Participatory Planning and Action

Eight Steps for Facilitators

Enabling people to become the architects of their own community development

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Acknowledgements

This field guide was written by Eileen Higgins and Anna Toness under the guidance of Dr. Richard Ford. Our goal is to guide development facilitators in implementing participatory techniques. We have created an eight-step sequence that can easily be followed by both new and experienced facilitators who want to use participatory tools. It has long been known that participation by communities in the development process improves the likelihood of project success. This field guide and the eight-step process give a structured approach on how to begin a community, neighborhood, or organizational development project. The eight steps demonstrate how and when to include participatory tools throughout the development planning process.

We have compiled examples and ideas from years of fieldwork and from numerous facilitators into this field guide. We hope that it can be used as a hands-on reference for facilitating Participatory Planning and Action in the field. Many other resources exist in this field, but this guide attempts to give practical advice about which participatory tools work best and at which phase of the process.

Many of the ideas, advice, and examples come from programs implemented by the Center for Community-Based Development at Clark University, the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC), field programs conducted Dr. Toness and diverse PRA teams in Paraguay, and Peace Corps Volunteer projects in Belize and Paraguay under the guidance of Ms. Higgins and Dr. Toness. We are immensely thankful to all of them for allowing their work to be used as examples so that others can learn.

We gratefully acknowledge the excellent fieldwork done by the facilitators and program leaders referenced throughout this field guide. Cathy Cordes, Executive Director of the UUPCC had a germ of an idea in 2003 - that her organization could empower communities - that has now spread to four continents. Dr. Richard Ford from Clark University acted as an inspiring mentor, convincing many team members to spend vacations and free time facilitating participatory programs in the field. Due to his thorough coaching, guidance, and patience, we are now able to teach and train others in these techniques. Many of the concepts included in this field guide are his. This field guide would not exist without the wisdom, examples, and advice provided by Dr. Ford. Pat Rodgers, the guide’s technical editor, provided thoughtful reviews and ideas that improved the clarity and accuracy of the information in this guide.

We want to recognize facilitation team members in Romania, The Philippines, India, Paraguay, Belize, and elsewhere who implemented participatory programs with great success. We received many examples and ideas from Krisztina Pall who, after participating in a community planning workshop, took on a leadership role in implementing her village’s Action Plan. Her work resulted in transformation in her hometown and she continues to inspire other communities through her enthusiastic facilitation. We also recognize the dedication of Venus Caballero in promoting participatory development in her own country of Paraguay for over 15 years. We would like to acknowledge several Peace Corps Volunteers whose participatory work in organizations led to better decisions. In particular, our thanks go to Erin Hogan and Nancy Livak whose work with the District Association of Village Councils (DAVCO) shows us how important these techniques can be for community-based organizations. To Julie Doll and Amy Sproston, whose help was invaluable in planning participatory processes in rural communities in the Chaco region of Paraguay. To the Baghdad neighborhoods that graciously allowed us to use their planning examples from urban neighborhoods.

And most importantly, we are thankful for the overwhelming and enthusiastic participation of thousands of community members around the globe who want to lift themselves and their communities out of poverty. When they made the choice to attend and implement the participatory planning process, they empowered themselves - to create their own Action Plan, to take charge of their own development, and to begin building a better future.
Forward

By Dr. Richard Ford

Why a guide for community-based development in 2010? Don’t the authors know that the wave of future development calls for investors to build factories, hire workers, and join the global economy? Have the authors never learned about the multiplier effect and how a new factory stimulates still more investment and leads to sustained economic growth? Look at the miracle of China with astounding figures of economic growth, urban development, jobs created, and new schools and universities constructed. These interpretations of development are money-based, not development-centered. Investment does not always drive development and, as Chinese, Nigerians, Venezuelans, Sudanese, and Iranians are learning, money does not automatically bring development.

This manual is not about economic growth because economic growth often has little connection with human development. Instead, this is a manual that joins a long line of development practitioners who argue that development is about helping people and communities to create their own solutions that they can sustain. The manual seeks to implement the themes of Paulo Freire (Pedagogy of the Oppressed), E. F. (Fritz) Schumacher (Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered), or David Korten and Rudi Klauss (People-Centered Development and Korten’s most recent book, Agenda for a New Economy: from Phantom Wealth to Real Wealth). It is a tradition that follows from the work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway who pioneered Rapid Rural Appraisal in the early 1980s and the substantial family of practitioners who followed with Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and its many variants.

This manual brings together the wisdom of several years field research – mostly in rural Africa; the practice in hundreds, perhaps thousands, of communities in Asia, Africa, and Latin America/Caribbean; the benefit of experience during which multiple communities and hundreds of volunteers helped to formalize the process; the courage of 100 neighborhoods (upwards of 1,000,000 people) in Baghdad in 2009 who adapted the tools to the unique post-conflict situation of the multiple ethnic and religious groups of that huge city; and to the vision of the Unitarian Universalist Partner Church Council (UUPCC) that has been using the tools to enable North American and overseas communities to work together as equals to enhance their respective communities.

As the global economy stumbles, as courts are increasingly populated with the financial issues of many corporations and investment firms, as local jobs disappear throughout the world, as armies stumble in winless struggles, as religious fanatics drive the politics of parts of the world, and as environmental indifference threatens to bring a halt to human habitability, this field manual suggests that there is hope to return to the sensibility of community cooperation as the front line of attack to solve the globe’s seemingly insurmountable problems.

To those who say working at local levels is a 19th century strategy, ask them to think again. Has the global economy brought economic and political well being to the world’s seven billion? If one wants to know how to mobilize local communities to work together to reach the lofty goal of human development, read on. It is an interesting story, supported by effective tools, and documented with astounding examples. Read On!
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Participatory Planning & Action
A People-Centered Approach to Development

This field guide is designed to give development professionals and community volunteers an overview of how participatory processes and tools can lead to more effective community action plans. The process works because community-wide participation builds commitment among participants. Unlike other approaches, it places the development professional in the role of facilitator rather than leader and allows community members to control and lead the action planning process.

Participatory processes can be used in many types of communities and organizations — a whole village, an urban neighborhood, a school, a parent’s group, a women’s group, national park management team, water management committee, or any other group. You’ll learn how this program helps build skills and enables people to transform their communities for the future.

This guide will also help you decide what sorts of projects might be suitable for these techniques and how to get started.

As a facilitator, you can be the spark that kindles a community to build a sustainable future. By focusing on participatory planning, you give a community or group the power to forge its own future.

Introduction – page 1
For more than 20 years, development agencies throughout the world have been using participatory tools to enable communities to become the primary architects of their own development. These tools use a participatory approach to mobilize communities and enable village institutions to help themselves. The result is the creation and implementation of an Action Plan that find solutions to the community’s highest priority problems.

As you do your own research, you may find these programs referred to by different names - Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Participatory Learning and Action (PLA), PAPPA (Policy Analysis for Participatory Poverty Alleviation), and others. Whatever the name, one thing is clear – you are more likely to be successful in implementing development projects when community members support them and are willing to commit their time and resources to implement them.

Key tools include community mapping, institutional analyses, seasonal calendars, ranking, and action planning. Other useful tools are timelines and gender calendars. Used by experienced facilitators, these tools help a community to organize what it already knows and mobilize resources it already has to come to consensus about an Action Plan to guide development. Armed with a plan that the entire community supports, local leaders are better able to negotiate with external partners such as government agencies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to secure resources not presently available to the community.

Participatory community-based tools help to:

- **Build consensus on public issues** using conflict mediation techniques
- **Create action plans** based on community consensus about highest priority needs and ways to address them
- **Assist local institutions to mobilize their own resources** to focus on these priority needs
- **Form partnerships** with government, NGO, and private sector agencies
- **Instill community ownership and pride** in the projects they implement

Using participatory tools creates an environment where all members of the community – men, women, youth, elderly, poor, and well-to-do — can come together to openly discuss the future of their community.
The Process Inspires Confidence

The Participatory Planning and Action process presented in the guide is based upon the belief that community members — urban or rural, large or small — can join together and take responsibility to develop their community and to lead efforts to alleviate their own poverty. But they need tools to help them get organized for action. They need a systematic process to get people involved, get everyone’s ideas on the table, and to come to consensus when there are differences of opinions. They need to know how to create an Action Plan that mobilizes their own resources and how to find outside resources when necessary.

The Meetings Encourage Participation

There are several models for implementing a program of Participatory Planning and Action, but all start with a series of community meetings led by a trained facilitator. Community members participate in a series of planning meetings where they conduct an assessment of their needs and their resources. Residents participate in open discussions through the use of several tools designed to organize and record information about the community and its needs. As facilitator, you help them reach consensus on how to best improve their wellbeing and their livelihoods or to achieve a special goal in their community. The process finishes when the community creates and implements an Action Plan that addresses the highest priority projects.

A key strength of the process is that all residents are invited to participate, not just political or organizational leaders. Community-wide participation means everyone has the opportunity to generate ideas and shape the community’s future. This open process results in broader support and participation in making the plan work.

The Tools Lead to Consensus and Action

These tools have emerged over the past decades in many parts of the world and are based on three key assumptions:

- Communities are filled with knowledge and information about their needs and ways to solve them but this information needs to be organized.

- Communities have some resources – human, material, managerial – to solve their problems but these resources need to be mobilized.

- Organizing information and mobilizing internal resources enable a community to resolve internal conflicts and come to consensus on its highest priority needs and how to resolve them. This consensus becomes part of the planning process and consensus leads to an achievable action plan.
A Structured Approach to Planning

Eight Step Process

The process can be summarized in eight basic steps, but may take many weeks or months or even years to implement properly. Sustainable development and change take time.

Before and After

The first and last steps – Preparing and Implementing -- occur outside of the structure of the participatory planning meetings. The middle steps occur during a series of planning meetings with broad attendance by interested individuals.

Assessment and Discussion

Steps 2 through 4 focus on gathering and organizing information about the community, its resources, its accomplishments, and its ideas for the future.

Decision Making and Planning

Steps 5 through 7 focus on decision making and planning, where participants begin the difficult work of prioritizing needs and creating an Action Plan.

Capacity, not Charity

For many years, community development focused primarily on charity – the transfer of funds and technical expertise from the world’s more affluent communities to poorer ones. Although some success has been achieved in this manner, the development paradigm for the 21st century has moved beyond direct assistance and charity. The new model of partnership is a community-based, people-centered approach that builds capacity within the community itself.

Participatory planning is one such alternative to charity. Its primary goal is to equip local leaders and residents with skills in development planning and management. After learning tools of data collection, resource mobilization, conflict mediation, planning, implementation, and management, the community institutions and local leaders become the architects of their own development.
The Process -- Eight Steps to Community Transformation

Following this eight-step process will allow your community or group to create Action Plans based on the group’s consensus about its highest priority needs. You and the community can easily implement these steps over a series of weeks or months.

The rest of this field guide is dedicated to providing you with ideas, tools, and techniques that can help you successfully facilitate each step. As you study this field guide, the examples and comments next to the photos hold insights from field work around the world. The examples will also help you understand the realities of facilitating in the field.

