

SESSION 7 PLA Preparation

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will...

- ✓...Address any hypothetical field problems that could not be resolved during the previous session
- ✓...Understand how to organize and manage a PLA workshop
- ✓...Be able to describe what the PLA team does during an initial site visit
- ✓....Suggest ways to include hard-to-reach groups in PLA activities

Materials

Flip chart and markers
IIED Video



ACTIVITIES

#1 Debriefing: Challenging Field Situations

Ask participants if there were any challenging field situations that they were not able to resolve during the previous evening's homework exercise. Ask other participants to brainstorm about solutions.

#2 Logistical and Management Issues

Have participants brainstorm about what types of tasks would be involved in organizing and managing a PLA workshop. Go over the different tasks involved and ask participants if they would add anything.

#3 Introduction to the Community

Ask participants to divide into small groups of four to five people and imagine that their PLA Team has just arrived in the community for the preliminary site visit. (REFER TO STEP 3 OF THE PPD PROCESS. TELL THEM TO IMAGINE THAT THEY HAVE ALREADY DONE STEPS 1 AND 2) What are some of the things that they would do during that first visit? What information would they try to collect? Who would they talk to and why?

Bring the groups back together to share their results.

#4 Revealing Perspectives

Watch the clip entitled “Revealing Perspectives” on the IIED video *Questions of Difference: PRA, Gender & Environment*. Ask participants to brainstorm about strategies that they might use to make sure that societal groups that have the least power (e.g., women, youth, the elderly) participate fully in the PLA process. Also brainstorm about ways to deal with gatekeepers who want to dominate the discussion.



TRAINER'S NOTES

CONTEXT: This session covers the logistics of organising and managing a PLA workshop, as well as how to conduct the initial site visit in the community. It also increases participants' awareness of the need for full participation of all community groups in the PLA workshop.

#1 Debriefing: Challenging Field Situations

Take a few minutes to discuss any field situations that the participants could not agree on how to handle. Since many of the questions that the groups will be discussing are similar, encourage other participants to suggest solutions before offering solutions yourself. Explain that their solutions will form the basis of a team contract, which they will draw up in a later session, before beginning the field practice.

#2 Logistical and Management Issues

Participatory programme development requires a lot of logistical preparation and good management. The sponsoring agency which is coordinating the PLA workshop and follow-up should make sure that all of the following issues are addressed:

- **Training of the PLA team:** Once a PLA team has been formed (including the community link persons), the first step is to conduct a brief training (a few days) in order to ensure that all team members have a basic knowledge of PLA principles and techniques. The exact length of the training will depend on the team members' level of experience with PLA. The training can be conducted by the team leader or another qualified trainer.
- **Transportation:** Arrangements need to be made for transportation of the PLA team to and from the community during the PLA workshop. In addition, the staff of the sponsoring agency who are responsible for following up with the community after the workshop will need transportation to and from the community.

● Food and lodging: If the PLA team members do not live near the community, it will be necessary to arrange accommodations during the PLA workshop (both for the PLA team and drivers). In addition, the team will need to arrange to either eat at local restaurants, cook food themselves or hire a community member to cook food for them (often a local woman will gladly welcome the opportunity to earn some extra money). The PLA team will either need to purchase cooking ingredients in the community or bring the ingredients with them if they are not available locally. The team leader should also verify whether or not the team needs to bring its own drinking water.

● Translators: Unless everyone on the PLA team is able to communicate in the local language, it will be necessary to hire at least one translator. The translator should be thoroughly briefed about the purpose of the PLA workshop and the kinds of information that the PLA team members are trying to elicit from the community members. It is especially important to emphasize what kinds of information should not be omitted in translation (e.g., a translator may omit or “tone down” negative opinions which he or she is afraid would insult the PLA team members. The goal of PLA, however, is to solicit all opinions, whether they be positive or negative).

● Supplies: The team leader needs to ensure that the PLA team has all of the supplies that it needs to carry out the PLA activities. Some basic items include pencils, notebook paper, flip chart paper and markers, sticks, beans or stones, chalk (for drawing on concrete in urban areas), and tape. Local facilities for making photocopies should also be identified.

