simple ranking requires informants to assess the relative importance of different items, usually by placing the items in order of importance (1st, 2nd, 3rd etc.). Simple ranking is a useful way of prioritizing the impact indicators you wish to use in an assessment, or to get an understanding of which project benefits or activities are perceived to be of greatest importance, with reasons.

5. Pairwise Ranking

As the name suggests, pairwise ranking involves the comparison of two items picked from a group of 5 or 6 items or more. The idea is to establish what is the preferred item from the respondents' perspectives. For example, a community can establish who is their preferred veterinary service provider by comparing one with another. In the table below Government Veterinary Services emerges number one after scoring 4, the second is CAHW, number three is the informal market, fourth is traditional medicine and fifth is other.

Service Provider	Govt. Vet Services	Informal Market	Traditional Medicine	Community Animal Health Workers	Other	# of times preferred (overall rank)
Govt. Vet Services		Govt. Vet	Govt. Vet	Govt. Vet	Govt. Vet	4 (1)
Informal Market			Informal Market	CAHW	Informal Mkt	2 (3)

Traditional Medicine				CAHW	Trad. Med	1 (4)
Community Animal Health Worker					CAHW	3 (2)
Other						0 (5)

The assessor can then develop an additional table to probe and record the reasons behind the preferences. The probing and reasoning behind the preference is what enriches use of participatory methodologies for research as the team comes out with solid, often overlooked, reasons for use of one method or provider over another.

Indicators	Reasons for the preference
Govt. Vet vs. Informal Market	
Govt. Vet vs. Traditional Med	
Govt. Vet vs. CAHW	
Govt. Vet vs. Other	
Informal Mkt. vs. Traditional	
Informal Mkt. vs. CAHW	
Informal Mkt. vs. Other	
Traditional vs. CAHW	
CAHW vs. Other	
Other vs. Traditional	

6. Matrix Scoring

This is usually used to establish the types of services or foods that are available in the community. Matrix scoring draws heavily on visual aids, such as line drawings, to depict both the items being scored and the indicators.

How to do it:

Designing the Matrix

1. Identify and illustrate the items to be compared and the indicators. The items might be different types of food, different service providers, different crops, or different types of income-generating activities etc.
2. In the case of service delivery projects, there are five useful indicators to include in the matrix, should informants not mention them, namely: accessibility, availability, affordability, acceptance, and quality.

Conducting the Scoring

3. The pictures that depict the items to be scored are usually placed in a row on the ground and the meaning of each picture is verified with the informant(s).

4. One of the indicator pictures is then selected and its meaning also verified; the indicator picture is placed adjacent to the relevant item pictures.
5. Using a pile of around 25 or 50 counters (makes it easier to convert the numbers to percentage), informants are then asked to score the items against the indicator, using all the counters. The scores are then checked, and questions are asked to reveal the reasons behind the scoring.
6. Select the second indicator and place this below the first, and repeat the scoring with this indicator; again, ask questions to check the scores and show the reasons for the scores.
7. Taking each indicator in turn, repeat the scoring and gradually add more rows to the matrix until all the indicators have been scored.
8. Ask further questions to clarify, probe and explore the scores, so that the reasons for each set of scores are explained fully. The idea is not just to get numbers, but also to get the reasoning behind the choices and get participants to talk about the issues
9. Write down the scores or take a picture of the final matrix.
10. Write down the discussions and reasoning behind the preferences and choices.

Matrix Scoring of Veterinary Service Providers in Southern Ethiopia (simplified)

INDICATOR	Govt. Vet Services	Informal market	Traditional Medicine	Community Animal Health Workers	Other
'Service is near to us, so our animals are treated quickly'	00000 00000 (10)	(0)	(0)	00000 00000 00000 (15)	
'Service always has medicines available'	0 (1)	00000 0 (6)	0000 (4)	00000 00000 000 (13)	0 (1)
'The quality of medicines is good'	00000 0 (6)	000 (3)	0000 (4)	00000 00000 00 (12)	
'Our animals usually recover if we use this service'	0 (1)	00000 (5)	000 (3)	00000 00000 00000 (15)	0 (1)
Etc.					

(Source: Admassu et al., 2005)

7. Historical Timelines

Timelines are very useful for defining boundaries in time, sometimes called the 'temporal boundary'. They aim to ensure that everyone is clear about the time period being assessed or referenced. Timelines can capture the important historical events in a community, as perceived by the community itself, and can also positions a project start and end date against these events when required. It can also make attribution of impacts more accurate.