Your Role in the Process - Leading, Facilitating, Coaching

As you work with a community, you will find yourself playing different roles. Prior to starting the Participatory Planning and Action meetings (Step 1), you will take a stronger leadership role - organizing activities, networking with officials, and training your team. During the meetings, you move into a facilitating role. You will find that to be easier in Steps 2-4, where the work focuses on Assessment and Discussion. The activities in these steps are fun and engaging for participants. The work becomes harder as you move to the Decision Making and Planning phase (Steps 5-7). Selecting priorities is difficult and, for some participants, this will be the first time they will have created an Action Plan. Finally, as the group moves to the Implementation phase (Step 8), you move into a coaching role, supporting their work and connecting them with the resources that will lead to success. This is also when you begin to let go and trust the community to lead their own projects.
Step 1: Preparing the Participants

It sounds simple, but this first step is actually the most important. It is during this phase that the facilitator and the community begin forming a comfortable and trusting relationship that can lead to positive change. First you will need to find a willing partner to advocate from within the community about Participatory Planning. As you build rapport within the group, you will find people becoming more and more open to the Participatory Planning process.

This is the point where you consider what the community’s objectives might be and how you might organize the process. You’ll also begin conversations with others — both within the community and outside — about forming a team that will help you implement the community meetings.

Don’t be surprised if this first step lasts for a few months. The time spent building alliances and preparing a good team is crucial and will lead to more successful Participatory Planning meetings.

Facilitation Hints

Develop Local Support

It sounds obvious, but if members of the community won’t support this sort of process, you will struggle as a facilitator. Without local support, success will be difficult. Sometimes it will take time to convince them to try participatory processes. Be patient. You are better off starting a few months later than without support.

Once you’ve found a local partner, walk him/her through the process. Making your partner knowledgeable about participatory tools enables him/her to advocate for the process within the community.

Determine the Objective

Will this be community-wide, exploring the full gamut of development needs? Or will this be a study for a particular project such as starting a functional youth group or selecting which new product to launch? As you define the objectives, you will be able to determine who are the right people to participate in meetings, planning, and decisions.

Consider the Community

Ask questions about the sort of community or group that you will work with. Are the people homogeneous or are there many different ethnicities, religions, and cultures? Do you expect conflict or a positive working environment? How much time will people have to participate? How many people do you expect? The answers to these questions will help you anticipate problems, decide how many people you may need on your team, and determine the best way to plan for community meetings.

In Schools, Businesses and Organizations

A community is a group of people that are willing to work together to achieve a common goal, for example:

- School Teachers
- Women’s Craft Group
- Family Business
- Water Management Team
- Management Team
- Entire Village
- Youth Group
- National Park Protectors
- Urban Neighborhood
- City Council
Building the Perfect Team

Generally, you’ll need to have the help of a team of facilitators to properly implement a Participatory Planning and Action program. Look for team members within the community, at NGOs already present in the community, or other local organizations. Select and train your team wisely. Assign roles to each team member. Your team will need a variety of skills to be successful — organizing, observing, interviewing, facilitating, and analyzing. They will play two key roles during the community meetings — facilitators & scribes.

The Facilitator’s Role

You will probably be the lead facilitator, but others will help facilitate small subgroup activities and exercises. You will introduce the objectives of each activity, teach the participants how to complete each exercise, and ensure that everyone is participating. You will ask probing questions to encourage results with deeper meaning. Your enthusiasm should motivate attendees to participate.

The Scribe’s Role

You’ll need at least one scribe to write down key information and take detailed notes during meetings. Although scribes record basic information such as the date, time, number and gender of participants, they play a more important role as listeners and observers. While community members are involved in an activity or tool, scribes take detailed notes of what community members are saying and discussing. They also observe and make notes about group dynamics. Finally, they write up the finished results at the end of an activity.

Three to Five Team Members

You need three to five people that can commit to a series of meetings that may occur during one week or over a series of weeks or months.

Diverse

It is best to have both men and women and a mix of professional backgrounds. Try to have members from outside the community, but include at least one community member who supports the process.

Capable

You need some who can be good group facilitators and others who can be insightful observers and scribes. Because team members will help you analyze the outcome of each meeting, make sure that the necessary range of skills is represented (see below).

Key Skills for Team Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facilitation</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitators are open minded and non-judgmental</td>
<td>• Organizers plan meetings and agendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitators manage the process, not the content</td>
<td>• Organizers ensure that materials, supplies, and meeting spaces are available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitators help the group process its own ideas</td>
<td>• Organizers consolidate information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitators tap into the group’s collective knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitators are energetic, but not authoritarian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitators encourage all to participate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observation</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observers gather information without being intrusive</td>
<td>• Analyzers pull ideas, facts, or information together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observers identify information that may need to be confirmed or questioned</td>
<td>• Analyzers see patterns and trends in information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observers probe about the reliability of information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observers notice each participant’s comfort level</td>
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Interviewing

• Interviewers demonstrate respect and develop rapport
• Interviewers use appropriate and non-threatening questions
• Interviewers listen more than they talk
Preparing the Community for a Planning Workshop

Work out Good Communication Links

You will need to establish a reliable method for communicating with your local team members and community. This will allow you to better coordinate planning and, when it comes time for implementation, to help link the group with resources you may know about. Sometimes, phone is available, but often the cost of an international call is prohibitive for some communities. In recent years, rural communities and community-based organizations have been gaining access to the Internet via satellite or cell phone modems, using these links to good advantage. Skype and other voice-over-internet communication tools can help you keep in touch at much lower costs than traditional telephoning.

Set a Convenient Schedule

First, you should determine the schedule for holding a series of community planning meetings. You will need to balance the availability of your team and the community. It may be that you hold the meetings three consecutive evenings from 5 - 9 p.m. Or all day Saturday and Sunday may be best. If the facilitation team lives nearby, a schedule of one evening or day each week for several weeks is also possible. The process works best when you implement it over the shortest practical timeline.

If the times and dates of the meetings are not convenient, don’t be surprised if no one attends. Farmers cannot meet early in the morning — they are in the fields. Women cannot meet at lunchtime — they are making lunch. Harvest season is not a good time for planning exercises as the meetings pull people away from the important work of their farms. The rainy season may also be a bad time, depending on the livelihood base of the community. Village holidays and celebrations might also conflict with people’s availability to come to meetings. The communication system you have established will allow you to determine the best set of dates.

Obtain Formal and Informal Government Approval for Workshop

Very few programs in community development will have long term and sustainable impact if they try to function outside of government structures. While politicians and elected officials may not support a program initially, they want to know what is going on in their territory. Further, if they are aware of the goals of the program and they see it getting off to a good start, they are more likely to be helpful in the future if they were informed at the beginning. Your team should inform district, regional, or state leadership that a team will be facilitating for a group or community in their area. Schedule these meetings before you begin implementing the process so that these officials feel informed and included. These leaders will often be crucial to obtaining the technical or financial resources required to implement the Action Plan.
Preparing the Community for a Planning Workshop

Explain the Process Well

The more information people have about the process and the tools, the more likely they are to engage and support participatory planning. In many parts of the world, the concept of full participation will be new and can be perceived as threatening to local and regional leadership or be viewed with doubt by community members themselves. Better understanding will allow participants and their leaders to feel more comfortable about Participatory Planning and Action meetings.

Explain the Process – to the Community

Use every chance you get to explain how the process works and why community participation is more likely to lead to successful project outcomes. This builds allies and excitement before the meetings. You might want to show examples of case studies to local leaders so that they have an idea of what to expect.

Explain the Process – to Community and Neighborhood Leadership

It is equally important to hold special briefing meetings with village leaders – formal and informal – so they know about the planning exercises and to reassure them that the entire community is invited. These briefings explain that planning workshops have enabled many communities to accomplish amazing improvements to their infrastructure or organizational capabilities.

In conducting these meetings, be aware that political issues should be considered because the planning workshops could be rejected if these local leaders perceive them as a threat to their administration. Remind them that mobilizing an entire community behind their leadership will enhance their ability to speak with a louder voice at the regional, state, or federal level.

Explain the Process – to Local, Regional, and State Elected Leaders

Briefing political and technical officers to inform them about how the participatory planning process works helps advance projects once the community moves to Action Planning. The challenge for implementation is often how the Action Plan can be integrated into the development plans and pre-existing budgets of the municipality, province, or state.

This is the time to stress to these officials that the participatory planning process is designed to help generate new resources to complement their current development plans and budgets and that community consensus will make implementing development plans easier and more effective.

Don’t Let Money Matter

Make sure everyone knows that the people facilitating the process are not bringing money. Instead, they bring a process that results in something more powerful -- a plan that the entire community has agreed upon, will support, and can implement.

Prior to implementing a participatory planning workshop in Transylvania, Romania, facilitators met with local business leaders, NGOs, and mayors to gain their support.
Preparing the Community for a Planning Workshop

Invite Everyone

When you invite members of the community to attend Participatory Planning & Action meetings, participation should not be limited. Include as many people as possible. Success is more likely when participation is community-wide. Encourage everyone to attend – men, women, people of all political parties, people of all faiths, young people, and formal and informal community leaders. Let them know that an impartial facilitator will lead each session and that this facilitator is there to listen to everyone’s point of view.

Don’t Forget about Publicity

Prepare an invitation or announcement for the entire community that can be distributed to all potential residents who might wish to come. This should be distributed at least one month before the workshop. It can also be posted in schools, community centers, shops, churches, and perhaps bars or restaurants if the community is large enough to have such places. These notices should be prepared in the local languages. These announcements can be read at community group meetings or at church services.

Just prior to the workshop, a small team of people should go door-to-door to remind people, generate excitement, and increase attendance at the first meeting.

Prepare the Schedule

Prepare the schedule in advance so people know what sort of a time commitment they are expected to make. Several sessions are usually required. It works best if the sessions can be implemented over the shortest possible time frame. The schedule for three consecutive evenings might look something like the following:

First Session (Thursday 6:30 pm – 10:00 pm)

Complete the exercises and tools for the Assessment and Discussion Steps (Steps 2-4). The group will prepare sketch maps, calendars, an institutional analysis, and an accomplishment list by working together and in small breakout groups.

Second Session (Friday 6:30 pm – 10:00 pm)

Complete the exercises and tools for the first two Decision Making and Planning Steps (Steps 5-6). The group will prepare a detailed needs analysis and come to consensus about its highest priority needs.

Third Session (Saturday 6:30 pm – 10:00 pm)

Complete the exercises and tools for the final Assessment and Discussion Step (Step 7). The group will analyze the problems surrounding their highest priority needs and draft action plans to address these needs. They will work in both large and small breakout groups.
The First Meeting

This community meeting sets the stage, so think carefully about how to conduct it and how to get good attendance. Avoid any activities that could cause disagreements or conflict. Instead, start off with activities that break down barriers and encourage people to interact outside the traditional boundaries of gender, class, ethnicity, or education.

Avoid Meeting Apathy

Everyone hates meetings. They are necessary, but can be boring and unorganized. Don’t let your Participatory Planning and Actions meetings be like the typical meeting we’ve all attended. Make them fun. Make them interactive. Have an agenda. Keep notes and don’t run over the time limit. And, don’t be afraid to use food to lure people into participating. This can be a great way to encourage women to show up to meetings they might normally be timid about attending - if they have been asked to prepare juice or a snack, they have a reason for being there. Food can also be used to celebrate success at the end of a series of meetings.

+ ideas, tools & examples: for preparing the participants

Boring, but Necessary - Logistics

Accommodations

It is often helpful if outside facilitators stay in the community during the community meetings rather than commuting from another town or staying in a hotel. Staying in the community allows them to build trust while befriending people in a casual environment. If you are staying in a rural community, make sure that outside facilitators pack appropriately for the climate — bedding, towels, personal hygiene materials, toilet paper, first aid kit, mosquito repellent, bed nets, etc.

Food and Water

If the community is unable to provide enough food for any visiting team members, facilitators should bring enough food for their stay. They should bring drinking water or be prepared to purify local water.