● Meeting place: The PLA team can ask the local leaders to provide a meeting place which is accessible to all community groups and which can be used for several hours at a time. This is typically the village square, a school, a church or other location.

● Funding for projects: Before entering a community, the sponsoring agency (SA) needs to ensure that funding will be available for implementing community projects. Of course, it is not possible to know exactly how much funding will be needed until the community develops its action plan, but the SA should know approximately how much it is able to provide. It is possible that the community will also seek funding from other external sources. If this is the case, the SA may need to train members of the action plan committee (APC) how to write proposals and approach other donors.

Once the community receives funding, either through the SA or another external agency, a mechanism needs to be established for transferring the money to the community (e.g., through the bank account of a community organization). A responsible person in the community also needs to be identified to manage the funds.

● Monitoring: The SA needs to make regular follow-up visits to the community in order to meet with the action plan committee and monitor the implementation of the projects. The timing and frequency of these visits should be decided jointly by the SA and the APC.

- Documentation: Each step of the PPD process should be thoroughly documented in order to provide a record of the process to the community and to ensure adequate follow-up on the part of the SA. This documentation should include a PLA workshop report, copies of the information collected during the PLA activities (e.g., maps, charts) and progress reports on the implementation of the community action plan.

#3 Introduction to the Community

The goal of the PLA team's initial visit to the community is to introduce the team members to the local people in a non-threatening way and to become familiar with the village or neighbourhood. Community members need time to get comfortable with the "outsiders" before they are willing to participate in a PLA workshop. During this first meeting the following issues are discussed with community leaders:

- Purpose of the PLA workshop
- Process and concepts (e.g., self-help, community empowerment)
- Logistics and management (e.g., meeting times and places)
- Maximizing participation (e.g., how to make sure that all groups are invited to participate, emphasizing that participation is strictly voluntary)

Other activities during the initial visit might include the following:

- A walk around the community to introduce the team members to local people;
- Informal chats with community members about current and past development projects in the community;
- If possible, an activity in which the local people teach the team members a local skill or something about the culture of the community (e.g., how to process a specific food or how to do a traditional dance). This will help to establish the two-way flow of knowledge between the PLA team and community members; or
- Collection of background (or "secondary") data (e.g., statistics, reports, photographs, maps).

The team members should make an effort to introduce themselves to as many segments of the community as possible during their initial visit (e.g., women's groups, teachers, traditional healers, community leaders, school children, market vendors, etc.). They should make a special effort to reach groups that might not be easily accessible, such as the handicapped. Each time that they meet local people, the team should explain the purpose of the PLA workshop that will be taking place, emphasizing that it will be an activity that will allow the community members to promote their own development. (It is important that local people realize that the PLA team is not there to give out money or food).

#4 Revealing Perspectives

The short video clip “Revealing Perspectives” from the IIED video *Questions of Difference: PRA, Gender & Environment* highlights the importance of including all segments of the community in the PLA workshop, especially women. Ask participants to brainstorm about ways to include hard-to-reach groups. Some ways to include these hard-to-reach groups include:

- Having separate meetings for men and women so that they will feel free to talk about sensitive issues;
- Scheduling activities at times that are convenient for each group;
- Making the groups as small as possible during activities so that timid people will feel more comfortable and talk more; and
- Making sure that the activities can be conducted by both literate and non-literate people (e.g., not doing activities that require the community members to write or draw with a pencil and paper).

Often one of the gatekeepers in the community (such as a village elder) will try to dominate the discussion. It is important to resolve this problem quickly, so that the community members won't feel intimidated to share their own opinions. Suggestions for dealing with these situations include:

- Tell the gatekeeper that you appreciate his or her input, but that you would also like to hear from the other community members. Ask the gatekeeper to help you devise a strategy to ensure that everyone participates as fully as possible.
- Call on other community members to participate so that the gatekeeper sees that you would like to include them.
- If all else fails, find a task to distract the gatekeeper. For example, tell the gatekeeper that his or her opinion is needed in another group, ask the gatekeeper to help copy something onto paper, or have one of the other facilitators take the gatekeeper on a mini-transect walk to learn more about the village.