Communities often remember key political events of disasters that occurred at a certain time in their history. These then become the building blocks for the timelines. A political referendum, election of a president, post election violence, floods during which time the river burst its banks, are all memorable enough to serve as markers around which the rest of the events can be anchored. Timelines then show external factors that might have contributed to food security, such as improved rainfall and other NGO interventions. Where applicable, a timeline should highlight non-project factors in order to help isolate the impact of a project from other relevant variables.

How to do it:

1. Explain what the timelines are about and what information they can be used to gather.
2. Sit the participants together in a group of 5-12.
3. Ask each person to estimate when the last events were experienced (the time does not have to be accurate, you are creating confidence).
4. On the ground with a stick, let the participants write down major events (national elections, deaths in the community) around the estimated time.
5. Set up the skeleton timeline.
6. Ask what happened in each of the years mentioned.
7. Refine the timeline by getting more details as the participants discuss.
8. Allow for correction of dates and months and years.
9. Close the discussion, thank the participants for their time and participation.
10. Transcribe the discussions and ground map on flip chart paper portraying the timeline of events as accurately as possible in a calendar.

8. Seasonal Impact Calendars

Impact calendars are used to measure the duration of impact of an emergency or project. Participants are given 25 counters representing, for example, a household's total amount of milk during the year.

Using 12 cards to represent each month of the year, participants are asked to distribute the counters along a 12-month calendar to show the monthly household consumption of the milk, up until depletion.

The method can be used with participants for the year before and again for the year after the emergency/project. When repeated several times with different households (male and female heads) it is possible to get a sense of the seasons (or months) of the year when malnutrition among children is likely to spike due to reduced consumption of milk. Comparing the responses from male and female participants can also give a sense of who is more in touch with the milk matters in the household and community. The responses can also spark discussions on why some months are without milk while others have plenty etc.

In LEGS it can be used to measure the impact of an emergency event on the affected community in areas such as water availability, access to services, etc.

Par	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
HH1	00 00	00 00	00 0	00 0	00	00	0	0				
HH2												
HH3												
HH4												
ETC.												

How to do it:

1. With 5-12 participants, decide and agree 2-3 indicators of the impact
2. On 12 cards write out the 12 months of the year and place on the ground
3. Give participants 25 counters and ask one to spread out the counters on the months following the emergency when the specific impact was felt the most and continue placing counters until the impact ends. e.g., How long was it before the community was able to access veterinary services?
4. Let the participants discuss the placement and make adjustments. When there is consensus on the time; ask one participant to capture the status on paper or take a photo on a phone.

9. Participatory Mapping

Defining the geographical (spatial) boundaries of a project aims to ensure that everyone understands the physical limits of the area in which impact is supposed to take place, or which is affected by the emergency. Participatory mapping also acts as a good ice-breaker as many people can be involved. Maps are produced on the ground using available materials that are easy to construct and adjust until informants are content that the information is accurate.

Mapping is a useful method for the following reasons:

- Both literate and non-literate people can contribute to the construction of a map, as it is unnecessary to have written text on it.
- When large maps are constructed on the ground, many people can be involved in the process and contribute ideas. People also correct each other and ensure that the map is accurate.
- Maps can represent complex information that would be difficult to describe using text alone.
- Maps can be used as a focus for discussion.

Many variations on the basic mapping can be used. These include projecting images of local maps derived from Google Earth onto flip chart screens and asking people to add layers of detail to the maps including community boundaries; note that annotation using marker pens can be difficult to adjust compared to maps on the ground.

How to do it:

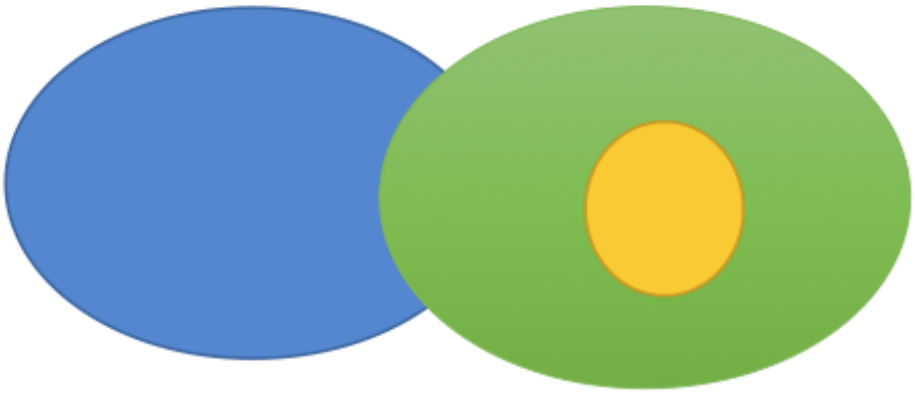
1. Mapping is best used with a group of 5-15 informants.
2. Use a wide sheet of paper or the ground using pebbles and sticks.