Supplies

Depending on what the community can supply, you may need to bring some or all of the supplies needed to facilitate Participatory Planning & Action. Be creative and don’t worry if you can’t find or afford everything on the list. Chalk on a floor or a stick in the dirt can work well in a pinch or on a budget.

Transylvanian women served homemade sweets to celebrate three nights of successful meetings.
Step 2: Sharing Information

Individual community residents already know a great deal about their needs and have ideas about how to solve them. However, this information needs to be shared with everyone in the community. It must be made available to everyone, organized, and recorded. It also needs to be seen from a variety of perspectives. People tend to “know” things from their own point of view. Others may not yet be aware of their ideas.

The first activities in any Participatory Planning Meetings are designed to share community information among all participants. The meeting generally kicks off by collecting knowledge about the community and its needs.

There are many tools that can be used, including mapping, timelines, calendars, gender task analyses, or matrices. All are designed to make the participants comfortable working together. If they can work well together at this stage, they are more likely to implement their Action Plan.

Facilitation Hints

Make Participation Comfortable for Everyone

Because this may be the first time these people have gathered together for a community-wide meeting, it’s important to set an inclusive tone right away. This is particularly important in communities where the ideas of women, the poor, or youth are often disregarded. Make sure that everyone feels included and has an opportunity to participate. One of the best ways to do this is to break into subgroups so that people work with those they are comfortable – by sex, age, or ethnicity.

Everyone Must Feel their Ideas are Important

Let every subgroup present their work to the whole group. It lets them know that their opinions and ideas matter. This may be the first time that women, young people or the poor have been able to present in front of a group. They may be shy, but listening to their ideas is worthwhile. It sets the stage for working together on any action plans.

Listen for Community Strengths and Needs

The exercises you conduct in this step allow participants to discuss their community openly and in a non-threatening manner. The facilitator and scribe must listen closely to what is being said during these exercises. Most of the community’s needs will be discussed during the exercises. You will learn about what the community has achieved in the past and how they worked together to implement their accomplishments.

In Schools, Businesses, and Organizations

Maps help people understand the strengths, challenges, and resources in facilities, neighborhoods, classrooms, and the broader community. They help businesses understand distances to clusters of customers. They identify routes for getting goods and services to market. Maps help youth groups understand where young people go to play and hang out, places that are popular, and places that are unsafe.
Choose Your Tools

Although maps are the most commonly used tools for information gathering, many others are available. As facilitator, you will likely choose several of these to use with your group:

- **Maps** - to collect geographic information
- **Seasonal Calendars** - to understand annual patterns
- **Activity Schedules** - to learn how people spend their time
- **Histories** - to understand projects and communities over time
- **Trend Lines** - to gain insight into trends over time
- **Surveys** - to collect detailed information from individuals or households

Community Mapping

One particularly effective tool is the Community Map. Participatory mapping allows a group to share information about a geographic location. Because everyone knows his or her community, drawing a Community Map is a stimulating exercise to start the session. It allows groups to create shared knowledge. Because it is a visual and verbal process, it encourages all members of the community – men, women, and youth; rich and poor; young and old; educated and illiterate – to be part of the process.

When preparing a Community Map, participants draw a map of their community, its infrastructure, schools, key agricultural institutions, fields, water supplies, etc. During this process, the discussion invariably turns to their accomplishments, but may also point out things that aren’t working well for them. The facilitators and scribes listen and quietly record these accomplishments and needs. When groups work together to create a map, they create more than just a map – the mapping process creates an open forum for discussion and sharing information.

Looks don’t matter when you’re making a map. It’s the content and the discussion that occurs while drawing it that are important. Eleven women created this farm map in Avalos Sanchez, Paraguay. It shows a typical farm, including fruit trees, animals, dogs, vegetable gardens, latrines, and the well. The lines show where products go (for home consumption, to market, or to feed animals). They also show who does what (men, women, children). The women’s map looked quite different from the men’s.
Making the map and then analyzing its contents provided time to discuss needs in Puriang, India. They included the lack of a nearby water source, the extremely poor condition of the road leading to the fields, and lack of sanitation facilities. Participants also noted that there were not many small industries in the village. The mapping process enabled the group to highlight the village’s accomplishments. For example, the community now has ten schools, including secondary education.
More Maps

Depending on the objective of your work, you can create many different types of participatory maps.

Regional Maps

Regional Maps show a larger area. They highlight resources outside of the community’s geographic boundaries and their connection to the community.

Household/Farm Maps

Household/Farm Maps indicate the use of resources and the roles of family members in household and farm activities.

Thematic Maps

Thematic Maps can show such things as natural resources, crop location, migration trends, customer locations, disease prevalence, customer locations, or market trends.

Future Maps

Future Maps create a vision for the community or organization. This may be helpful when you begin action planning. It also is a useful tool when working with different subgroups to share diverse perspectives on what they desire. A future map is a great tool to use with youth.

Social Maps

These types of maps indicate a community’s social characteristics such as economic well-being, living arrangements, education, health, access to food and water, and religious or social class characteristics. Drawing a social map can create conflict -- so think carefully before creating one of these and be prepared to facilitate actively.

Residents of Bencéd, Romania wear their coats to keep warm in their primary school as they create a Community Map. The woman in this photo, Roszika, was one of only three women who attended the first community meeting. The other village women did not believe that they were wanted at a community meeting. After Roszika told them that she got to fully participate and that her opinions were listened to, the women of the village attended all future meetings.

This Social Map indicates health, income, and educational levels in the community of Fortín Falcón, Paraguay.
More Mapping Examples

Residents of Felsőrákos, Romania created this map. The village is located quite close to a now abandoned open pit coal mine which is causing environmental problems for the people in the area. The waste from the mine has contaminated many natural springs. Discussion also brought up the fact that the forests were mismanaged and clear-cut during the Communist era. Now that the land has been returned to the community, they are implementing new systems of forest management, but re-forestation has not yet been addressed.

Community History

This tool allows participants to remember how things began and reflect on how far the community or group has come. They can quickly identify both positive and negative changes in the community. This exercise generally creates pride and is often a great tool to use early on. While preparing the timeline, encourage conversation about the meaning of these changes. This is an excellent tool to create understanding and appreciation between older people and younger people.

Village elders in Kyrdem, India discussed the history of their community. The discussion highlighted the difficulties brought on by numerous health crises, ranging from cholera to malaria to small pox. It also pointed to a number of community accomplishments over the years.
Seasonal Calendars

Seasonal calendars help you understand seasonal demands and patterns. Create a seasonal calendar when you want to:

Understand seasonal variations in labor, income, and expenditures.

See patterns in weather, water, crop production, animal diseases, available resources (natural & human), or human health in a larger context.

You may also ask community members to divide into subgroups — women, men, youth, older people — to create multiple seasonal calendars. When the calendars are compared, everyone learns about annual responsibilities from multiple perspectives.

An annual activity calendar also provides clues about when people are available to provide time and labor for community projects. In the case of this African community, scheduling residents for a building project in April would not be a good idea. There is simply very little labor available. More community members would be available to donate their time in July.

This composite calendar from Fortín Gondra, Paraguay shows activities that occur in their community throughout the year, including weather, cropping patterns, pastures, ranging, holidays, events, school schedules, and illnesses. This visual tool helped people begin to discuss issues and plan for solutions with a picture in front of them.

You can use this type of calendar to analyze gender differences as well by writing the symbol for men or women next to the activities for which they are responsible.

All participants gather to review the calendar created by the women in Fortín Gondra, Paraguay. Later, the women listened to the men report on their calendar.
Daily or Weekly Activity Schedule

Daily and Weekly Schedules can provide information on exactly what individuals do during the day. When subgroups create and share their individual daily calendars of activities, they learn and appreciate the differences by age, gender, occupation, or social class. Discussing this information among the entire group creates understanding and appreciation of everyone’s work.

Schedule information can help identify when human resources are available as well as help individuals and groups discover ways to better use their time. Schedule information also helps you create convenient meeting schedules and is useful when developing the timeline for implementing action plans.

Daily Activity Schedule - Nagbinlod

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s View on Women</th>
<th>Women’s View on Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 am cooking, sweeping, breakfast</td>
<td>Breast feeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 am – laundry</td>
<td>Doing laundry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 am – cooking</td>
<td>Cooking housecleaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 am eating lunch</td>
<td>Weeding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 pm – sleeping</td>
<td>Grazing livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 pm manghipos sa hi-nalay</td>
<td>Gathering firewood for fuel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 pm ironing</td>
<td>Collecting water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 pm loto</td>
<td>Manogqway og hayop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 pm sweeping</td>
<td>Child care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 pm – supper</td>
<td>Bathing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 pm – resting</td>
<td>Praying before sleep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 pm - sleeping</td>
<td>Grinding/winnowing corn</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Nagbinlod, the men were more familiar with what the women do during the early mornings and evening. They are less able to detail their activities during the rest of the day. These types of exercises give everyone in the community a better understanding of how time is spent. It sets the foundation for respecting that the needs of women are just as important as the needs of men.
Trend Lines

This is another simple visual tool to obtain historical data about a community. Trend lines are simple to construct and can quickly show the historical, economic, or social changes that have occurred in the community over time. Use them to encourage residents to reflect on the changes that have taken place in their community and to start a conversation on the meaning of those changes.

Community members from Arkos analyzed their community’s progress since the fall of communism. After the end of centralized planning and cooperative farming, the community regained control of their land which led to greater agricultural productivity. Unfortunately, as the central government stopped providing many essential services, residents no longer had access to health care.

Household Surveys

Formal household surveys can also be used to collect data about a community and its well-being. A variety of topics can be explored such as type of land ownership, household income, and type of land preparation. These surveys help create a robust picture of the community and its needs.

The facilitation team conducted a very detailed house-by-house survey in Nagbinlod to enhance their understanding of the village prior to the participatory planning meetings. A snapshot of some results is shown (left). Village households spend most time collecting water and buying household goods. This community eventually selected water as its number one priority. This survey data suggests that their priority is well-chosen. They spend little time selling produce, confirming that their farm income is low. Given the fertility of the soils, future focus on road improvement might make marketing crops easier.
Step 3: Identifying Resources

If you understand the organizations that exist in a community, you gain key insights into community life and the activities in which people participate. One of the key resources that communities have are their pre-existing community institutions, groups, and organizations. Many of these institutions already meet on a regular basis, are highly functioning and effective organizations. Others may not yet have reached their full potential, but may need to for effective implementation of Action Plans.

The local community or village council will usually play an important role, but other groups can as well. These institutions range from churches to schools, from the police to a forest association, or from a youth group to the town soccer team. Once the community moves onto Action Planning, this step will show participants that they do have organizations that already exist that can be mobilized towards action.

Facilitation Hints

**Explain that They are Already Organized**

Many times small communities feel that they aren’t organized to implement change. They don’t realize that they already have a set of highly functioning institutions that meet on a regular basis. You may need to give them examples of the types of institutions or organizations that you are looking for. These organizations may be a women’s crafts group, a water board, a soccer team, the village council, board of directors, or a school.

**Talk in Detail about Their Institutions**

One of the best ways for determining community resources is to conduct an Institutional Analysis. A Venn Diagram is the tool most frequently used to help a community create a pictorial view of the organizations and influential individuals that impact their communities. There are several basic approaches that use Venn Diagrams. One is simple and analyzes only the organizations within the community. The second looks at institutions and individuals both within and outside of the community.

**Show that Existing Organizations are Resources**

During the process, encourage people to discuss whether they think existing organizations have the capability to work on other projects in the future.