SESSION 8

Introduction to PLA Tools and Semi- Structured Interviews

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will...

✓...Be able to name different PLA tools

✓...Understand the purpose and elements of semi-structured interviews (SSIs) in PLA

✓...Demonstrate SSI skills through a role-play

Materials ✎

Papers with discussion topics
Stones, beans, or seeds



ACTIVITIES

#1 Introduction to PLA Tools

Give a brief summary of the main topics that have been covered up to this point in order to situate the use of PLA tools in the context of the whole PPD process. Then present the different types of tools which will be used during the course.

#2 Introduction to Semi-Structured Interviews

Introduce the concept of individual semi-structured interviews (SSIs) and ask participants to brainstorm about how they might be used in PLA (both with individuals and groups). Ask participants to think back to the session on interpersonal communication and to list some of the concepts that they learned would be important to apply during SSIs. Emphasize the importance of probing.

#3 SSI Practise

Have participants divide into pairs, with one person playing the role of the interviewer and the other playing the role of the informer. Give each pair a topic, and have the pairs role-play an SSI. Encourage the interviewers to use probing questions and avoid leading questions, and have them take notes about what was said. After a few minutes, bring the pairs back together and ask participants how well their partner demonstrated good interpersonal communication skills.

#4 Choosing Our Words

Divide participants into three large groups and have each group sit in a circle. Give each participant three stones or beans or seeds. Tell the groups to discuss what they have thought about the course so far. Every time a person speaks, he or she has to put a stone or bean or seed into the centre of the circle. Therefore, each person can speak only three times. After the discussion, bring participants back together and ask them to reflect on what the exercise taught them about communication and listening.



TRAINER'S NOTES

CONTEXT: Now that participants have been introduced to the PPD process, the principles of PLA and the behaviours and attitudes of good PLA facilitators, they are ready to learn specific techniques. This session also introduces semi-structured interviews as the first PLA technique, because they are used in conjunction with all of the other techniques, as well as by themselves.

#1 Elements of Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews (SSIs) are informal conversations for gathering information. They are based on a pre-determined set of topics, which can be added to and modified as needed. The interviewers prepare a list of questions to use as a general guide, rather than reading questions from a fixed questionnaire.

