
CHAPTER 3

PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL

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WHAT IS PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL?

Participatory appraisal refers to the process that enables communities to analyze and share their knowledge, experiences, views, and concerns on different topics related to their physical, economic and social conditions. This analysis is usually carried out at the village/hamlet level in rural areas or neighborhoods in urban locations.

WHY DO WE NEED PARTICIPATORY APPRAISALS?

Participatory appraisals generate information needed in the design of project activities, and they provide the basis for developing a participatory monitoring and evaluation system.

WHO CONDUCTS PARTICIPATORY APPRAISALS?

Someone who works in the CBO or FBO in charge of the project will lead the participatory appraisal. This person helps guide the process, but ultimately it is community members who define and give shape to the issues that come out of the appraisal. By involving the community in analyzing their own situation, and enabling them to take part in deciding the activities that will be implemented, the participating communities will also own the process. Such participatory processes have a better chance of succeeding in the short and long run.

WHEN SHOULD A PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL BE CARRIED OUT?

Participatory appraisals should be carried out **before** designing project activities—in fact, a participatory appraisal should be carried out as the first step in a project development process. However, it is possible that some of you using this manual may already be in the midst of implementing projects. In such cases, it will probably not be possible or efficient to start the design process again from the beginning. However, it would **still be useful** to conduct a participatory appraisal even at this stage, as findings from the appraisal can be used to modify planned activities and the implementation process as needed.

A participatory appraisal carried out **after** a project has already started can successfully introduce a participatory monitoring process.

For CBOs and FBOs that have already carried out participatory appraisals, there is no need to repeat the process if the community has records of the appraisal and the information is available for the community to prepare a monitoring plan. It's important that the previous appraisal included the community identifying indicators for monitoring the planned activities and the process. If these indicators are not already available, it is possible to develop them if you have good records of the previous appraisal.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL?

Ideally, participatory appraisals should be carried out in all the communities that you plan to work in. There can be differences in the way these appraisals are carried out across different communities. The first two or three community appraisals will probably need to probe a large number and variety of topics. Once the local issues become clear, the focus can be narrowed in the later appraisals.

Some CBOs and FBOs may plan to work in a large area and cover several communities. In such cases, it is important that you enlist and train community volunteers to conduct participatory appraisals so that they have the skills to facilitate the process in their own and in neighboring communities.

This transfer of skills and responsibility is possible if you keep the process simple and demonstrate it in a couple of communities before handing over the responsibility to the volunteers. This will also prepare the volunteers to facilitate the participatory monitoring process at a later stage.

Attempts should be made to involve as many people in a community as possible. Sometimes extra effort is needed to include certain groups of people, like women who work in their fields during the day, or men from a particular social group who do not mix with other groups in the village. Discussions with local leaders help in understanding the local situation, as well as in verifying the analysis carried out by different groups in the community

If your project is working specifically with individuals or households affected by HIV/AIDS (e.g. with those providing care and support to the affected), you will need to focus more on those households during the appraisal process to ensure that their voice is heard.

PLANNING FOR YOUR PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL

There are no blueprints for carrying out a participatory appraisal. The design will vary according to the context and type of activities planned. However, the following steps provide a general guideline to follow when conducting your participatory appraisal.

1. Refer to your **proposed project objectives** in order to determine potential topics for a participatory appraisal. We need to be clear on why we are carrying out the participatory appraisal. If a project plans to work on

preventing the spread of HIV, it should select topics that are related to this objective.

2. **Identify communities** that will participate in the appraisal and inform them about the appraisal and its purpose, and decide dates with community members and local leaders.
3. **Plan logistics**, such as transport and meals, and collect critical material to have on hand at all times – such as paper, marker pens, masking tape, scissors, pencils, and pens.

Once this preparation is finalized, you can begin to prepare to work with individual communities. This involves the following steps:

Step 1:

- ✓ **Create different groups of community members who will help analyze an issue or issues from different points of view. For sensitive issues, consider doing one-on-one interviews instead of group discussions.**

Usually an appraisal is carried out with different groups of men and women in the community. These groups can be further divided by age or other social characteristics (for example, occupation, caste, location in a village or neighborhood, etc). Having different groups analyze the same issues helps in verifying the results and also to understand whether there are any differences in experiences and concerns among the different groups within the same community, e.g. do women and men have different views on condom use? Do older and younger men have the same information on how HIV is transmitted? Some topics tend to be personal and sensitive in nature. For example, many people don't feel free to discuss their sexual behavior in a group. Such issues are best discussed at an individual level.

Step 2:

- ✓ **Create a checklist of issues that will be covered during the discussions**

A checklist helps ensure that all the important themes are covered at the community level. This list of issues can be modified as the process develops in the community or as you move to other communities. New issues may emerge from the discussions that need to be included, and other issues may turn out to be not so important and can be dropped from the list. It is also possible that some issues are more important for some communities, while not so important for other communities that have different experiences and concerns.

Step 3:

- ✓ **Begin the participatory appraisal**

Usually an outsider, from the project office or a volunteer from another community, **facilitates** the appraisal process. The role of the facilitator is critical in carrying out an in-depth participatory appraisal.

The facilitator's responsibilities include:

- ✓ Asking questions that initiate the discussion on different topics;
- ✓ Introducing visuals for analyzing the issues;
- ✓ Enabling all members in a group to take part in the discussions;
- ✓ Ensuring most people in a community take part in the appraisal;
- ✓ Ensuring that no individual or group dominates the discussions.

The facilitator should have good listening skills, and should not ask leading or closed questions (questions that imply an answer - like "Do you get information about HIV/AIDS on the radio?" A better way to ask this question is "Where do you get information on HIV/AIDS from?").