**In Schools, Businesses and Organizations**

For businesses, Institutional Analysis helps explain the relationships between customers, suppliers, and departments. In schools, they can show how clubs, parents associations, and teachers associations work together. In not-for-profit organizations, they can show relationships between the board of directors, operating managers, outside donors, and supporting organizations.
Identifying Resources

Simple Venn Diagram

Simple Venn Diagrams can provide a lot of information about community institutions. To create one, break residents into teams and ask them to visually draw all the organizations that exist in their village. Larger circles indicate the strongest and most influential community institutions. Smaller circles show less influential or smaller institutions. Then show linkages between organizations that work well together by drawing them closer together.

In-Depth Venn Diagram

A more complex Venn Diagram also includes the outside groups and individuals that impact the community. The largest circle indicates the boundary of the community. Organizations, groups, and people from the community are placed within this circle. Managed carefully, a good facilitator can ask the group to indicate the quality of the relationships and links that each entity has with the community (very good, neutral, not so good) on the diagram. This process can bring up issues, so be prepared to negotiate conflict. Participants can also create a “wish list” by adding to the map the organizations they wish existed.

This Institutional Analysis from Malingin, The Philippines showed that four institutions were viewed as the most influential - the Barangay (village) Council, schools, religious groups, and money lenders. Participants placed these centers of influence at a distance from each other, an indication that each is influential, but that they may not always collaborate.

This Venn Diagram was created in Fortín Falcón, Paraguay. The small circles indicate groups while the triangles indicate individuals. Some of the individuals are opinion leaders rather than elected leaders.

Blue linkages indicate good working relationships, yellow indicate normal ones, and red indicate those that could be improved. The dashed lines show relationships that do not exist, but should for proper community development.
Step 3 – Identifying Resources – page 22

+ ideas, tools & examples: for identifying resources

**Noticing What is Missing**

Sometimes it is not what is in the diagram that is important, but rather what is missing. Facilitators should look for organizations that normally exist in communities and ask questions if these institutions are not represented.

**Identifying Effective Institutions**

Venn diagrams can help facilitators and community members identify the institutions that are the best organized and most likely to successfully implement large projects in the future.

Residents of Felsőrákos, Romania considered the institutions in grey to be the best organized. In other words, they were key community assets. When the community wrote its Action Plan, the Forest Association took a leadership role in managing the planning and creation of a village water system. The Women’s Group decided that they could use their existing organization to improve the health clinic. Usually, the mayor or local council runs these types of programs. What Felsőrákos decided to do was mobilize other groups to assist community leaders in implementing a larger number of programs simultaneously.

In Puriang, India, the Institutional Analysis showed a number of organizations. Participants ranked the institutions that were most important. They did the same for the key influencers that were regional in nature, but not directly part of the community. Although the community had a number of organizations that were working in poverty reduction, it did not have a Village Development Committee (VDC). In northeast India, a functioning VDC is required to obtain funding for numerous government-sponsored development programs, including infrastructure and job creation. The community may need to include a VDC in their Action Plan.
Finding Relationships that Work

Institutional Analysis reveals a great deal about a community and how its members work together to achieve success. When a facilitator notices a community that is used to working well together, it is an indication that it can take on more difficult and long-range projects.

In the case of Doldol in The Philippines, probably the most significant item to notice is the central role of the Barangay (village) Council. There are nearly forty groups and institutions working in the community. Many of these groups work closely with the Barangay Council to implement community improvements, while others tackle issues of great social and socioeconomic importance. The youth have a program that focuses on the development issues of out-of-school youth. There is an active and productive women’s organization that focuses on building livelihood programs and collaborates with groups dealing with the protection of children and preventing abuse of women. Men are active in the father’s organization and also assist with keeping peace and order. The senior citizens have mobilized to support the school feeding program. All community groups, under the coordination of the Barangay Council, were consulted during the preparation of Doldol’s Development Plan that lays out its hopes for the future. All of this activity reflects a community that is used to working together to find ways to solve problems and present proposals to local and provincial officials that will continue to spur development. This institutional analysis shows that Doldol is ready to tackle complicated projects.

Finding Relationships that Can Be Improved

Institutional Analysis often gives a community a structured method to identify which institutions interact with one another and who are the key influencers who can impact the community.

This Venn Diagram from Belize shows groups within (blue) and outside (yellow) the community. The participants added their thoughts about how the relationships between groups were functioning (very good, good, not so good, or bad).

The women from the Unitarian-Universalist Church of The Philippines drew a Venn Diagram to identify the programs that their social action committee uses to help alleviate poverty Negros Island communities.
Step 4: Envisioning a Future

After several long hours and meetings, the participants have been discussing their community in great detail. In this step, you add exercises that allow participants to begin thinking about a better and different future. The tools used here are designed to build the group’s confidence and spirit about the future before they move on to the Decision Making and Planning Steps.

No decisions are made at this time, but the discussions are focused on past accomplishments and future dreams. You will use a combination of activities that encourage individual reflection as well as group consideration about these successes and thoughts.

This step makes use of Appreciative Inquiry techniques that encourage participants to feel confident that they can work together to improve their future.

Facilitation Hints

Focus on the Future

The tools used in this step are based upon the principles of Appreciative Inquiry. They allow participants to step away from the discussion of what life is like today and engage in activities that encourage them to turn towards the future. You will be asking them to imagine a different and better future.

Motivate them to Create a Better Future

The tools you have used in the previous steps have started conversations where participants frankly and collaboratively discuss their community. Many of the community’s needs have been identified; more will come to light as the planning meetings continue. Often, they can seem nearly impossible to overcome. It can even be demoralizing for people to think about a long list of needs.

In this step you use tools that ask them to focus on the positive. The goal of this step is to assure them that they can help build a better future. Your goal is to build the community’s confidence about implementing change.

Remind Them of Their Past Success

You will ask them to analyze their past achievements and determine how they have achieved those successes. These successes show that they are powerful and have the ability to change their communities and their lives.

In Schools, Organizations, and Businesses

In school, the group can focus on student successes or building improvements. Small businesses can look at past growth patterns or customer growth. Community organizations can review their previous contributions to the residents they support.
+Ideas & Tools that Work

Listing Accomplishments

Accomplishment Lists

One good way to get a group focused on the positive is to review their accomplishments over time. You can ask them to list community accomplishments for the past twenty years. Where applicable, list the organization or individual who was instrumental in implementing that accomplishment.

Sometimes, more focused accomplishments are helpful. For example, you could focus business accomplishments on specific areas such as costs, quality, or new customers.

Reflection and Sharing

Another easy exercise is simply to ask people to list what they like about their community, jobs, or organization. It is a simple and quick way to add positive energy to a conversation.

Accomplishments - Kyrdem Communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Hall</th>
<th>Road</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Buildings</td>
<td>Cultivated Fields are Productive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Buildings</td>
<td>Well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Tap</td>
<td>Community Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Current</td>
<td>Playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot Path</td>
<td>Day Care Center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Feeder</td>
<td>New Shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultivating Land</td>
<td>Bus Waiting Shed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Community Forest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Distribution of Food for Poor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A group of men in Kyrdem, India prepared their list of accomplishments over the last few years.

Reasons Why People Like Living in Puriang

- I was born here and it is my homeland
- We have enough food
- Unlike some villages, we have enough water - even in the dry season
- There are enough places to work
- We have a better climate than other villages. We are high up on the hills so there are fewer mosquitoes and malaria.

Puriang, India residents created this list of positive attributes of their village. Despite the poverty, lack of jobs, and lack of health care, they are thankful that they are able to grow enough food and have a healthier climate due to their hillside location. Despite the two-hour round trip walk to the spring in the dry season, they are thankful that they have water throughout the year.
Sharing Individual Visions

For most of the exercises so far, participants have worked in groups. But individual work also gives people time for thoughtful consideration about personal hopes for the future.

You can create a short list of questions that participants can prepare before they come to the meetings. The facilitators collects the responses and shares these thoughts, usually anonymously, with the group. Normally the results are both inspiring and more cohesive than participants might imagine.

The Faith in Action (FIA) committee of the Unitarian-Universalist Church in The Philippines is the organization dedicated to alleviating poverty among its communities. The FIA committee had been working for a few years, but wanted to update its vision and mission for the future. All attendees of the Participatory Planning and Action meetings answered a few questions in a Pre-Workshop Assignment. The goal was to show that all committee members had an extremely positive view of the future.

Sample of Responses to Pre-Workshop Assignment

Imagine that the Faith in Action (FIA) department is very successful in the next 5 years. Write a description of the department's accomplishments as you hope they will be in the future. List how many communities are impacted, the number of people who are involved, the activities implemented, and the actions that FIA will have achieved.
Sharing Personal Dreams

Asking individuals to share their personal dreams is another method to get participants to focus on the future. People can either write these goals as stories or draw them. With less-literate populations, drawings usually work better. For organizations or small businesses, written stories can be extremely inspiring. When these dreams and stories are shared, people are often surprised to find that they share the same goals.

Sharing Collective Dreams

Groups or communities can also create a vision of their collective dreams or goals through stories or drawings. They can create excitement about the future and how success will positively affect the lives of each participant.

Appreciative Inquiry Exercises

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a field of study of its own. Numerous AI exercises build positive energy for change in groups and individuals. They are designed to show people that they have the power to create change in their communities. They assume that people, groups, and communities will be successful. They encourage people to look at their assets and believe that they are strong. They presume that people will collaborate towards success.

AI exercises can be done in a large group or in pairs. The box to the right is an exercise that is best done in pairs engaging in thoughtful conversations.

Appreciative Inquiry Exercise

- Work with a partner.
- Share a story about a time when you worked together as a team to accomplish something.
- What values does this represent about that team?
- Taking turns, listen to your partner’s story.

What we’ve done successfully in the past, we can do successfully again.

We’ve worked well together in the past. We can work together again.
Step 5: Analyzing Needs

Completing a needs assessment helps community members identify their desires, needs, or problems. A list of issues may be developed by discussion or from analyzing the information you have gathered and organized about the community and its institutions.

During this step, you will want to encourage lots of discussion about the items on the list. Discussion leads to better understanding of the issues and the perspectives of men, women, youth, and other subgroups about their development needs.

Make sure that all needs, large or small, are placed on the list at this point. Later in the process, the group as a whole will decide which ones to address first. For now, all needs must be considered as important because they matter to the person or people who listed them.

Facilitation Hints

Start with Their Words

By listening carefully and taking good notes throughout the meetings you have facilitated, it should be easy to say, “I’ve heard a lot of people mention that safe drinking water would benefit this community.” The facilitator should try to echo what community members have already said they need or want to improve.

Look for Common Needs

At this early stage, encourage people to list anything they can think of. There is no need to prioritize right away. By listening to everyone and getting a broad range of ideas, you can identify common needs. Finding collective needs will help inspire action as the community works on items of importance for everyone.

Have an Open Conversation

The tools you have used in the previous steps will have opened a conversation about the nature of the community’s strengths as well its needs without ever asking the direct question, “What do you need?” The answer to that question can make people feel that they are dependent on outsiders to help them with their needs. What you have been doing through this participatory process is highlighting their strengths, their organizations, and their resources. Facilitated properly, the group should now be working well together — well enough that they can frankly and collaboratively discuss community needs.

In Schools, Organizations, and Businesses

Listing needs and looking at causes of problems works in any sort of organization. Businesses may need better accounting systems, lower costs, or higher quality. A school may need a library, improved training in reading techniques, or more involved parents.
Create a Community Needs List

One good way to get the list of needs started is to have the scribes create a chart based on what they've heard community members saying they need. The scribe’s list is the community’s starting point and serves as the basis for the full list of needs that all participants create. Participants start with this list and then brainstorm what is missing.

