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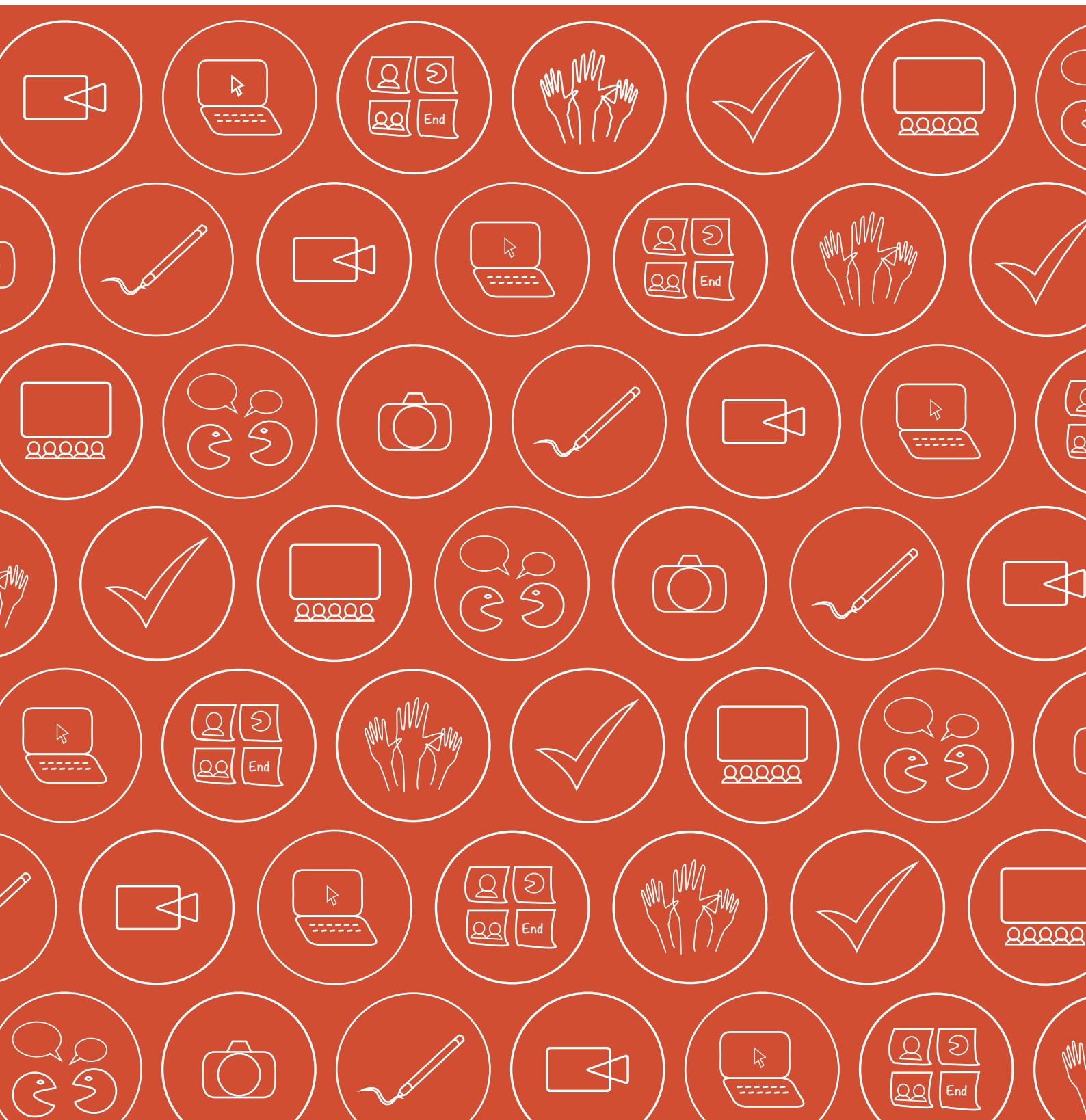
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HOW TO FIND AND SHARE COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS?

A HANDBOOK





cobra

Future Challenges
Local Solutions

HOW TO FIND AND SHARE COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

A HANDBOOK

JANUARY 2015
UPDATED VERSION

How to find and share community owned solutions - A Handbook

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PREFACE

“Project COBRA could not have been timelier for the North Rupununi. We are at a time where there are frightening concerns at the various levels of natural resources exploitation that could lead to environmental degradation and destruction of a unique wetland ecosystem and the associate of the people who dwell within this landscape. If our people do not develop our capacity to negotiate, to take control and to manage the environment that we live in, then we could soon become history, a failed group of indigenous persons.

It is top priority for communities to begin and identify or even explore solutions to their problems within their landscape since it is they who live there, in good and not so good times. They need to have the vision, will and skills to monitor, evaluate, plan and execute for better management of their resources and development. Some of the exercises within the handbook allow them to achieve some of these things, like the visioning exercise allows the community to think about where they want to go and explore some of the challenges they would face to achieve this vision and also identify steps that can be taken to ensure that the vision is achieved. It opens the opportunity for you to see yourself from your own eyes and how you could make your own assessments and adjustments to your planning strategies.

Working together, as the COBRA approach promotes, could assist communities to become confident and feel ownership of their village, the resources within and their management. It will also promote the respect for the opinions of

the women, men and children as they too see things from different points of view.

Another important aspect of the COBRA approach, as demonstrated in the handbook, is the use of films and photostories to document the solutions identified by the communities. This technique not only allows us to share with others but also to document for prosperity within our communities. But most importantly, as noted by one of our leaders, having these solutions documented from our communities and shared amongst ourselves serves as a reminder of the knowledge that we have and could lose with the changing times. It also reminds us that we may have the answer or answers to some of the questions being asked.

I would like to take the opportunity to encourage you to explore this handbook to find the elements that are useful to you; if all of it is even better. Compliments of the highest level must be showered upon the parties that made this possible, namely the North Rupununi District Development Board, the Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development, Royal Holloway - University of London and the other partners of Project COBRA. A good example of how local, national and international partnership could assist in developing local solutions for future challenges.”

Sydney Allicock
Member of Parliament, Guyana

WHY THIS HANDBOOK?

CONTEXT: PROJECT COBRA

This handbook emerges out of Project COBRA (Community Owned Best practice for sustainable Resource Adaptive management), a three-year research project, funded by the European Commission. The aim of the project was to explore, record and disseminate community owned solutions within the Guiana Shield region of South America.