Facilitation is best done in teams. You should have at least two trained facilitators for every group discussion, one to facilitate and the other to take notes. Sometimes it is good to have a man and a woman, so that both male and female participants can feel comfortable with the facilitators. However, there are times, especially when discussing sensitive information, when it is better to separate men and women into different groups, and assign a facilitator of the same gender to each group.

Step 4:

- ✓ **Record all information obtained in the appraisal process**

**Documentation Generated
by Participatory Appraisals**

- 1. Field notes**
- 2. Daily reports**
- 3. Site report**

Taking notes in the field while the appraisal is going on is very important. A lot of information is generated and analyzed during the group discussions. If this information is not recorded, it will not be possible for the facilitators to recall the details at a later date. Besides, proper recording is very important for developing any monitoring system. Since information generated during a participatory appraisal will be used for planning and monitoring project activities, it is important that adequate attention is paid to recording the process as it takes place in a community. This includes a record of all the discussion, including what people did or did not agree upon, reasons for agreement and disagreement and so on, as well as the visual outputs (for example, maps, lists and rankings, diagrams, etc).

Daily reports are written at the end of the daily fieldwork. This ensures that all members of the facilitating team get a chance to record the results from the

discussions. This also provides an opportunity for the facilitators to review progress, and make plans for the next day's work.

A Site Report refers to a compiled report for a particular community. It contains all of the results from the participatory appraisal in that community, including the visual outputs. The results can be arranged according to the topics listed in the checklist. It is important to note that this report should focus on what people discussed. If the facilitators have their own views and opinions, these should be noted separately.

If you have never carried out a participatory appraisal before, you should try it out in a couple of communities before planning to cover all of the areas you plan to work in. Testing the process can help in finalizing the checklist of issues that are important to the community as well as generate confidence to facilitate the process in a large number of communities.

Key elements of participatory appraisals

- ✓ ***Be flexible and open-ended:*** Although it is good to prepare a checklist of issues that will be analyzed at the community level, it should not be used as a questionnaire. This checklist should serve as a guide, so that you don't forget any important themes for the discussion. At the same time, you need to be prepared to discuss any new issues that may come up at the community level. It's important to provide communities with the opportunity to express their own concerns, so that the participatory appraisal generates as true a picture as possible of the situation.
- ✓ ***Use visuals to focus the discussion and analysis:*** The use of visuals during group discussions helps focus the analysis, enables in-depth analysis on any particular issue, and helps to involve everyone in the discussion. Visuals can be drawn on the ground, on paper, on a blackboard,

or on whatever material that is available and with which the groups may feel comfortable.

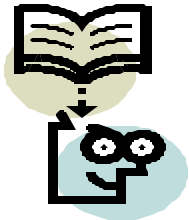
- ✓ **Copy all visuals on paper** so that the outputs are recorded and can be stored safely to be used later for monitoring purposes.
- ✓ **Discuss the same issue with different groups of people using different methods.** Refer to the table below to see how various types of participatory tools and methods that can be used in participatory appraisal.
- ✓ **Choose your facilitators well** since the success of a participatory appraisal depends largely on the attitude and behavior of the facilitators. Good listening skills, respect for communities, and not being judgmental or biased are some of the traits of a good facilitator. Facilitators should be trained in making participants comfortable in sharing views without retribution. Facilitators should feel comfortable not expressing their views or trying to influence the community. Remember that this is about understanding the community's views and experiences.

As organizations implementing HIV and AIDS projects, you are likely to be involved in one or more of the following three focus areas: preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS; removing stigma associated with HIV/AIDS; and, providing care and support to those affected by HIV/AIDS. The table below and on the next page provides an overview of topics that can be included in participatory appraisals. The table suggests different types of tools and methods that can be used to gather information on these issues. These tools and methods are described in detail in the Annex.

HIV Prevention	
Activities/information needs	Methods
Information and perceptions about reproductive health issues and behavior: safe sex; contraception; HIV/AIDS symptoms, transmission, prevention, care and support; treatment of other sexually-transmitted infections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussion • In-depth interview • Listing • Scoring/ranking • Trend analysis
Sources of information on reproductive health and HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social map • Focus group discussion • Listing • Scoring/ranking
Sexual behavior and norms: Age of sexual initiation for males and females Number of sex partners for males and for females Reported condom use by males and by females at last sexual encounter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FGD • In-depth interviews • Trend analysis
Reasons people engage in risky sexual behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cause-Impact diagram • Focus group discussion • Listing • Scoring/ranking
Number, location and availability of community volunteers trained in home-based care for AIDS patients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social map • Trend analysis • Seasonality analysis
Types of sexual relations within the community, their origins, manifestations and consequences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussion • Listing • Scoring/ranking • Cause-impact diagrams • Trends analysis
HIV and AIDS related Stigma	
Activities/information needs	Methods
Location and composition of households affected by HIV and AIDS, that is, caring for an infected person and/or fostering AIDS orphans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social map • Trends analysis
Causes, manifestations and consequences of HIV and AIDS related stigma and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussion • In-depth interview • Cause-Impact diagram • Listing • Scoring/ranking
Location and characteristics of individuals and institutions demonstrating HIV and AIDS related stigma in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussion • Social map • Trends analysis • Cause-Impact diagram

Care and Support

Activities/information needs	Methods
Type and location of resources available in the community to support care-givers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social map • Listing • Scoring/ranking
Age, sex and physical location of AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social map • Listing
Coping strategies of HIV and AIDS-affected households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussion • In-depth interview • Seasonality analysis • Trends analysis
Institutions providing care to infected and affected individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social map • Listing • Ranking/scoring



Remember!

You can select the topics for the participatory appraisal depending on the specific focus of your project and you can add other issues to this checklist.