If the list of needs is extremely long, the facilitators may want to group the needs into categories. It will often make it easier for the participants to work with when they start prioritization exercises.

List of Unranked Needs
Al-Hadhar Neighborhood
Baghdad, Iraq

- Building schools
- School rehabilitation & expansion
- Equip the medical center
- Rehabilitation of sewage system
- Paving and coating the streets
- Construction of kindergarten
- Clearing the debris
- Supply big containers
- Supply and fix power generators
- Cultural courses for widows
- Parks rehabilitation
- Sports
- Electricity/solar lights
- Disabilities

This list states the community’s view of its needs. Most were developed during the community mapping exercise, but the institutional analysis and timelines clarified and refined their thinking. Because about thirty needs were listed, a small group of Arkos residents was assigned to group them into ten categories.

Unranked Needs in Arkos, Romania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizations</th>
<th>Inadequate Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of cultural life – no social events</td>
<td>Lack of hygiene in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a club for elderly</td>
<td>No physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No organized local fire protection</td>
<td>No library in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No local association of farmers</td>
<td>No playground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No NGOs working in Arkos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unorganized Sport Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bowling team is not organized and supported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor facilities, especially football</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Healthcare System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No full-time healthcare staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of health care system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diseases at change of season</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension is very small</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palace (Tourism)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not belong to community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weak Infrastructure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No sewage or natural gas system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpaved roads</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limited Youth Social Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No place for youth at night – no pubs, movies, or dance facilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Insufficient Legal Services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No legal services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example - Khasi Hills, India

This page and the following page contain an example of facilitating Step 5 from the Khasi community of Puriang. It shows how it is easier for participants to start with a needs list prepared by the facilitation team who listened carefully to what people were saying about their community and its needs during the Assessment & Discussion phase (Steps 2-4).

Based on the discussion generated using participatory tools, the facilitators compiled a draft list of approximately 25 needs. Because the list was long, the needs were reshaped into nine categories. This list and the categories were reviewed and discussed by three smaller groups of participants. The discussion was lively and they identified many additional needs. These were added to the original list to compile a complete list of unranked needs.

Preliminary List of Unranked Needs for Participant Review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Recreational Facilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Not all village children attend school</td>
<td>- Sports facilities could be improved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Low teacher salaries</td>
<td>- No recreational center</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher grants for salaries</td>
<td>- A place for cultural events</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Care Systems</th>
<th>Small Industries/Income Generating Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No health services for village</td>
<td>- Not many small industries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not many people to teach health skills in the village</td>
<td>- Not many ways to earn an income except agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Not many people with knowledge of health in the village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No pharmacy in village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No regular health worker visits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- High costs for health care and transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Seasonal diseases like cholera &amp; dysentery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Water Supply</th>
<th>Road to Sung</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Carrying water takes a lot of time</td>
<td>- The road to the fields is unpaved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No water supply into the village</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agricultural Prices</th>
<th>Sanitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Crops sell at very low prices at harvest time</td>
<td>- No garbage site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Middleman makes all the money</td>
<td>- Not many latrines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No storage facilities to sell crops at a different time</td>
<td>- Not everyone has sanitation education/knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No food processing facilities (to can tomatoes or make finished product to sell at higher prices)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity Building</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- No training for village groups in how to work cooperatively to achieve goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- No training for men and women in parenting or family planning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Final List of Unranked Needs

### Education
- Not all village children attend school
- Low teach salaries
- Teacher grants for salaries
- No school bus
- No night school
- Low family income to support education
- Lack of teaching aids and materials
- Dropouts are increasing

### Health Care Systems
- No health services for village
- Not many people to teach health skills in the village
- Not many people with knowledge of health in the village
- No pharmacy in village
- No regular health worker visits
- High costs for health care and transportation
- Seasonal diseases like cholera and dysentery
- No sub-center/dispensary (government)
- No medicine in PHC
- No ambulance

### Water Supply
- Carrying water takes a lot of time
- No water supply into the village
- No agricultural chemicals and fertilizers
- No seed bank

### Recreational Facilities
- Sports facilities could be improved
- No recreational center
- A place for cultural events

### Agricultural Prices
- Crops sell at very low prices at harvest time
- Middleman makes all the money
- No storage facilities to sell crops at a different time
- No food processing facilities (to can tomatoes or make finished product to sell at higher prices)

### Small Industries/Income Generating Activities
- Not many small industries
- Not many ways to earn an income except agriculture
- Lack of entrepreneurs – tailor, barber, forge, blacksmith

### Road to Sung
- The road to the fields is unpaved

### Sanitation
- No garbage site
- Not many latrines
- Not everyone has sanitation education/knowledge
- No cooking gas
- No washing place/platform

### Capacity Building
- No training for village groups in how to work cooperatively to achieve goals
- No training for men and women in parenting or family planning
Step 6: Building Consensus

One of the key strengths of the Participatory Planning and Action process is that it brings people together and minimizes the local conflicts that exist in nearly every community. Conflict must be minimized so that the entire community can agree on its highest priority needs for development.

With the list of needs developed, it is time to prioritize the items. Invariably, differences of opinion will exist and it's important to get them out in the open. It's natural that individuals will have different perspectives about what is their highest priority. For long-term success, the group needs to determine their collective priorities. Try to minimize the disagreements that can arise during prioritization by using consensus building tools such as Pairwise Ranking.

Eventually, the results of the Pairwise Ranking exercise will allow the entire community’s most important priorities to emerge.

Facilitation Hints

Use a Structured Tool

A structured tool is crucial to minimize conflict while deciding between priorities. Pairwise Ranking is excellent when the group is large and when the choices span a wide range of topics. Matrices can be used with smaller groups who are working with narrowly defined choices such as selecting between business opportunities or crops.

Use Pairwise Ranking

One of the best ways for building consensus is Pairwise Ranking. This technique works well because each need’s importance is discussed and considered. Pairwise Ranking assumes all needs are important, but still must be prioritized. This tool never asks participants to vote because voting can create winning and losing ideas than can harden conflict rather than reduce it.

Call a Tie

If the debate over priorities gets heated, cut it off quickly before tempers flare. It is often difficult to decide which is of higher priority when both needs are important. Instead, let them both be equally important. Acknowledge that both are critical needs, validate that having different opinions is fine, and rank them the same. If you are using Pairwise Ranking, you will have other opportunities to compare these two needs versus others during the discussion. You can only reach consensus if conflict is kept to a minimum. Declare a tie and move the discussion forward.

In Schools, Organizations, and Businesses

Ranking matrices are an excellent way to compare the differences in costs and market potential for products. Pairwise ranking can help a board of directors compare and contrast the importance of several potential new programs.
**Build Consensus with Pairwise Ranking**

Pairwise Ranking proceeds through an entire list one pair at a time and enables a community group — no matter how badly in disagreement — to come to conclusions about its first choices. This process provides the community with an opportunity to discuss its preferences in a consensus building manner.

As each pair is compared, the community selects the most important need from that pair and awards it one point. If making a decision about one pair is difficult, skip it for a few minutes and move on. Come back later and see if it is any easier. Do not vote. Simply call it a tie and give each need 1/2-point.

Community members in Szekelyszentmihaly, Romania discussed their community needs during a Pairwise Ranking exercise. They quickly came to consensus on their top priorities - health care, a milk collection point, and water and sewage.

The results of Pairwise Ranking indicated the most important needs of the Teko Pyahu Women’s Committee in Yacarey, Paraguay. The women chose improving their existing organization as the most important step to increasing their income by better using their jam factory.

1. Organization and committee strengthening
2. Future planning
3. Technical assistance and training
4. Capital investment
5. Water treatment
6. Glass jar supply
7. Marketing
8. Better documentation
9. Better labels
10. Waste water
11. Equipment
12. Improving the physical structure of the factory
13. Organization of community
Example - Deciding between Competing Priorities in Doldol

Pairwise ranking highlights how difficult it can be to decide between two equally important priorities. In Doldol, The Philippines deciding between health care and post-harvest storage agricultural facilities was very difficult. Both were critical to village development and many people presented strong cases for each. The storage facilities would allow Doldol’s farmers to dry and store crops for several months. These crops could then be sold at much higher prices than at harvest, when a glut of harvested crops kept prices low. Regarding health, people believed that facilities were lacking, equipment broken (even the stove couldn’t heat water for the midwife), and no medicines were available locally. In the end, they decided if they were not healthy, all livelihood programs would have little value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Post Harvest</th>
<th>Health Center</th>
<th>Roads</th>
<th>Farm Financing</th>
<th>Livelihood</th>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>Barangay Relocation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post Harvest Storage</td>
<td>PH/HC</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>PH</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Center</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R/BL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm Financing</td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>FF</td>
<td>FF</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livelihood</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>BL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle</td>
<td>BL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barangay Relocation Site</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Ranking**

1. Health Center
2. Post Harvest Storage
3. Roads
4. Farm Financing
5. Barangay Relocation Site
6. Livelihood
7. Vehicle

Example - Men and Women Prioritizing Together in Kyrdem

For the initial ranking in Kyrdem, India men and women met separately, ranking their own lists. This gave good identification to the choices so that both men and women felt as if their needs were central to the solution. These top choices were combined to form a second round of ranking in which men, women, and youth were included in one group. The caution was fully unnecessary. The combined list was a huge success and resulted in the final and joint list of community priorities.
+ ideas, tools & examples: for building consensus

Example - When the First Priority is Clear, but the Second is Less Obvious

The pairwise ranking exercise was done in a large group in Puriang. Despite the size of the group, it proceeded smoothly. The list of needs that were evaluated was also quite long. The top priority was a unanimous decision — the water supply. To increase discussion and thought about the next highest priorities, a second matrix was prepared to re-rank the top five priorities—water, road, capacity building/training, agriculture, and health care systems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need or Problem</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water supply</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building / Training</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare systems</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income generating activities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School bus</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Night school</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Initial Results of Pairwise Ranking

In Puriang, it’s clear why water is a priority. The trip down the path to the dry season water supply takes one hour each way. Most women and children make this trip twice a day.

Example - Setting Priorities in an Urban Neighborhood

In the Baghdad neighborhood of Al-Hadhar, it became clear that the first priority was given to the achievement of electric power generators. The second priority was the maintenance and expansion of the sewage system. Their third priority was the lack of medical supplies and capabilities at the medical center.

Final Ranking

1. Water supply
2. Healthcare systems
3. Agriculture
4. Road
5. Capacity Building / Training
Ranking Matrices

Ranking matrices can be used to help determine priorities, particularly if your team is working in a well-defined area. Matrices have variables along both the horizontal and vertical axis. The vertical axis usually contains the projects or products that you wish to compare. The horizontal axis contains the variables the community wishes to consider before it selects a project. If the community is selecting between very different priorities, matrices do not work well; pairwise ranking will be a better tool.

On the following page, you will see a typical case where a ranking matrix might work better than pairwise ranking. If your group already knows that it will be planting a new type of crop to increase livelihoods, it might want to use a matrix to help select the best option.
Step 6 - Building Consensus

ideas, tools & examples: for building consensus

Because this northern Belizean community wanted to increase income from crop production, participants from the community evaluated the potential of various crops. They compared sales potential among tourists, locals, and restaurants. They also considered some production constraints like shelf life and the fragility of the crops.

Notice that this group chose to use easily understood symbols rather than numbers to determine their priorities. This can be a helpful tool when working with groups that are intimidated by numbers.