The project involved the participation of a number of Civil Society Organisations (CSO) across Europe and South America, in collaboration with several European research institutions. These organisations developed and tested the approach described in this handbook through the support of a number of indigenous communities in the Guiana Shield. We worked with a group of 5 to 8 community participants who were, after training, responsible for engaging with other communities across the region.

Although developed in the Guiana Shield this handbook is designed to be as flexible as possible so it can be adapted to work with a range of communities in different contexts.

For additional information on Project COBRA, see www.projectcobra.org.

PROMOTING COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

The main aim of this handbook is **to promote community owned solutions by proposing approaches that respond to current and future challenges to sustainability, natural resources management and biodiversity conservation.**

The handbook introduces key concepts and techniques which underpin a participatory and systems approach to community engagement.

It helps a community build up practical skills for exploring, recording and disseminating their own community owned solutions.

TARGET: COMMUNITY PRACTITIONERS

We define 'community practitioners' as:

- individuals who are actively engaged with communities
- individuals who are concerned with supporting and strengthening communities
- individuals who are able to be practically engaged in order to make a difference

To be a community practitioner then you need to be literate and computer literate and be willing to undertake a role of facilitator rather than a leader.



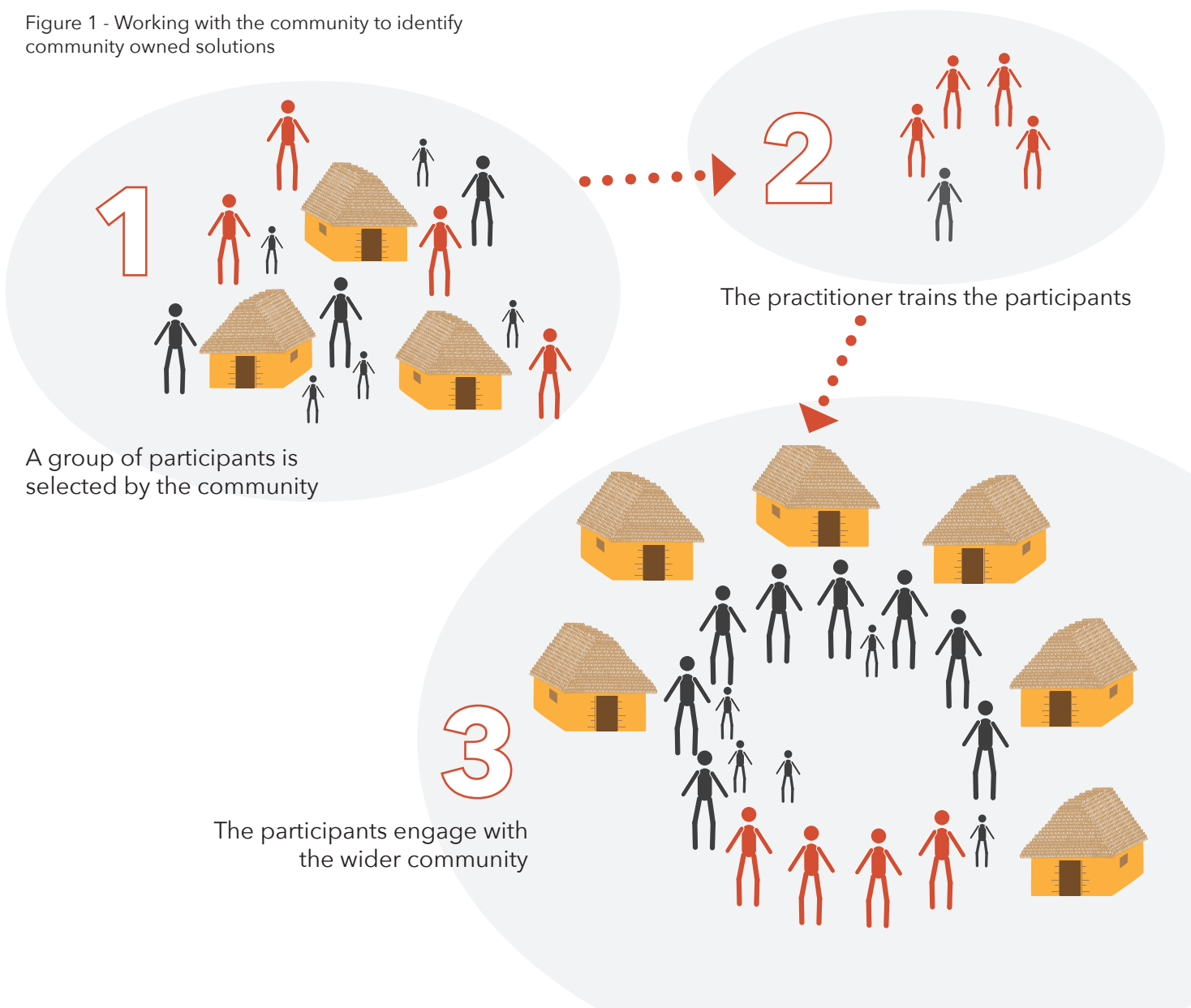
How to find and share community-owned solutions | A Handbook

Although the handbook provides activities using photography and filming to engage with the community, it is possible to run these activities without the use of cameras. You can decide whether to facilitate the activities with cameras or use other techniques such as discussions, mapping and/or drawings.

As a community practitioner you will work closely with selected individuals from the community who we will refer to as "community participants" within this handbook. The community participants will be trained and then tasked with engaging the wider community, helping to identify community owned solutions, supporting the implementation of a best practice within the community, monitoring how the implementation takes place and evaluating the impact of the best practice ~



Figure 1 - Working with the community to identify community owned solutions



STRUCTURE AND USE


The handbook is structured in four sections with supporting information in Appendices:

- Section 1 - **concepts and techniques** which underpin the approach
- Section 2 - **activities to identify** community owned solutions and select best practices
- Section 3 - **activities to share and implement** best practices with the wider community
- Section 4 - **monitoring progress**
- Appendices - **technique information and useful handouts**