SSI form the core of PLA, since they can be used in combination with all of the other information-gathering techniques presented in the previous sessions. SSIs enable the PLA facilitators to examine community issues in depth and to explore the perceptions, feelings and opinions of community members. They can be conducted individually (one-on-one) or in groups.

~~~~EXAMPLES OF USES FOR SSIs~~~~

The uses for SSIs in PLA are endless. Following are just a few:

- Identifying problems (e.g., during transect walks)
- Obtaining more details about the results of other activities (e.g., diagramming)
- Exploring causes of problems
- Exploring reasons for adopting or not adopting specific health behaviours
- Discussing possible solutions to problems

For SSIs that are planned ahead of time, several things must be prepared and considered. Of course, these steps may not be able to be followed if the semi-structured interviews are impromptu, in conjunction with another PLA technique (e.g., talking with a community member who is encountered during a transect walk)¹⁵:

- 1. Preparing the interview guide:** An interview guide is developed based on research questions and issues relevant to the community.
- 2. Discussing the interview context:** The time, place, seating arrangements, body language and biases are discussed ahead of time. Remember: The context of the interview is just as important as the questions that are asked.
- 3. Active Listening:** The PLA facilitators listen in an attentive, open-minded, non-judgmental and empathetic manner. It must be emphasized that the respondent's answers will be kept confidential!!
- 4. Sensitive Questioning:** The facilitators ask open-ended, probing questions. They don't ask two questions at once and are careful to avoid leading questions.
- 5. Judging and cross-checking responses:** Information received from discussions is evaluated and the facilitators probe further if responses are not accurate or sufficient.
- 6. Recording the interview:** Notes are taken during the interview because diagrams cannot convey the richness of the responses given. Interviewers should always get permission from the respondents to take notes, and then use a small, discreet notebook. In addition to recording what is said, non-verbal communication and respondent emotions (e.g., tension, laughter) should also be recorded. It is important to note the respondents' gender, age, and other important characteristics (e.g., socioeconomic status) when recording their responses. The process of how the interview evolved should also be noted, as well as the interviewer's personal impressions.
- 7. Doing a self-critical review:** After the interview, the PLA facilitators discuss which parts of the interview went well and which ones need improvement. Questions may need to be revised in order to be more effective. In addition, team members discuss how the context of the interview affected the outcome. Team members should be honest about critiquing each other and do it with a positive attitude.

Individual interviews are most useful for conversing one-on-one with a community member about sensitive or private topics. It is also better to conduct individual interviews if the respondents are of different socioeconomic statuses, which might prohibit those of lower status from participating fully.

¹⁵ Adapted from Pretty et al. 1993. p. 74-76.

Group interviews are informal, directed conversations with a large heterogeneous group of people (e.g., people with different characteristics), usually ranging in number from fifteen to fifty. A group interview is often conducted as a village meeting to which the whole community is invited. The community group is heterogeneous, and therefore it is important to ensure that everyone in the group has a chance to participate fully. If necessary the groups can be split into smaller groups.

As with individual interviews, the interviewers have a topic guide that can be modified during the interview as needed. One or more of the PLA facilitators should serve as note takers in order to ensure that all of the relevant information is recorded.

Some participants may have experience conducting focus groups. **Focus group discussions** are less structured than group interviews. The discussion guide is less rigid, and the conversation is free to shift to topics that are unplanned. In contrast with group interviews, the participants are usually homogenous in focus groups (e.g., they all share a specific characteristic). Focus groups are often smaller than group interviews; while the ideal size for a focus group is six to ten people, there is no limit on the number of participants for a group interview (although, ideally, it should not be too large, so that everyone can participate).

Probing

Probing is the use of open-ended questions to encourage someone to give more information about a subject. In PLA, probing is often used in the context of (SSIs), although it can also be used to foster discussion during other PLA activities, such as mapping. Probing is a crucial skill for PLA facilitators because it can be used to encourage community members to express their opinions and feelings to the fullest extent possible. Probing also allows the PLA facilitators to move beyond the superficial; in other words, to explore issues in depth. Probing can be used to learn about the root causes of problems, to explore community members' perceptions of various issues and to clarify points that might be unclear.

Probing questions often begin with "Why?," "What?," or "How?". Examples of probing questions include:

*What kinds of problems do people face when there is a drought?
Why do you think that children in this village get diarrhoea?
Why do young girls here drop out of school?
How is the birth of a girl child celebrated differently from the birth of a boy child?
Could you say more about how you feel?
Can you tell me what happened?*

Leading questions encourage respondents to answer in a certain way. The way that these questions are worded expresses an opinion on the part of the interviewer, and may cause the respondents to give a different answer than they

normally would. For this reason, leading questions should be avoided during PLA, so that the information gathered is completely unbiased. Examples of leading questions include:

*Don't you think it's good to have your children immunized?
Why don't people here use condoms if it is the best way to prevent AIDS?
Breastfeeding is very good for babies. What proportion of women in this village breastfeed?*