Example - Setting Priorities for Additional Crop Production

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Sales Price?</th>
<th>Can we Use or Consume it?</th>
<th>Good for Soil?</th>
<th>Easy to Grow?</th>
<th>Low Cost?</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybeans</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manioc</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key

Good = 2  
Okay = 1  
Not Good = 0

Example - Comparing Community Priorities and their Impacts

Because this Paraguayan community listed their community needs on the left side, these needs included better orchards, farming, more animals, better pasture management, improved forest management, and others. They then ranked how improvements in each of these would impact their family lives. Items considered included health, education, and access to credit among others.
Step 7: Creating an Action Plan

Priorities are helpful, but until they are translated into a specific Action Plan, the priorities have no meaning. Your final Community-Based Planning meetings are dedicated to creating Action Plans for the top priorities. The broad participation that occurs in an open and community-wide meeting is what creates broad-scale ownership of the plan. It becomes the community’s plan, not the Facilitator’s plan. The Action Plan starts with a more detailed analysis of the problem followed by a list of potential activities and solutions. Residents discuss the labor, technical assistance, materials, and money that will be needed for the projects. Then the group assigns a person or institution to lead small implementation committees that will report back to the community. Time-lines are set for next steps and they decide on a variety of measures that will be indicators of their success.

Facilitation Hints

Be Respectful of the Past
As the meetings turn towards finding solutions to the community’s highest priorities, one of the first steps is to understand whether they have tried to solve these problems in the past. If they have been unsuccessful, try to understand why their efforts did not yield the results they were hoping for.

Be Sensible, Be Feasible
Don’t be surprised if the highest priority is incredibly difficult to implement. Just because something is a high priority doesn’t mean that it should be the first project you tackle. Encourage people to be sensible and select a project that is among the highest priorities, but can be implemented successfully. Success builds confidence as well as skills.

What They Can Do
The key to creating a successful Action Plan is to understand what resources exist within the community. They always exist, but many of these resources are unrecognized or underutilized. They may be extra supplies, manpower, an unused building, or an organization. Encourage participants to think of all their possible resources.

Engage the Youth
Try to identify a project that the young people can manage themselves, even if it was lower on the list of priorities. Young people can take charge of environmental projects like stream cleanups or recycling programs.

In Schools, Organizations, and Businesses
Businesses and organizations are often used to writing action plans. What they may need help with is writing them with a methodical approach that leads to better decisions and better plans. Entrepreneurs with great ideas often throw money and time away by entering businesses that are not financially feasible.
Problem Analysis Matrices

Problem analysis matrices assist participants in identifying the causes of their most important problems. You may want to break into small groups to create analyses of the top three or four of the community needs that were identified during pairwise ranking. Encourage them to examine each problem to determine why it exists, what’s been done in the past, and what may be done in the future. This analysis is not meant to solve the problem, but will show if the community already has ideas about how to solve the problem and if there are local resources that might be available to implement solutions to problems.

### Problem Analysis: Top Three Priorities in Nagbinlod, The Philippines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Previous Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Opportunities and Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roads</td>
<td>• Heavy rains destroy the road</td>
<td>• Several requests made to government</td>
<td>• Committees meet to work out a plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Limited government budget to maintain roads</td>
<td>• No community labor offered as local contributions</td>
<td>• Offer counterpart labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Heavy trucks destroy the road</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Raise funds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Several requests made to Barangay Council to government</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Petition Municipality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• No community labor offered as local contributions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>• Lack of funds</td>
<td>• Several requests made to government</td>
<td>• Create committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Classrooms neglected with no maintenance for last three years</td>
<td>• No community labor offered</td>
<td>• Provide community labor as local share</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Increase in number of pupils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>• Open well is unsafe and unclean</td>
<td>• It is budgeted by the Municipality, but funds have not been made available</td>
<td>• Volunteer labor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Long distance to walk to bring water to houses</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Purchase pipe to bring waters to the Barangay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Source of clean water is limited</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Problem Analysis: Healthcare System in Puriang, India

This was the first exercise that focused on solutions in Puriang, India. The process encouraged the community to think first about the causes of its problems, then to remember previous attempts to solve them, including why they did not work, and finally to reflect on this history prior to quickly imagining some solutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Previous Coping Strategies</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• No medicine in regional center (PHC)</td>
<td>• Use herbal medicine</td>
<td>• Share/consult with the government for the health workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No sub-center in village</td>
<td>• Go to hospital in Shillong or Jowai for medical needs</td>
<td>• Train the villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Irregularity of health worker from PHC</td>
<td>• Taking loan for healthcare</td>
<td>• Find support from government department (PHC/Block)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No sanitation facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ambulance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Distance to PHC</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Discuss the traffic jam problem with the government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• High cost of transport</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Coal truck traffic jams</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feasibility Analysis

Before creating a detailed plan, it is often useful to do a feasibility analysis on each of the top three priorities. Sometimes the highest priority need is the most difficult to implement. This is particularly true if implementation requires a substantial amount of outside financial or technical resources. Implementation can also be difficult if the community has had difficulty working together in the past. In these cases, it may be better for the group to select a lower priority project if it is more likely to be implemented successfully.

Simple Feasibility Analysis

Evaluate the project using four simple questions. If the answers to these questions are all “Yes”, it’s probably not the best project to tackle first. This is particularly true for a community or group that does not have a history of working well together.

In-Depth Feasibility Analysis

There are many ways to evaluate a project’s feasibility, but they generally compare the following categories:

**Productivity** — How much will this option yield?

**Stability** — Could this project disrupt the economic, political, cultural, or ecological life of the community?

**Sustainability** — Will this option be able to continue for an extended period of time?

**Equitability** — Will all or many people benefit?

**Time to Benefit** — How long will it take before benefits are seen? Quicker is better.

**Cost** — It the cost realistic in relation to the benefits of the project?

**Technical Difficulty** — Can the project be implemented in the context of the community’s support system?

**Independence** — Can the project be implemented with minimal outside resources?

The facilitators in Al Mashl, Iraq used faces to help participants implement a more in-depth feasibility analysis. This analysis was conducted on one area of action planning - Education. Participants were trying to decide which type of educational programs would have the most impact while considering the practical constraints of budgets and other resources.
Example - Organizing for District-Wide Development

The District Association of Village Councils (DAVCO) from one state in Belize knew that they needed to have an influence on government in order to change the plight of poverty in the small villages of their district (state). The needs were great - clean water, better schools, roads, jobs, and health care. As the leaders of the associated villages, they conducted a simple feasibility study on various tactics to evaluate which one would be the most likely to succeed. In the end, improving participation among villagers and villages in the DAVCO programs seemed most likely to work. Their action plan focused on improving participation. It has had an impact. The leaders of DAVCO knew they would be stronger acting together and their participation programs created cohesion among its constituent villages. Two years later, they had already seen great results from their plan.

Simple Feasibility Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interference</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Relations</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Issues</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The more “yeses” a project receives, the harder the project.

Results - Two Years Later

- All villages regularly participate in DAVCO meetings.
- Consulted by government for new policy on local governance.
- Advised government on local construction programs.
- Newsletter communicates issues to villagers.
- Media used to elevate rural issues.
- Receiving NGO and government funding for projects & operations.

DAVCO leaders contributed actively while completing tools and exercises during their 2-day Participatory Planning and Action meetings. These leaders wanted to improve the quality of life in impoverished Belizean villages.
Community Action Plans

Community Action Plans integrate the ranking of identified needs with information that has been obtained throughout the entire Participatory Planning and Action process. Often, it is useful to break into smaller groups to create action plans for the top three priorities and then come back together to discuss them together. Community Action Plans generally include:

**Activities** — The tasks that need to be done.

**Resources** — The resources that are needed. These may be technical assistance, labor, materials, or money. Some will be available within the community. Others may need to come from outside the community. Indicate those that you already have vs. those that you do not have.

**Responsibility** — The person or organization that will implement this task. Get a name if you can — it’s always best for someone to feel responsible, even though others may help him or her with the task.

**Timing** — When the activity will take place. For some tasks there may be a start and end date.

**Indicators** — The measures that show that the group has been successful.

Mobilize Their Resources

One key assumption of Participatory Planning and Action is that there are already resources available in the community. But these resources are often unrecognized. They can remain immobilized for a variety of reasons — local conflicts, tensions between strong-minded leaders, factional rivalries, or traditional views of gender roles that push women aside. More often, these resources remain immobilized simply because communities rarely come together to talk about how their collective resources can serve the well-being of the entire community. No matter how poor they may be, communities always have some resources — human, material, managerial — to solve their problems, but these resources need to mobilized.

### Abásfalva’s Action Plan for a Community Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Activities</th>
<th>Resources Needed</th>
<th>Who will Act?</th>
<th>When?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To compromise with the owner on a small place which is necessary for the scale house</td>
<td>• Wood</td>
<td>• Szocs Laszlo will talk with owner</td>
<td>First week of May - compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community meeting, community work</td>
<td>• Transporter</td>
<td>• Zaombori Balaz will organize the community meeting with Local Council, Land Owner Association</td>
<td>Second week of May - community meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Wood felling and cutting</td>
<td>• Public Work</td>
<td>• Homorodi Gyula will organize the public work</td>
<td>The end of May - build, public work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transport to the new place</td>
<td>• Money (funds)</td>
<td></td>
<td>June - someone is responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Bringing the back hoe from the mayor</td>
<td>• Certificate of the scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Building the scale house</td>
<td>• Back hoe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Checking and certifying the scale</td>
<td>• Person responsible for the scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Choosing a responsible person for the scale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is interesting about this action plan from Abásfalva is that it clearly shows that the community does have resources to solve its own problems. There was a new realization that the community can be part of the solution. They do not have to wait for outsiders to help.
Example - Combining Resources to Achieve Success

Nagbinlod village on Negros Island in The Philippines conducted a village planning exercise that set water as its highest priority need. Their Action Plan noted many things. One specific item was the community’s commitment to provide voluntary labor to bury about 3 km of water pipe. For the previous five years the village council had gone to the Mayor’s office and explained they needed a water supply. The Mayor would always smile and say he had 30 villages in his district and they all needed water supplies. He noted that he did not have enough money to install systems in every village. So, he lamented, he could not help them.

On this visit to the Mayor’s office, the committee then produced its new Action Plan. The Mayor smiled again and said this all looks very nice, but I have no money. As he spoke, he glanced at the Action Plan. The paragraph that showed the community’s contribution of labor caught his attention. He began to read more carefully and his smile broadened. He looked up and asked, “is it true that you are ready to provide labor to install all of the pipe?” The committee responded with an emphatic “yes”.

The Mayor told the committee to come back next week. When they reappeared the Mayor said that if the community was so determined to have a water system that they would invest a substantial portion of labor, he could find some small money ($5,000) to build a water tank and provide a pump. Because they now had the Mayor’s commitment, the village subsequently was successful in raising an additional $5,000 to buy the pipe. In nine months, they had a fully installed and operational water system.

Community Action Plan
Bringing Water to the Village of Nagbinlod, The Philippines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Technical Assistance Needed</th>
<th>Resources Needed - Labor, Material, Money</th>
<th>Who will Act?</th>
<th>When?</th>
<th>Indicators of Success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase 450 meters of pipe</td>
<td>Secure estimate of total cost</td>
<td>Need: Pipe fittings, pipe cement, Teflon</td>
<td>Village Chairman and council with Infrastructure Committee</td>
<td>Nov/Dec 2003</td>
<td>Reduction in the amount of time spent obtaining water each day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build a tank</td>
<td>Engineer from municipality</td>
<td>Need: Contact engineer Have: Labor</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduction in illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Install pipe</td>
<td>Engineer from municipality</td>
<td>Need: Contact engineer Have: Labor</td>
<td>Community labor to install pipe</td>
<td></td>
<td>Change in amount of water available for special occasions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 8: Implementing the Plan

In developing their Action Plan, team leaders emerge and resources within the community (such as labor and supplies) are identified. While some problems can be solved with the newly mobilized resources within the community, others require outside resources. These resources are typically financial, but can also be specialized technical assistance.