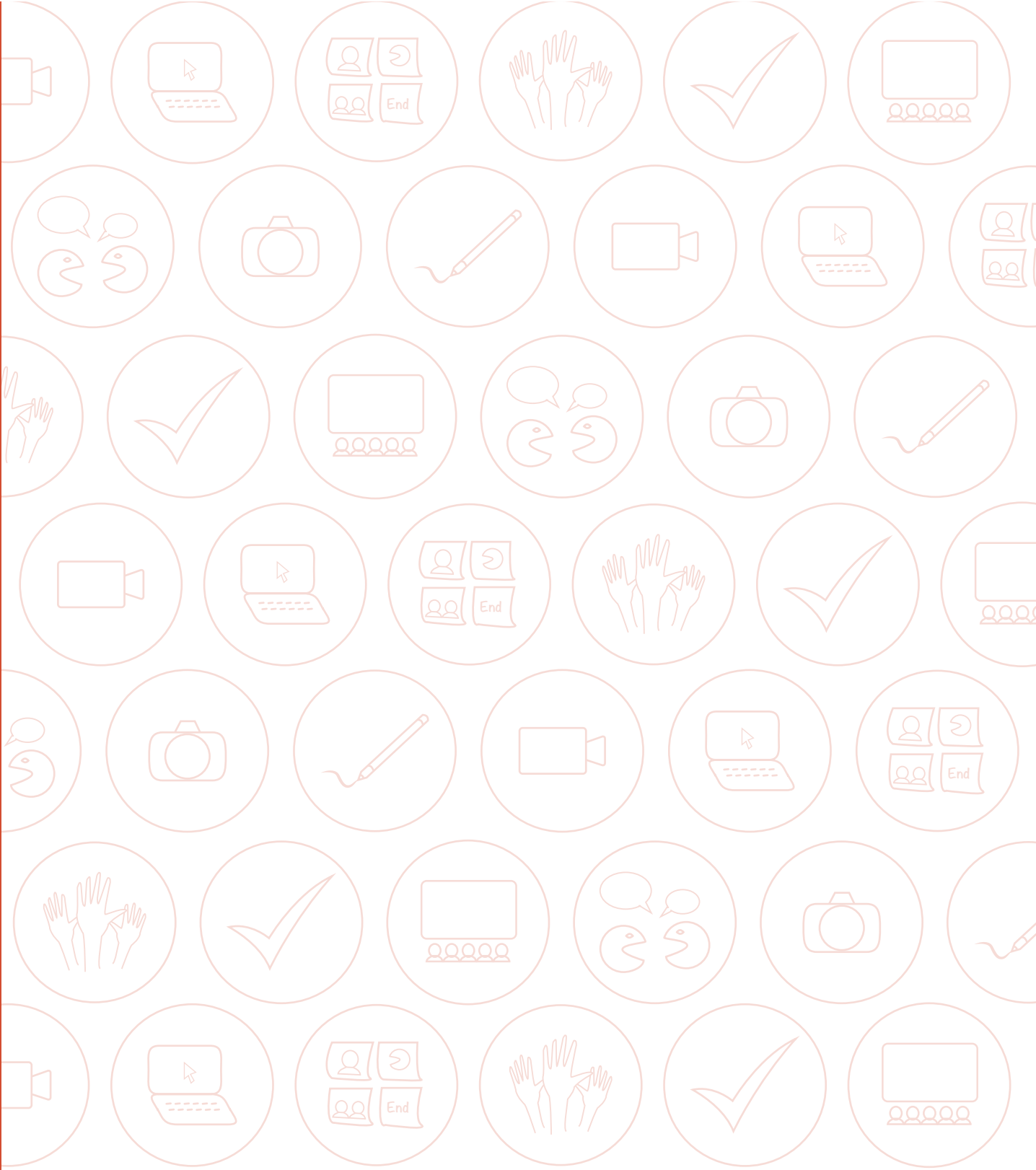
It is up to you and community participants to decide how the sections within the handbook will be used. We recommend the duration for each activity, but this depends on the time available and the capacity of participants. Our experience

within Project COBRA has been to deliver Section 2 and Section 3 activities concurrently during a 10 day visit to the community with follow up visits of a week each to monitor progress and carry out Section 4 activities.

However, our main advice is to be adaptable and flexible: you are encouraged to develop a tailor-made plan of activities that suit the context and the objectives identified by the community; to try out this plan; observe how things go; reflect on the impact; and then be prepared to adapt your plans based on your reflections.

As you navigate through the handbook, you may spot the following icon  on the top left corner of a page together with one or two numbers. The numbers associated with this refer to specific appendices at the end of this handbook and are there to facilitate the navigation between the sections and the appendices ~





SECTION 1

KEY CONCEPTS & TECHNIQUES

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS?

Community owned solutions are practices developed and carried out by communities themselves. The solutions contribute to the well-being of communities in the present and in the future. They are born, developed and implemented in the communities, by the communities, for the communities, with minimal influence from external stakeholders. They are fair to all members of the community and they do not negatively impact on the environment (Box 1).

Although many community owned solutions are developed from within the community, ideas can also emerge from the outside. If these are adopted and adapted by the community, then they can become community owned solutions. However, these innovations need to fit into, and support, the strengths of the community, rather than undermine community solutions.

As Figure 2 suggests, importing food into a community for its food security might help and offer a temporary solution but also creates dependency and disempowerment. Promoting local solutions to food security (like local techniques and knowledge for food production) is empowering and promotes independence

Box 1. What is a “Community Owned Solution”

- The community needs it
- The community does it
- The community controls it
- The community benefits from it
- The solution is fair
- The solution is good for the environment
- The solution is self reliant and not dependent on long term external support



Figure 2 - External solution (food parcels) vs. community owned solutions (traditional cultivation of cassava). Drawing by Clifton Smith, Photo by Claudia Nuzzo

WHY RECORD AND SHARE COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS?



Photo: Claudia Nuzzo

You could easily identify community owned solutions without needing either to record them or showcase them to external audiences. However visual recording and sharing provides the following benefits:

If a solution works well within one community, it could be used as inspiration for another community who might be facing a similar challenge.

'Communities that share directly with other communities' challenges the expert-led process, where 'experts impose their ideas on communities'. Communities that share have a greater chance of understanding each other's problems and finding the best solutions. Solutions are less theoretical, more realistic and engaging, showing how things actually happen in real life.

It can encourage people who were initially hesitant or reluctant to participate to contribute, as they immediately see outputs which they can identify with ~

Key concepts & techniques

KEY CONCEPTS AND TECHNIQUES FOR IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

There are several ways in which you can engage with a community in order to identify community owned solutions. Building on our experience within Project COBRA, we suggest a series of concepts and techniques that we have used, tested and found to be effective.