#2 SSI Practise

The goal of Activity #2 is to give the participants experience conducting individual interviews. The interview topics to be probed should be subjects relating directly to the informant, so that he or she will be able to answer the probes without difficulty.

Suggested topics include:

- Why the informant chose his or her profession
- The most interesting place the informant has visited and why
- Aspects of the city where the informant lives that he or she likes or dislikes
- The most important health problem in the informants' village

After the exercise, ask the interviewers to give brief summaries of their conversations and describe what kind of non-verbal communication they observed. Also ask the interviewers how easy or hard it was for them to probe, and ask the informants what it felt like to be interviewed.

#3 Choosing Our Words

One common mistake interviewers make in SSIs is to talk more than they listen, which limits the participation of the community members and may intimidate them. The goal of this exercise¹⁶ is for participants to carefully reflect on what they say and to practise listening attentively. Each spoken remark is given equal value (one stone or bean or seed), and the participants must carefully choose what they say. After the exercise, ask participants to share what they learned from the exercise and how it can be applied to SSIs.

¹⁶Adapted from Pretty et al. 1993. p. 180.

SESSION 9

Mapping

Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will...

- ✓...Understand the purpose of mapping
- ✓...Be able to describe different types of maps
- ✓...Demonstrate two different types of mapping skills

Materials

Chalk
Local materials (such as sticks, stones or leaves)
Pencil and paper



ACTIVITIES

#1 Introduction to Mapping

Give an introduction to mapping and show an example of mapping from the IIED, EDI or RDWSSP video. Invite participants to brainstorm about all of the different types of information that can be presented through maps. Ask them to identify specific kinds of maps that could be useful during a PLA exercise for exploring issues in their sector (e.g., health, education).

#2 Mapping Practise

Go outside of the training centre to a location where participants can draw on the ground. Have participants divide into their field practise teams. Invite each team to draw a map on the ground of the training centre. Encourage them to use chalk, sticks, stones, leaves and other local materials. Ask each group to choose one person to record the group's map on paper.

Discuss the differences among the maps and ask participants whether the mapping exercise was difficult, and if so, why. Also ask participants how they might do mapping in a non-traditional community (e.g., factory workers in an urban area).

#3 Body Mapping Practise

Have participants regroup into their field teams and assign each team a different health topic (see below). Ask each team to construct a body map on the ground to illustrate the topic. Have each team present its map to the rest of the group. Brainstorm about other types of body maps that could be drawn by community members during a PLA workshop.



TRAINER'S NOTES

CONTEXT: *This session introduces the different types of techniques and then focuses on mapping. Mapping is one of the first techniques presented in the course because it is often the first exercise conducted during a PLA workshop.*

#1 Introduction to PLA Tools and Mapping

Up to this point, the course has covered the history and theory of PLA, in addition to the behaviours and attitudes that are needed to be a successful PLA facilitator. The participants have learned about the first three stages of the PPD process:

1. Selection of the community and formation of the PLA Team
2. Training of the PLA team and logistical preparations
3. Preliminary site visit

NOTE: Referring to the stages posted up on the wall will help to orient the participants.

The next phase of the classroom training starts with Stage 4 (The PLA Workshop: data collection). Participants will be learning and practising the tools and techniques which are used in PLA.

These tools can be divided into several broad categories as follows:

Information/data gathering tools

SPATIAL DATA:

Mapping (geographic and physical)
Transect walks and observation

TIME-RELATED DATA:

Time lines
Seasonal calendars
Daily schedules

SOCIAL/HEALTH DATA:

Semi-Structured Interviews
Well-Being Sorting
Body mapping
Pie charts
Venn diagrams
Flow diagrams

Analytical tools

Preference ranking
Pairwise ranking
Matrices

The information/data gathering tools are used during the first part of the PLA workshop to gather information about the community and its problems. The analytical tools are used during the second part of the PLA workshop to prioritize the community's problems and solutions.

When do you use each tool?

There is no set order or “recipe” for when to use which tools, although some tools are more effective as introductory tools at the beginning of the PLA workshop, while others should be used later to explore specific topics. The tools should be chosen based on the types of questions that need to be answered. More information about the uses of specific tools is presented in the sessions.

NOTE: The tools presented in this course are a sampling of the most commonly-used tools in PLA. Other tools and techniques exist which participants might find more appropriate or useful in their own communities. Encourage them to refer to the other PLA resources listed in their handbooks in order to learn about additional tools. Also emphasize to participants that they may not need to use all of the tools that are presented here when they do PLA workshops in their own communities.

Introduction to Mapping

Maps are **spatial data gathering tools** which provide a visual representation of the community (either the whole community or part of it). They can be used to:

-Do an informal census of how many people or households are in the community
-Learn about the presence and location of community resources
-Identify which resources are important to different community groups (e.g., men might focus on roads, while women might focus on schools)
-Establish dialogue between different community groups
-Learn about general community problems
-Form a list of households to sample for in-depth interviews
-Provide a visual resource that can be used as a baseline for assessing change
-Learn about specific characteristics of community members