Finding outside partners for these action plans can be an intimidating process for a community with only basic literacy levels or low self-confidence in dealing with bureaucratic or technical agencies. The first step is to work with their local government contacts to learn about NGO, national government, and international programs that can help to implement their Action Plan. Often the facilitators can play a helpful role in identifying funding agencies or technical resources and providing advice about how best to work with these types of agencies.

Facilitation Hints

Transfer the Workshop Report

As a facilitation team, one of the most important things you can do for the community and group is to complete the final report of the Participatory Planning and Action workshops. This report should contain copies of all completed tools and your team’s analysis of the outcome.

This report is proof that they have worked together in a new and different manner, collectively and collaboratively. They can use it to guide their work in implementing projects. They can also use it to request funding. Many government programs and granting agencies are now requiring that participatory techniques be used prior to allocating financial or technical resources.

Be a Shepherd

Be sure that community members are leading the implementation of the Action Plan. Implementing this plan could take longer than your facilitation service. Focus on transferring your role of leader-facilitator to key people and groups in the community. Work to establish credible and effective project implementation committees that will be able to continue after the facilitator has left the community.

Unite Before Asking Others for Resources

Communities that are effectively organized, technically focused, and politically unified will achieve results. They are more likely to get attention and funding than communities without action plans because they are able to show that their community is willing to participate in its own development.

In Schools, Organizations, and Businesses

Be sure to respect the hierarchy of the organization by garnering the support of senior executives such as principals or managers. It is important that they be included in and supportive of the Action Plan.
Name a Responsible Committee

The most important action after the planning workshop is to identify the members of the project steering-committee or choose an existing community-based organization that will be responsible for implementation. Normally, this organization would have been identified in Step 7 – Action Planning. The Action Plan developed during the planning workshop has a column that identifies who will be responsible. That is a good place to start.

If the Action Plan identifies an existing village committee, work with that group. If the Action Plan suggests individuals, then meet with those individuals and see what they are prepared to do. It may be possible to create a new committee made up of these individuals, specifically charging them with implementing the project. Any new committee should represent multiple viewpoints, including those of women, youth, and the very poor. Be sure to invite anyone with needed technical expertise to join. In addition, make certain that the village’s existing governing body approves the new committee.

Help the Committee Get Started

Once you have a committee in place, meet with them to determine if they are prepared to take the necessary steps to implement the plan. Work out an informal or even formal agreement and set a schedule. When this agreement is in place, find a way to inform the rest of the community that their committee has already taken the first step to get started on the plan.

If there are no officers or formal leaders within the committee, you might want to have the committee designate who will be in charge of different parts of the work. That information should also be made available to the entire community. The more everyone knows what is happening, the more you will be able to get help and support from the community as the implementation process moves forward.

As facilitator, this is a good time to let the committee know how you would like to be involved in supporting them during the implementation phase. This is also a good time to organize a means to keep in contact with the committee.
+ ideas, tools & examples: for implementing the plan

Expanding and Completing the Action Plan

Past experience suggests that the Action Plan created during the planning workshop often needs additional information and detail. Gather together either the project steering committee or the existing village executive committee (or both) and review the Action Plan.

Technical Aspects

Look at the plan’s technical aspects. For example, if it is a water supply system, does anyone in the village know about installing water systems? If not, where can you get information about the technical needs? There may be a local government officer trained as a water engineer. Or perhaps there is another village nearby that has recently installed a water system. Maybe an NGO has an office in a nearby town and can help. There is also a possibility that someone from the facilitation team knows about water projects or knows someone who has done such things. This technical review of the action plan is very important so that the committee will know what kind of materials are needed, approximate costs, length of time to install, and most importantly, what the village can contribute and what will be needed from outside resources.

Preliminary Feasibility

As you review the action plan, check on how practical and realistic it might be. For example, one action plan stated it would solve its water problems by tapping into a source above the village. The project committee conducted a preliminary investigation and learned that the source was privately owned and already in use by families living nearby. Check the feasibility of a solution before getting involved in major project planning or negotiating. A different solution may be needed.

Budget Estimate

Before investing major time in planning a project, get approximate estimates of costs. If there are to be proposals submitted to government or other agencies, the committee needs to have a sense of what support is potentially available and whether the project is realistically within that agency’s ability to support.

Permitting and Government Regulations

Determine whether the group will need to obtain building permits or other local approvals before they start a project. The local government staff can help determine this. Just as there may be need for local permits, there may be district or national government permissions required such as registering the sponsoring agency, getting permission to open a bank account, or related permissions.

Implementation Calendar

Look at the schedule for implementation produced during the planning exercises. Compare it with the technical details that have been added and see whether you need to adjust the schedule to make it consistent with these technical needs. For example, will it take many more months than anticipated to order and install windows in a renovated health clinic? Reconcile these differences to create a practical implementation timeline.

Reflect on Indicators

Review the indicators of success selected in the original Action Plan. Are they still relevant? Do more need to be added? Often when a community asks for funding, the government or NGO funding agency will ask how the group will evaluate the result. In Nagbinlod, the village was able to show that school attendance had improved because the new water system had reduced the incidence of diarrhea and other stomach/intestinal ailments. Better water leads to better health and more regular school attendance. Government officers and granting agencies can be persuaded to support a project that has truly positive outcomes.
Working with the Project Steering Committee

Who is in Charge?

Make certain that the source of authority for the committee is clearly understood in the community as well as who the officers and leaders are within that committee. If an existing committee is managing the project, this should not be a big problem. If a new committee is created to run the project, make certain that its members have been chosen in a formal and legal way and work to make certain that the entire community understands why each member of the committee has been selected.

Holding and Managing Committee Meetings

As facilitator, you should not chair the community meetings. This is a task for the appropriate committee member. Instead, the task of the facilitator is to keep the meetings directed toward the design, organizing, mobilizing, and implementation of the project(s). Work with the chair to set an agenda, provide background information, learn about other villages that have done similar projects, and be alert for government programs that might be helpful. It is also appropriate for the facilitator to assign someone to take minutes of the meeting so there is a record of what was discussed and who will follow through.

There is a fine line between the duties of the committee chair and the facilitator. Only experience and good judgment can guide the facilitator in maintaining this separation. As meetings continue, the facilitator should be able to turn complete control over to the committee chair and its members. Early on, the facilitator should work with the committee to ensure that they:

Establish Committee Norms

Once a committee has been established and before beginning anything, be sure to set norms for how they will work together. Who will lead the team? Who will take minutes? How will the agenda be set? How often will they meet?

Make Decisions Public

Record and make public the decisions taken at committee meetings. This helps avoid rumors that committee leaders are placing wells or clinics near their own homes or adding their relatives to the payroll of a community project. The best way to control these rumors is to make all decisions public. Distribute the minutes or post them in public places.

Formalize Links between the Committee and the Facilitation Team

When you leave the community, you should have agreed with the project steering committees about how you will stay involved with them as they implement their Action Plan. Regular communications are helpful for three reasons. First, you will feel a connection to the community and will want to hear of their successes. Second, because you represent a wealth of experience and expertise, you can help connect the community with the resources that it needs to implement its Action Plan successfully. Third, as they share successes and struggles, you will be able to motivate them to be patient and persevere as they implement change in their community.
Preventing the Steering Committee to Manage Money Properly

Don’t Let Distrust Form

Implementing the Action Plan will often require financial resources. Whenever money is involved, the risk of conflict and mistrust exists. You can avoid this by encouraging the creation of a transparent and fully accountable money management system for any project that requires cash resources for implementation. Create this system before any money is received.

Train if Needed

There are many resources to train the committee on how to manage money properly. Some even involve using a simulation that manages a hypothetical project over the course of a week or two where committee members are given cash (pieces of paper) and they have to keep track of expenses, create reports, and budget.

However you decide to teach the committee about accounting and money management, you need to be clear about the importance of high standards for managing any budgets or funds that the project committee may have access too.

Create an Accounting System

Even small organizations need an accounting system to manage their funds. A basic accounting system helps the group keep track of its:

- **Past** – receipts and trends
- **Present** – inventory and costs
- **Future** – budgets and forecasts

Honesty and Transparency are Rewarded

When groups manage money responsibly, the community will trust them to manage other projects in the future. If funds have been received, for example, to buy computers, make public the information about where the money has come from, how it will be spent, who will be responsible for managing the budget, and where the bank account is located as well as who are the legal signatories for access to the account. If these actions are not taken, can you blame a community for wondering if there was more money available or if any of it was used for other purposes? How are they to know if no system is in place to show that their money was managed with care?

Governments and NGOs may take a risk to fund a new group once, but they won’t take it twice. If the project committee squanders or misuses the funds, they will likely never receive funding again. On the other hand, groups and communities who have implemented their first development project using outside funds in a responsible, honest and transparent manner are much more likely to receive future grants or funding in the future.
Mobilizing Community Resources

Look in the Action Plan at the full list of materials and other resources required to implement the project. What does the community have that is already available? These resources could be materials or labor.

Many granting agencies require a community contribution prior to funding a development project. Finding and contributing local resources can mean the difference between receiving funding or being denied. In the case of Nagbinlod, after the community agreed to donate the manual labor needed to implement the water project, the government provided funds for the pump and tanks.

For some projects, no outside resources are required. The youth of Arkos built trash containers using their own labor and donated lumber in an effort to clean-up their community streets. The women of Malingin began growing medicinal plants and herbs for sale in their own community. They are now evaluating how this can be expanded into a business beyond the community.

Looking for Outside Resources

Some projects do require outside resources for proper implementation. The chart below highlights the types of outside resources that communities and groups need.

Obtain Implementation Support

Once the project steering committee is in place, it needs to set up a more specific schedule and detailed assignments. While each Action Plan will be different, implementation needs generally fall into four categories:

**Technical Advice**

Projects can falter for many reasons. One is poor technical advice. The project steering committee must work with all appropriate groups to insure the project is well planned, all technical issues are considered, and that realistic designs are adopted. Most local governments have staff skilled in the basic technologies of development. If that is not the case, work through village, district, or NGO networks to find people knowledgeable in technical areas.

**Labor**

Most communities have abundant supplies of labor during certain times of the year. A good project steering committee can find out when would be the best time to use community labor and to encourage residents to contribute their labor to implement the Action Plan. When communities are willing to donate their own labor, it shows their commitment and it lowers the overall cost of the project. This community-wide commitment is often what convinces outside organizations to contribute monies for supplies or equipment.

**Materials**

Almost all projects require some type of materials. You may be able to obtain some locally (gravel, fence posts, paint, etc.). Participatory Planning and Action often shows that a community has many local resources and that they can be made available at little or no cost. More complex materials (grain milling machines, pumps, oil presses, etc.) will come from outside of the community. The project committee will need to work to obtain these resources.

**Money**

You will need to decide if project funds can be generated through internal fundraising or if the project requires outside funding. It’s always easier and faster to raise funds within the community, but that is generally only practical for small projects. Although communities can do a great deal for their own development, they need outside resources to fund development. Forming strong partnerships with international and local NGOs, government officials, and others can open doors to resources for the current project and for future ones.
Implementation of a Participatory Planning & Action program can be a slow process, particularly for large and complex projects that can take two years or more to implement. As a facilitator, you become a positive force in mobilizing a community to manage its own development. Using participatory tools enables all community members to contribute ideas in an open and inclusive manner and allows you to play a clear role as a facilitator in the development process.