ACTION LEARNING

Action learning is a fundamental process that underpins your engagement with this handbook and the communities. When we practice action learning, we start off with a goal, an idea, or an issue that needs to be addressed, and develop a **plan** of action. Then we actually do what we planned and take **action**. Out of this experience, we **observe** and **evaluate** the impact of the actions and the appropriateness of our plans. We then formulate new **plans** for improving

the situation further. We then carry out another phase of **acting**, where we put our new plans into action. This generates experience, which provides an on-going cycle of action learning: observe, evaluate, plan, act, observe, evaluate, plan, etc. (Figure 3).

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND FACILITATION

For the process of helping communities to identify, share and implement community owned solutions to be successful, good facilitation skills are essential. Key is the ability to encourage active participation by individuals or groups, and to promote communication that is open and honest. Box 2 lists some of the key characteristics of a good facilitator.



Box 2. What makes a 'good' facilitator?

- Do your homework: understand the community
- Set the stage: clearly explain what you are going to do
- Manage expectations: clearly explain the potential benefits
- Get to know the participants: learn their names and backgrounds
- Encourage participation: do not discriminate but facilitate all to take part
- Be an active listener: always listen and pay attention even if someone is not speaking in your language
- Be observant: be aware of group dynamics
- Be positive: always encourage and support participants
- Use appropriate language and posture: use language and body language that participants are comfortable with
- Be neutral: make sure you facilitate all views
- Behave according to local rules and customs: respect local customs and decision making approaches
- Feedback and questions: ask for feedback and answer participant's questions

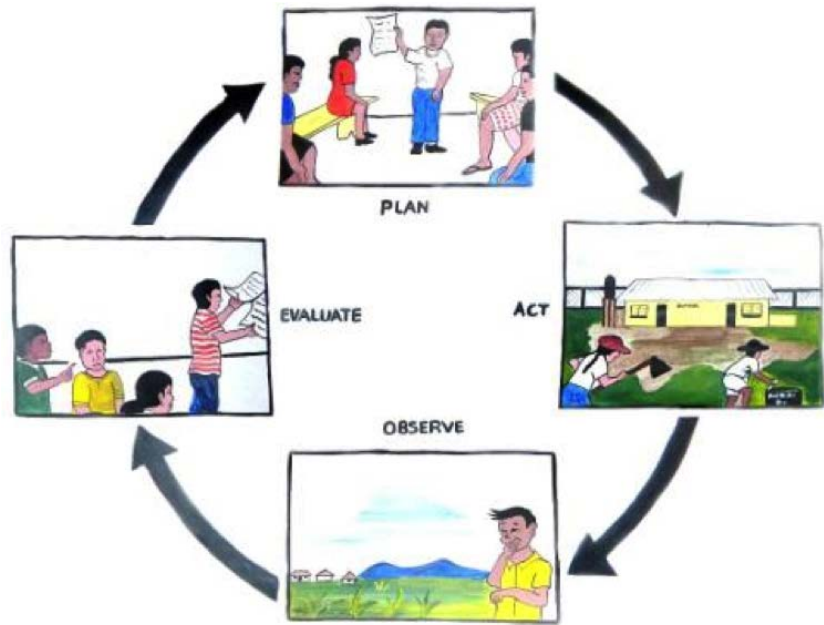


Figure 3 - The action learning cycle (drawn by Clifton Smith, North Rupununi)

social status, religion, employment, and community involvement.

Once participants have come forward, you will need to get to know them. Use the questions in Box 3 to facilitate this.

1. Selecting and getting to know the community participants

Stating what is required for participation prior to community engagement is important. You can use criteria to select the most appropriate people, such as prior experience of community engagement, particular language skills, IT skills, gender or age. Language is particularly important so you need to have a good translator if you do not speak the local language or dialect.

Seek as wide a representation of the community as possible. It's preferable to explicitly identify and distinguish specific groups in terms of age (elderly, youth), gender, origin (ethnic, location),

Box 3. Questions to ask community participants before getting started

- What skills and experiences do they have?
- What do the participants want/expect to get out of the training/activity?
- What are the participants' interests?
- What age are they?
- What languages/dialects do they speak?



2. What are the potential issues that might be encountered? Ethical considerations

Ethics refers to reasonable and well-founded standards of equity, positive attitude, anonymity and consent that provide guidelines for what we do in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society and fairness. Ethics is an integral part of proper research and community engagement. The following are some ethical guidelines:

Do not raise expectations - Ensure that the objectives of the project are fully understood by the participants and that no false expectations are built.

Consent - It is important that all participants are asked for their consent before any video or photographic material is screened which may feature them. An Informed Consent form, can be used to gain this agreement (Appendix 2).

Ownership - Prior to starting, ownership of the data should be made very clear. Who owns the data and where is it accessible (storage location). In most cases, this will be a community, represented by a village council/community-based organisation. Note that any sensitive personal data must not be identified by names. Be clear that all publicly available materials will be licensed under the Creative Commons "Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives" licence (CC BY-NC-ND). This implies that any distribution of original material will need to be attributed to the original authors, the material will not be allowed to be used for commercial purposes, and if the material is remixed, transformed or built upon it cannot be distributed as such.

Permits - Make sure all the appropriate permits have been obtained prior to starting the work. This may include country-level permits, but will normally involve a prior consultation with the community and written consent from them before the work is approved in compliance with the right to





Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), as stated in the international regime on collective indigenous rights.

Payment for participants - Be clear if and how some community members will get direct payment for their involvement. For example, in some cases community members may be working full-time and be employed under their respective community-based organisations. For wider community members, there may be incentives for participation in the research including the provision of food and accommodation if the participant is asked to travel from their usual place of residence.

Participants younger than 18 years - It should be acknowledged that children and youth may be present during the research process. Any engagement with children and youth should be done in the presence of one or more community adults and with prior consent of parents/elders, and under the same consent and data ownership guidelines as described above.

3. Making it fun and engaging!

One of the most important aspects of participation is that it should be fun and engaging rather than boring and formal. Based on experience, we know that numerous approaches and techniques used in this handbook not only stimulate thinking, creativity and discussion, they are also fun to do and can generate a lot of laughter and a 'feel good' atmosphere in the participants (Appendix 3).

To achieve this, many games can be sprinkled throughout the course - these are called icebreakers and energisers. Icebreakers can help people to get to know each other at the start of a session, feel at ease and can be used to introduce the theme of the activity. Energisers are games that are meant to wake participants up particularly at the start of sessions after lunch or after long periods of sitting and listening.