3. Find a piece of open ground and explain that you would like the group to produce a picture showing features, for example geographical boundaries of the community. In pastoral areas, these should include:
   - The furthest places where people go to graze their animals.
   - Main villages or human settlements.
   - Roads and main footpaths.
   - Rivers, lakes, dams, wells and other water sources.
   - Crop production farmed areas, fishing areas, forests, and other natural resources.
   - Market centres.
   - Services, clinics, schools, shops, seed and fertilizer distribution outlets.
   - Veterinary clinics, government offices.
   - Ethnic groups.
   - Seasonal and spatial human and livestock movements.
   - Areas of high risk, flooding, insecurity, tsetse flies, ticks and other parasites.

10. Venn Diagramming

Venn Diagramming is used in participatory data collection to show points of commonality and intersection. Communities intersect around certain things, as do institutions that work in these communities. Venn diagramming is used mainly to establish how close or far one institution is from another, or others, within the community.

Information gathered from the perspective of the community helps whenever in designing a response - especially to an emergency. Any response needs to draw from the strengths and points of



intersection of community institutions in order for the interventions to not fall through the cracks.

If we take the 3 ovals above to represent institutions within a community, it is obvious that the blue and green have areas of commonality at the points of intersection. The two institutions can then be trusted with common interventions. The yellow oval, while being part of the green, does not interact with the blue. If that is how the communities represent the relationships, it will not be wise to give a task to blue and yellow to work on jointly. The task is likely to remain undone or could even create conflict that could be counter-productive by pushing apart the blue and green. Venn diagramming

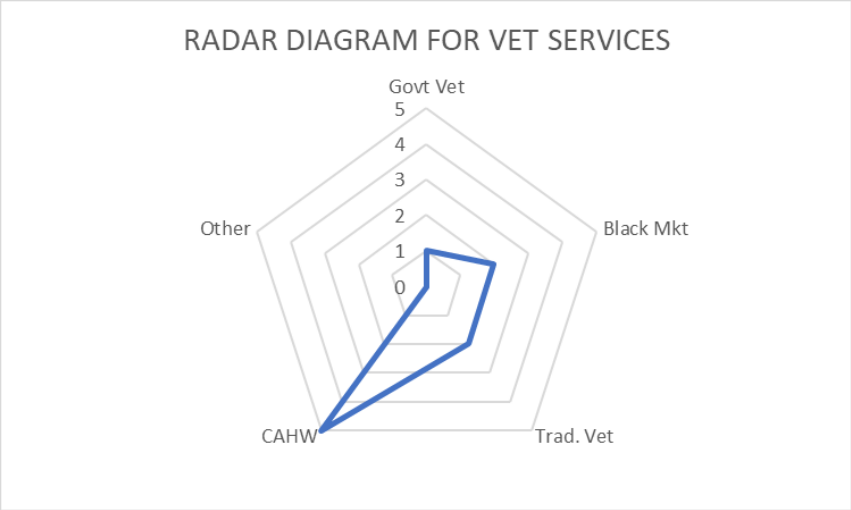
done by communities regarding relationships between institutions can form a useful part of the design of emergency response interventions.

11. Radar Diagramming

Radar diagrams are yet another tool that can be used as a discussion starter on relationships between institutions in the community, or even community members' participation in different aspects of extension services offered by the government or an agency. Radar diagramming provides groups with a tool to visualize relationship between 2 items based on given criteria.

The method often uses a relatively small scale for scoring, of either 0 to 5, or 0 to 10. In the example below, the question is: who is the preferred service provider for veterinary services in the community? The method can also be used to map changes among the service providers over a time period of perhaps 2 years.

The participant is asked to score, on a scale of 0-5 where 5 is the best, which of the service providers is better, in their opinion. A follow up question would be, how was the situation two years earlier? With the two answers mapped, it is possible to know how the various agencies are performing in the opinion of the community. In this example for the stated time, CAHWs score the highest in service provision at 5, followed by the informal market and traditional vets at 2 and government vets score 1 and other scores 0.



How to do it:

1. Ask participants to score up to 2 factors - on a scale of 1-5 - how the two relate with respect to the set indicators [e.g. 5 being favourable, 1 least favourable].
2. Record the scores.
3. Plot the scores on a radar diagram.
4. Discuss.