Facilitated properly, the process can be the catalyst for an entire community to forge new and productive partnerships with other organizations that can provide the technical or financial resources needed for community development and poverty alleviation.

Implementing Participatory Planning and Action takes preparation and patience, but the rewards are real. You will see long-lasting changes created by people that improve their lives, their incomes, and their future. Community-based work is exciting because it empowers people in a way that changes lives. The emotional bonds formed while celebrating the successes that make a permanent difference in the lives of community members — like new businesses, healthcare access, improved sanitation, better nutrition, stronger education — will last a lifetime. This is one of the many reasons that working with communities is so rewarding.

This final chapter shows the incredible results that communities have achieved by using participatory methods and highlights the difference this approach has made in the lives of people around the world.
Participatory planning brings communities together by building consensus about how to move forward to create a more positive future. Successful projects have yielded results in a variety of areas.

**Protecting the Environment**

The youth of several Romanian communities selected the environment as their priority. In Arkos, they organized a stream clean-up day to improve water quality. Together they built and placed 24 trash containers around the village and organized bi-weekly pickup by the county trash collection department.

The youth from Benced organized a village clean-up day with 100 residents participating. The young people participated in an environmental summer camp and Earth Day is now an annual celebration in the village.

**Revitalizing Village Life**

After their community planning workshop, residents of Benced organized and opened their first internet connection which has expanded to a fully functional cyber café. This free internet access has enabled the community to write several successful grant proposals. Cultural nights allow current and former residents to enjoy music, dancing, singing, and eating. The village’s senior citizens routinely enjoy youth-sponsored entertainment and hospitality.

**Improving Access to Water**

It is common for poor communities to list access to safe drinking water among their highest priorities. After Torockosztgyorgy village implemented a streambed cleaning, the Mayor hired a contractor to make further streambed improvements. Over time, this resulted in a water system upgrade that was finished in 2008.

The village prepared a proposal for the City Council to include a drainage and sewage system. Less than two years after its community planning session, the Indian village of Puriang saw the pipe and tank for its new water system installed. This new system will save more than three hours each day currently wasted in carrying water during the long dry season.

**Enhancing Infrastructure**

A newly mobilized Puriang was able to write and secure a government-sponsored upgrade for the road from the village to the rice paddies. Many of its villagers will be providing labor for the project and will receive cash payments in exchange for their manual labor.

**Building Health and Sanitation Systems**

The Indian community of Kyrdem has already made progress on its highest priority and has convinced the public health clinic to conduct two health awareness seminars. They then turned to applying for a public toilet.

The community of Puriang met with their elected official and learned how to file a formal application for a health center – something they had never done before. A few months later a site inspection team, including the doctor, came for a visit. They approved the site and have recommended to the Ministry of Health that a center be opened.
A Few Final Facilitation Hints

**Don’t be Afraid**

It can seem intimidating to facilitate the process the first time. After receiving training, I was terrified my first time. My advice is to prepare well, but then just jump in. Be enthusiastic. Be energetic. You’ll quickly discover new ways to facilitate that match your personal style. And you’ll feel so happy to have helped a community.

Krisztina Pall, facilitator since 2005

**Don’t Overdo the Tools**

When I first started working in the field, I used to use every tool possible. The reality is that the participants get frustrated when they can’t see where the process is headed. I realized that we were gathering more information than was helpful. Now I use the minimum number of tools needed to move a community towards consensus. Conflict-ridden communities may need more, but in many places 5-6 tools are enough. In short, use only the number of tools needed to move the people quickly towards action planning. That’s what they are interested in.

Dr. Richard Ford, facilitator since 1985

**Write a Report**

I always spend an extra day in the village writing the report so that the community gets a copy of its work immediately. I try to distribute it to as many people as possible and leave it in a public place, like a library, church, or school. Letting everyone see the report is important because it reinforces the fact that everyone’s opinion mattered and was recorded. This written record can be referenced during the implementation phase. In some countries, it’s crucial to have a good report because participatory work is often a requirement for receiving a grant or government money.

Eileen Higgins, facilitator since 2003

**Find Ways for Everyone to Participate**

Keep an eye out during each exercise to see that everyone is engaged. You may need to adjust how the groups are split. If the women are too quiet in a mixed group, create a women-only team. If one person is dominating the conversation, find another role for that person. If people seem stressed or reserved, get the positive energy flowing again by using a fun activity as an icebreaker.

Anna Toness, facilitator since 1999

**Know When to Be Patient**

After we finished the community planning workshop in Puriang, we returned home with high hopes and thought that we would be receiving reports of results right away. Progress did occur, but at a pace in keeping with the daily demands of life in a poor agricultural community rather than at the hyperkinetic speed Americans are used to. It’s very important to keep this in mind as participants in participatory planning programs. Active empowerment did take place between the villagers and the Indian government with no further outside American involvement. Two years later, a new water system was installed. We are thrilled that the lives of the people of Puriang are forever altered.

Sharon Van Duizand, co-facilitator since 2008
Success Breeds Success in Nagbinlod

Participatory Planning Empowered Community Leaders and Local Institutions

This case study of the Filipino community of Nagbinlod shows how their participatory planning meetings started a community development process that continues to this day.

The tiny, impoverished village agreed that clean, safe drinking water was a high priority and they organized their first Community Action Plan around this issue. Within 18 months Nagbinlod had an operational gravity-fed water system in place, delivering water at seven standpipe locations along the main road. The government granted $3,000 in materials because the village offered up an equivalent $3,000 in volunteer labor to install the new system. The participatory plan inspired North American partners to donate the pipe and valves needed to complete construction.

Motivated by the successful installation of its water supply, Nagbinlod became even more organized. Improvements abound in this small village. The people did much of the work themselves to repair and renovate the Barangay (town) Hall. They built a shelter in the public assembly field to host community events. Even getting to Nagbinlod became easier because they convinced the Ministry of Transport to fund grading and patching of the road.

Nagbinlod’s school used to be one rundown building. But improving the school system ranked high on the village’s list of priorities. The village received a $2300 grant from the government for materials because it provided a good portion of the labor, allowing the elementary school to grow to five buildings by 2006.

This village had convinced the government that they were a good investment. If the government provided funds for a community project, it could rely on these villagers to implement the project successfully and manage it for the long-term.

The government placed a new agricultural extension center there in early 2006. Villagers now receive training in innovative growing and irrigation techniques from agricultural extension specialists. Because they had a functioning water system, Nagbinlod was able to grant water rights to the agricultural extension center for irrigation. This facilitated a partnership with a Taiwanese seed company who needed access to water. In exchange, this partnership gives villagers access to new types of seed — like eggplant, broccoli, and melons — with higher yields, shorter growing cycles, and more nutritional value.

In 2003, this community could barely feed itself. Now its gardens are producing more than they can eat and the community is considering starting a food processing business.
Organized Communities Get Results

Nagbinlod used outside help only to attain funding for their first project — the water system. Recent successes resulted from their own initiative, in partnerships with The Philippines government, private sector groups, an energized population, and the work of invigorated local institutions including the Farm Family Association, the Village Council, and the Women’s Group. Using a participatory planning process gave this community the vision and tools it needed to manage its own development. The local action continues.

The First Success Starts the Ball Rolling in Nagbinlod

The chart shown below shows how one successful project implemented by a small, impoverished community can start a chain of successes that continues seven years later. Each year the projects seem to get larger. They recently received funds to bring safe drinking water to neighboring communities by implementing a regional water system.
What Does All of this Mean?

The lessons of Nagbinlod, Puriang, Kyrdem, Benced, Arkos, and many more are deep, sustainable, and relevant to literally thousands of similar communities across the globe. Poverty is everywhere. Solutions do not have to wait for donors or governments or NGOs to come. Individual communities can do a lot to help themselves. What are some of the lessons learned?

1. **People are the most important resource.**

   The greatest resource to solve global poverty is the people themselves. They know their needs and what has failed in the past. They also know and can sustain solutions that they design, implement, and “own.”

2. **Planning tools are more important than money.**

   The most significant role of outsiders is not bringing money. The money is soon spent (or stolen) and builds a cycle of dependency where the community believes begging for more money is the route to development. Instead of bringing money, Participatory Planning and Action brings tools, skills, consensus-building, conflict mediation, local ownership, and perhaps most important, hope.

3. **Start with local information.**

   The first task of the tools is to help people organize information that they already know and to share that information between and among all members of the community. The first round of exercises in the planning workshops does exactly that.

4. **Mobilize underutilized resources.**

   The second task is to mobilize resources the people already have. Nagbinlod is an example of a previously conflict-ridden community coming alive and moving forward by energizing their own resources.

5. **Consensus is critical to unite the community.**

   The third task is building consensus that enables the entire community to work together. This has been the hallmark of virtually all of the communities that have used this approach.

6. **Evaluation takes place in seeing new and successful projects, so all the community members are evaluators.**

   The best form of evaluation of the tools is that the communities keep using them. Nagbinlod, seven years after their initial workshop, is still using a participatory approach and succeeded in winning a government grant to expand their water project to several additional communities. They did this completely on their own with no outside help.
7. Local planning is gaining recognition.

Governments and donors now more frequently understand that matching grants and co-funded locally-planned projects are a more sustainable type of community assistance than 100% government-designed initiatives. The Government of India has recently introduced legislation in its 38 most poverty-ridden states that requires villages and neighborhoods to prepare community action plans prior to receiving money to assist in road, school, water, health, forestry, and related infrastructure projects. It was inspired directly by the well-known Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach that the government adopted several years ago and that is one of the forerunners of this handbook.

8. Partnership is the new mode of poverty alleviation.

Villages are looking to governments, NGOs, and the private sector as partners rather than providers of money with which local politicians can enhance their influence and power.

9. The people as preeminent.

The greatest lesson from the 30 years of developing participatory tools is that the impoverished know things worth knowing and can apply this knowledge to achieve sustainable results. How ironic that the greatest resource to alleviate poverty is not finding billions of dollars or Euros as many institutions assume. Instead, the missing link in the poverty alleviation game is the people who have the most to gain by reducing poverty. While money is a necessary resource, it is not the central ingredient in the poverty alleviation equation. But the people need structure, focus, tools, organizing, consensus, and vision to make this happen. The planning workshops, the tools, and the follow-up implementation examples noted in this handbook offer one way to enable the people to take charge of their lives, their communities, and their economic and social development.

Participation – A Different Process to Build Hope for the Future

After implementing village-wide planning meetings, the words of one Village Council member summed up both the hopes and fears for the future.

“We are happy that you’ve been able to be with us from the beginning of the process. It’s some kind of wonder – everybody was saying that it’s just like in a dream. It’s a kind of process that we’ve never experienced in our lives before.

We are so happy that you came here to help the village. And we hope that the issues that have been brought to the top will be able to succeed with the training you have set up.

Pray God that from the process we will be able to progress more.”


Livak, Nancy and E. Mira. Informal written reports and photographs of participatory planning progress with the Orange Walk District Association of Village Councils (DAVCO), Belize, 2007.


Toness, Anna and V. Caballero. Informe final de la evaluación y planificación rural participativa en Fortín Ávalos Sánchez. San Lorenzo, Paraguay, June 2000.


Toness, Anna and V. Caballero, PRA Team. Informe de resultados del diagnostico rural participativo en la microcuenca Santa Rosa. Cuidad del Este, Paraguay, July 2000.