Photo - Icebreaker activity

4. Feedback and evaluation

It is important to have regular feedback and evaluation during the training to make sure participants really understood the aims, concepts and techniques behind each activity. It also offers a summary of what has been learnt on both sides.

Lastly don't forget to reflect on your own facilitation, on how you thought the activities went, identifying how and where things might need to be changed (Appendix 4).

It is also important that monitoring and evaluation continues throughout the whole community engagement to monitor progress and assess impact. Section 4 provides more details.

USING SYSTEM VIABILITY TO ASSESS SUSTAINABILITY

1. What is system viability?

The 'system viability' concept allows participants to identify a wide range of solutions that communities have developed in order to survive and thrive in their 'environment'. The terms 'system', 'viability' and 'environment' are defined below:

- **System** - a collection of parts, which work together. They work together in order to achieve something, which the parts would

not be able to achieve if they were working separately. A breakdown in any of these parts will limit the survival of the system as a whole. A community can be seen as a system, where individuals work together to help the community as a whole survive.

- **Viability** - to survive, to be healthy and to prosper. However, for a system this is not easy. Sometimes the situation is stable, sometimes conditions vary from the normal, and sometimes things change forever. A community 'system' therefore has to continually react and adapt to its environment.
- **Environment** - any aspect from outside the system which has an influence on the system. Environment is often used to describe the physical situation such as weather, plants or animals. However, in this Handbook, the environment also includes economic, cultural, political, legal, and social factors. Communities need to develop strategies to cope with all these different aspects of the wider environment and they need to be careful to ensure that all their survival strategies are at hand to deal with an increasing number of different challenges.

System viability identifies six strategies to cope with different environmental conditions:

- **Existence:** the ability to get the resources for basic survival under normal environmental conditions that do not change over time or which go through a recurring pattern of predictable change, like the seasons of the year. In order to cope with the normal environmental condition, communities focus on key 'existence' strategies, which may include creating shelter, providing basic food requirements, or responding to routine changes in the seasons.
- **Ideal performance:** the ability to make the best use of limited resources in the environment. In these circumstances, communities develop strategies that can be characterised through 'ideal performance' i.e. developing highly efficient means of using scarce resources. These scarce resources can be anything from fish, to agricultural fertiliser, to money, to time availability.

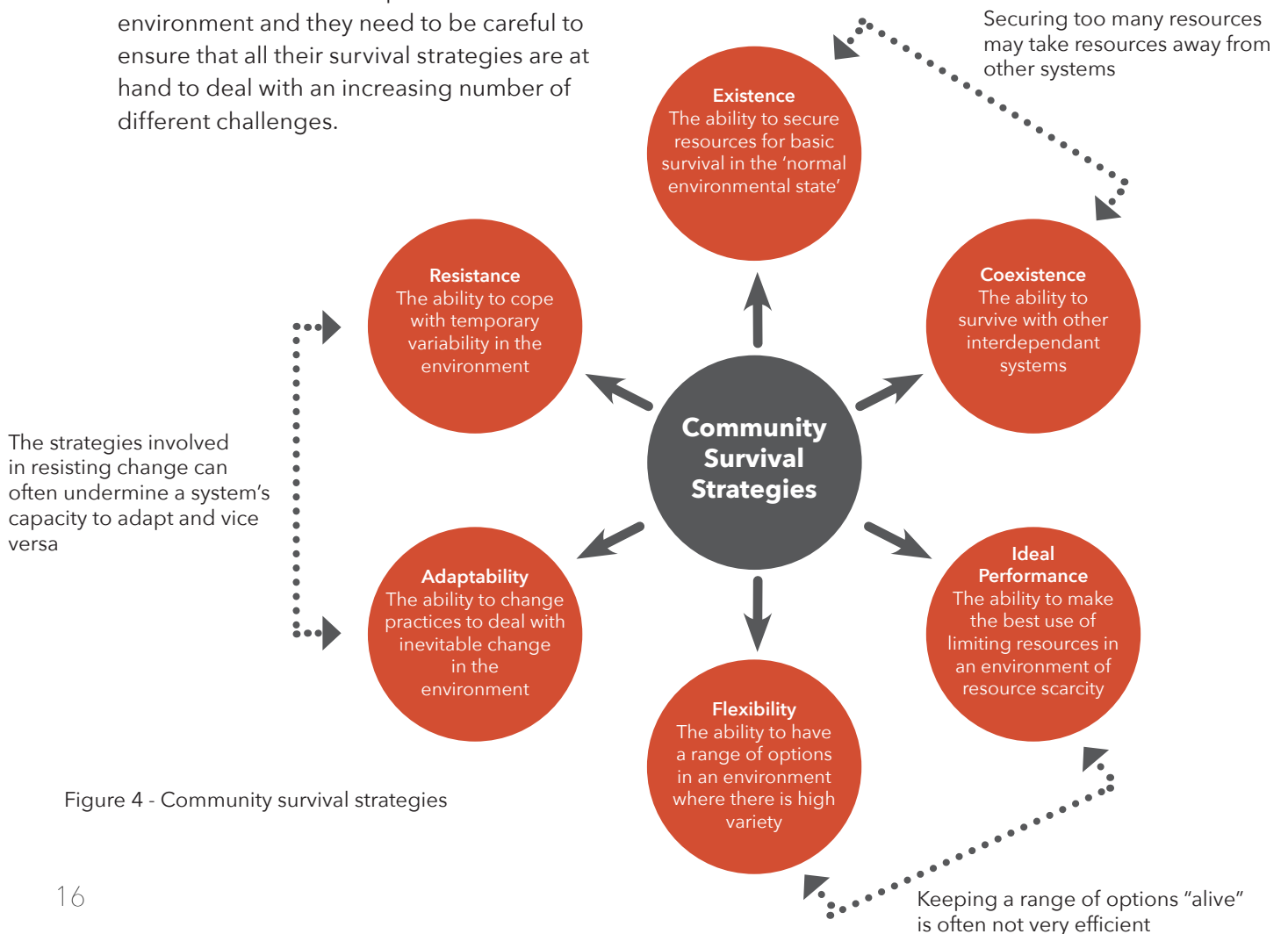


Figure 4 - Community survival strategies

- **Flexibility:** the ability to have a range of options or choices in a highly varying environment both over time and space. Here, communities develop 'flexibility' strategies, so that they can make the most of resources when they do appear, while having alternatives when certain resources disappear. Planting a range of crop species, or developing a range of livelihoods, are examples of how communities can cope with variety in the environment.
- **Resistance:** the ability to cope with temporary variability in the environment which can sometimes be random and unpredictable, but rarely permanent. Examples include the occasional flood or drought. In these situations communities develop 'resistance' strategies – approaches to withstand these temporary changes. Accumulating certain resources, such as food reserves or savings in bank accounts or relying on traditional methods of survival, are examples of coping strategies for variability in the environment.
- **Adaptability:** the ability to change practices to cope with major and permanent change in the environment. In this situation, the environment changes from what has been experienced in the past, to create a totally different environment (i.e. things don't change back to how they used to be) or they continue changing. When permanent change occurs, the best strategy a community can take is to 'adapt' i.e. develop new, innovative ways of dealing with the different conditions. Adopting new forms of communication or transpo-

ration, are examples of coping strategies for major and permanent changes in the environment.