~~~~WHEN TO DO MAPPING~~~~

Because it is easy to get people to participate, mapping is usually one of the first activities conducted during a PLA workshop. Doing a map as the first workshop activity has two advantages: 1) Because a lot of people participate, it helps to get the rest of the community interested in the PLA workshop; and 2) It generates a lot of information which can be used to plan the rest of the PLA workshop (e.g., It can be used to identify households for in-depth interviews).

Maps have enormous potential to generate discussion among community members, since everyone can participate. This may be the first time that a village or neighbourhood has ever been represented visually, which can be a very exciting event. Mapping does have constraints, however. Some community members may resist mapping because they don't want the

boundaries of their property to be known for security reasons (e.g., cattle rustling). In addition, it can be hard to manage mapping with large groups, and the maps can be difficult to interpret later if everything is not labelled clearly on the paper copy.

~~~~EXAMPLES OF MAPS~~~~

Many different kinds of information can be generated using maps. Maps can either focus on one specific type of information, or they can be used to gather many different types of information at once. Following are different types of information that can be gathered with maps, but it is by no means exhaustive. Some maps are used to gather general information, such as:

- Geographical features
- Infrastructure (roads, telephone lines, water pipes)
- Types of facilities (e.g., health facilities, schools, stores, factories)
- Land use
- Number and types of houses
- Natural resources
- Livestock
- Water sources

Maps can also be used to explore specific topics, for example:

- Which families use family planning
- The number of children in and out of school in each household
- The location of trained birth attendants or midwives
- Households with family members who have migrated elsewhere
- Skills of community members (e.g., carpenters, people who know how to write)
- Household suffering from different diseases
- Violence against women
- Tribe or ethnicity of community households

In addition, maps can be used to show changes over time: how things have changed from the past to the present, or how community members would like things to look in the future.

## #2 Mapping Practise

This mapping practise exercise encourages participants to be creative and gives the field practise teams an opportunity to start working together. Although the course participants are literate and can easily do this exercise using flip chart paper and markers, doing the mapping on the ground is a more realistic simulation of conditions that they will encounter in the field. It also helps them to identify locally available resources that can be used for markers, such as sticks, stones, leaves, and seeds.

When discussing why the teams' maps may have differed, it is important to point out that this may have occurred because different groups have different priorities, perhaps due to their professional biases or other differences in perspective. Emphasize how this can happen in the community, especially between men and women, and why it is therefore important to include all members of the community in the mapping exercise.

## #3 Body Mapping

Body maps are **health data gathering tools** that illustrate all or part of the human body. They can be used to describe the location of body organs and to describe bodily functions. The maps may consist of one large drawing, or of several smaller drawings that illustrate a process.

Body maps can be very useful in participatory research to gain an understanding of how the local culture perceives health issues. Different cultures have different ideas of bodily functions and how medical interventions work within the body. Gaining insight into the local perceptions of these issues can help health communications projects to better meet the expectations of their target audiences.

It can be difficult to explore these issues verbally because community members may be unfamiliar with anatomical vocabulary, and words may have different cultural meanings. Visual body mapping helps to overcome these barriers because it provides a shared point of reference for researchers and community members<sup>17</sup>.

Issues such as the following can be explored with these techniques:

- ◆The reproductive system
- ◆Behaviours that have positive or negative effects on the body
- ◆Nutrition
- ◆How specific diseases affect the body

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<sup>17</sup>Cornwall, A. 1992. p. 69.

CAUTION: Some of the subjects explored in body mapping can be embarrassing or sensitive. It may make sense to divide participants by gender or age group, depending on the situation<sup>18</sup>.

#### Body Mapping Practise

Following are suggestions for topics that the participants can explore through body mapping. They can either use chalk or local materials to construct the maps on the ground.

- ◆How alcohol affects the body
- ◆How oral contraceptives keep a woman from getting pregnant
- ◆How malaria makes a person sick
- ◆How worms make a person sick
- ◆How HIV/AIDS makes a person sick

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<sup>18</sup>Archer, D. & S. Cottingham. 1996. p. 176.