- **Coexistence:** the ability to survive with other systems outside the system or, in the case of a community, the ability to survive with communities or organisations outside the community. The environment may contain other communities or organisations whose behaviour might have a direct effect on the community. Communities are constantly challenged by, or gain significant benefits from, outside organisations, whether these are neighbouring communities, government institutions or private/civil society organisations. In these situations, 'coexistence' strategies make the most of the opportunities and protect the community against threats.

It is clear that characteristics required for coping with one environmental condition may not be appropriate for others and in many cases, there are tensions between these survival strategies as they all require resources in order to be sustained. For example:

- Securing resources for basic existence means that there are less resources for sharing with other systems within the environment (**existence** versus **coexistence**)
- Optimising a community's activities so that it can perform ideally with limited resources can reduce a community's flexibility to make the best use of an environment with high variety (**ideal performance** versus **flexibility**)
- Resisting change can take away resources from a community's ability to develop different practices (**resistance** versus **adaptability**)

The system viability concept can be difficult to explain but it is important for community participants to understand the different types of challenges they might face and how different strategies are required for community survival. Box 4 summarises the concept in simple terms. Figure 4 provides a diagram to illustrate the relationship among the six strategies which also can be used in communicating the concept.

Box 4. Community survival

- To exist it needs food, water, health, shelter, fuel
- To co-exist it needs good relationships
- To resist it needs traditions
- To adapt it needs to do new things
- To be successful it needs to become good at a few things
- To be flexible it needs to have more options

MEASURING SYSTEM VIABILITY USING INDICATORS

Indicators can be a useful way to identify and measure the different strategies communities use to survive. Indicators can be difficult to explain but a good example of the use of indicators is how a doctor treats a patient who feels sick (Figure 5). The doctor carries out some basic tests to find out what is wrong.

The doctor may check body temperature, breathing and heartbeat. These indicators will give the doctor some information about what is wrong. An indicator, therefore, identifies something that can be measured, such as temperature or a heartbeat, which can be used to describe, investigate and communicate health. For example, a 40°C body temperature is most commonly associated with an infection.

However, no single indicator can give a complete picture of a situation – they only ever give partial information. To identify the exact cause of the high temperature then further indicators need to be measured such as the presence or absence of nausea, digestive problems, pain, shivers, etc.

An example related to community survival could be traditional farming practices. Indicators of whether traditional farming practice is working well or not can be the number of elders in the community who have the knowledge to farm traditionally, the number of young people that have the knowledge to farm traditionally, the number of people that have the tools to farm traditionally and whether they have access to areas where they can farm traditionally. This last indicator can be measured in distance to or time taken to walk to the farming areas.

It is essential that the appropriate indicators be selected in order to know how to take action. A good indicator alerts the community to a problem before significant damage occurs and helps them recognise the areas to focus on in order to work on maintaining community survival and prosperity.



Figure 5 - A doctor/healer and her patient, looking for indicators to determine the patient's status (drawn by Clifton Smith, North Rupununi)

THRESHOLDS TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACCEPTABLE AND UNACCEPTABLE

Once indicators have been identified how can you tell whether a community is doing well or not? How can a community monitor change over time? The idea of 'threshold' can help with this.

What is a threshold?

A threshold is the 'acceptable level' of the indicator. When the measure of the indicator goes beyond the threshold a significant change will occur. Establishing indicator thresholds is a useful way to monitor the effectiveness of a strategy - to know when a particular strategy is being applied well or not, or to know when to take action (Box 5).

Thresholds are subjective. For example, Figure 6 illustrates three different levels of tolerance to altitude. Three people set off to climb a very high mountain. The first person stopped at the very bottom and felt they couldn't carry on, as they were feeling very thirsty and were not carrying any water. Their limit was the bottom of the mountain. The second person stopped half way up as they were starting to feel out of breath and dizzy with the altitude. Their threshold was half way up. The third person climbed to the top of the mountain so their threshold was the top. This illustrates that thresholds cannot be imposed. Individuals, as well as communities, will have their own specific limits.

Thinking of the threshold between a 'good' and a 'bad' situation encourages the community to:

Box 5. Example of indicators and thresholds for water quality

One of the steps in determining whether water is drinkable is by measuring its turbidity i.e. its 'muddiness'. Scientists have established drinking water standards in nephelometric turbidity units - NTU. However, we can also use characteristics such as the colour of the water, its darkness, its smell to decide whether water is good for drinking. All of these are indicators of drinking water. Over a 'certain limit' of these indicators, we know or we suspect that water might not be drinkable. This 'certain limit' is the threshold. For example, a standard scientific threshold for acceptable drinking water is 0.3 NTU for at least 95 per cent (%) of the samples taken in any month. However, according to where you live, how well you know your environment or what water you drink daily, these indicators and thresholds can be very different and just as useful. For example, in one place a "brown colour" might be the threshold that the water is contaminated. In another place, a special type of smell might be the threshold that the water is polluted.

- Reflect on its current situation: does the community consider being over or under an acceptable level? For example: is the water drinkable or not?
- Identify what are their strengths and weaknesses: For example, "the water is of excellent quality because our rivers are clean" or "the

water is not very clean because our wells are not deep enough"

- Discuss what and where actions are needed: For example, "what are our best practices to keep rivers clean?" or "what shall we do to make our well water cleaner?"
- Find a community owned way of monitoring the situation: For example, "how do we know if our practice to make our well water cleaner is actually working and acceptable?"

FUTURE SCENARIOS: ARE CURRENT PRACTICES FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

By exploring what the future might be like, it can help us understand whether present-day community practices will be fit for the future, enabling us to identify the best community owned solutions.

What are scenarios?

Scenarios are stories of what might be. They can help build a shared understanding of potential futures and allow people to explore how developments or activities may impact on them and the environment (Figure 7).

Scenarios can represent expected futures or desired futures:

Expected futures involve asking the question: What do you think the future might be? Thinking about this question allows you to think about the importance and likelihood of many different events and better prepare for handling change.

Desired futures involves asking the question: What kind of future would you like to see? In practice, this would involve imagining solutions to problems within a community and attempting to find ways they can be achieved.



Figure 6 - The level of tolerance, or threshold, of three persons climbing this mountain



Figure 7 - Imagining 3 different futures: plenty of fish, very few fish, a fish pond (drawn by Clifton Smith, North Rupununi)

Developing scenarios involves understanding three key issues:

- **Uncertainty** - we don't know how things will be in the future and how our current actions will affect the future.
- **Importance** - some things that might affect the future are more important than others, and this importance might change in time.
- **Complexity** - human-environment systems are complex. Whatever happens in the future will be influenced by many different (interacting) factors.

BEST PRACTICES: THE VERY BEST COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

What is a best practice?

We define good practices as a great solution to current challenges that will guide the community towards a good future. Best Practices are a selection of top community owned solutions that make the community viable and are an inspiration for other communities ~

PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES TO ACTIVELY INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY

This section examines why participation of the community is important when identifying, discussing and presenting community owned solutions. Techniques such as interviews, workshops, focus groups, and informal discussion can be used. Each of these techniques promotes active community participation and should enable wide community involvement in the identification of community owned solutions.

WHAT IS PARTICIPATION AND WHY USE THIS APPROACH?

Participation means the active involvement of people from the community. To successfully identify community owned solutions, as many members of the local community as possible will need to be involved, allowing them to share their views, their knowledge and their ideas.

The key idea of community participation is to build trust and confidence within a group so that a wide diversity of ideas will be represented for community owned solutions. Participation starts with informing, consulting and gaining consent within the community you will be working with. Box 6 highlights a few key points that can help encourage people to participate.

In this Handbook, you will find that there are different levels of participation with the community and different techniques can be used. Activities in Section 2 can either involve a limited number of individuals, or engage the whole community, according to time and logistical constraints (Appendix 5).



Box 6. How to encourage community participation

- Ensure people understand why you are asking for their opinion. You need to explain clearly what a community owned solution is and when it can be considered a best practice
- Explain how participating can be beneficial to the community. People need to understand that their opinion is crucial - you want them to find out about their best practices so that these can be further strengthened and supported
- Find ways for people to play an active role in activities. They should be clearly informed on the content and duration of activities
- Make sure activities are enjoyable and people feel at ease. They should not feel under pressure or forced to participate

VISUAL COMMUNICATION FOR ENGAGING AND RECORDING A WIDE RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES

Visual techniques can be used at all stages of the process of identifying and sharing community owned solutions and are central to our participatory and action learning approaches. Using images can help local people to put forward their views, experiences and hopes. Drawings, photos, videos produced by local people for local people can significantly help in the information being easily understood since it is expressed in the community's own language. Video is fun to watch and photos are enjoyable to look at so other people are more likely to engage with these approaches to communication, and because these can now be recorded digitally, they can be shared with distant communities and preserved for future generations within the same community. In fact, the idea that a photograph or video recording can be saved for the future can be a major incentive for participation.

Key concepts & techniques

In this handbook, we will be using the visual methods of Participatory Drawings (PD), Participatory Photography (PP) and Participatory Video (PV). The aims of PD, PP and PV go beyond just presenting information in a different way; they can be a tool in the process of gathering information. At the centre of these visual techniques, we find three elements:

- images (still and moving)
- words
- a story

When people are asked to tell a story, they are encouraged to reflect on some aspects of their lives/activities, to confront them, to take a position, and to present it to others. The way a person or a community decides to tell his/her story, choosing what to include, what to exclude, what to show, what to say and how, reveals a lot of thoughts about themselves and stimulates discussion within the community.



Screening: Observing, evaluating and planning



Storyboarding: Evaluating and planning



Editing: Observing, evaluating, planning and acting



Filming, acting

Key concepts
& techniques

Figure 8 - The four phases of PV and PP

The application of the PP and PV techniques can be broken down into four phases:

- storyboarding
- filming
- editing
- screening

PD can make a major contribution to the initial phase of storyboarding, and drawings can be incorporated into the PP and PV techniques. In fact, drawings are an effective way of introducing information into the PP and PV techniques when participants have had difficulties in capturing appropriate photos and videos. Figure 8 above shows how these phases of PV and PP emphasise different elements of the action learning cycle. The action learning process can be introduced whenever there are opportunities for discussion and feedback (e.g. feedback following screening can lead to changes to the storyboard and further filming).

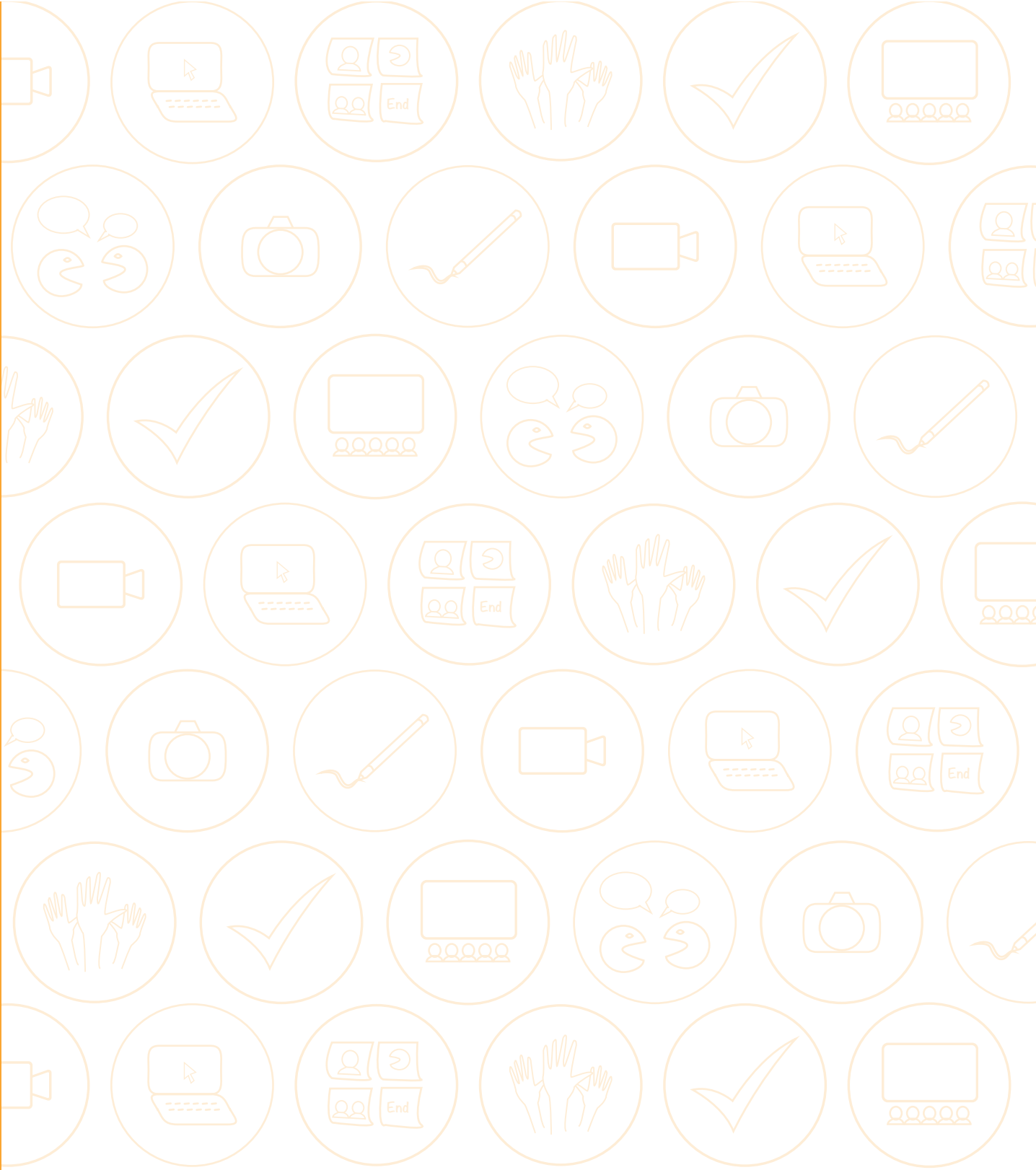
FINAL THOUGHTS

One of the main lessons we have learnt in developing this handbook is the need to be flexible and responsive to changing circumstances when working with communities. The concepts and techniques described above provide the baseline for the activities, but as a facilitator you need to be constantly alert and ready to adapt your approach and activities. This can be extremely demanding on your time, energy and emotions, but at the same time, successful outcomes are highly rewarding.

In the next sections, we provide guidelines on how the ideas and techniques described above can be put into action through a range of activities to identify, promote and share community owned solutions ~

NOTES

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SECTION 2

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The training is divided into activities that provide step-by-step instructions in order to identify community owned solutions. This process is based on our collective experience within Project COBRA. However, these steps must be seen as suggestions. In discussion with community participants you can choose to adapt them to your context or to the tools you have access to.

Activities 1 to 3 are used to engage participants and explore the community's context whilst activities 4 to 8 identify community solutions.

- Activity 1 underlines the importance of an introductory 'community engagement meeting', through which a small group of community members can be selected to become participants in the activities
- Activity 2 familiarises participants with the range of participatory and visual methods that can be used to identify community owned solutions. This is done through an

investigation of the community's history as a preparatory exercise for the next step of the course

- Activity 3 examines the challenges currently facing the community and introduces the six different survival strategies
- Activities 4 and 5 aim at collectively defining the community's viability. It is in this crucial step that all the elements that contribute to the community's survival are identified including indicators and thresholds
- Activity 6 focuses on developing best-case and worst-case future scenarios that the community could experience
- Activity 7 and 8 build on Activities 4 and 5 to identify the very best community owned practices

We suggest providing the community participants with their own notebooks, pens and pencils



as a minimum. If you are undertaking PV and PP activities you will also need to provide the community with the following:

- Video cameras with external microphone connections - minimum of two
- Microphone - minimum of one
- Headphone - minimum of one
- Tripod - minimum of one
- Video camera memory cards - minimum of two
- Hard drive for backing up files - minimum of one
- Extension leads - minimum of two

- Projector
- Laptop with video editing software installed
- Speakers
- Photo cameras with a USB download connection - minimum of two
- Camera memory cards - minimum of two

The higher the specification of the video and photo cameras, the easier it is to produce high quality films and photostories. However, this is dependent on your budget and good materials can be produced with basic equipment.

Community owned solution films and photostory examples can be downloaded from the COBRA website to share with the community (www.projectcobra.org) ~



Equipment required for delivering the training





ACTIVITY 1

COMMUNITY INTRODUCTION AND ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

	Objectives: to communicate the key aims, concepts and techniques underpinning the community engagement process; to discuss the consent process; to explain the programme of activities; to select the community participants.
	Duration of activities: 1-2 hours
	Who's involved? 10+ representatives from the community

How to facilitate

- 1. Introduce the concept and key ideas behind community owned solutions.** You can use PowerPoint presentations, hand-outs, or develop a short participatory activity to help the community grasp the key ideas of the project.
- 2. Introduce the provisional programme for the activities.** Ask for agreement on this programme.
- 3. Explain the participatory approach and use of visual materials.** Ask for agreement on the method of obtaining consent.
- 4. Identify participants.** Facilitate a process through which community participants will be identified for directly engaging with you. Note that in some cases, community participants may have been selected by the community prior to your arrival. An important tip is to train more people than may be needed for further work as some may give up, others may lack the necessary skills.
- 5. Screen community owned solution examples.** It is a good idea to screen at least one community owned solution to give people an idea of the project.

6. Meet with the community participants.

Begin initial discussions using the questions in Box 3. Also give participants an outline of what to expect during the activities. Don't forget to use icebreakers or energisers if necessary ~

ACTIVITY 2

COMMUNITY HISTORY

	Objectives: to demonstrate and practice the key principles of Participatory Drawing and storyboarding; to express ideas and tell a story through drawings; to illustrate the importance of sharing material with others.
	Duration of activities: 2-3 hours
	Who's involved? 4+ community participants

How to facilitate

- 1. Introduce the concept of storyboarding.** Give participants a feel for different types of storyboards using different examples from Project COBRA.
- 2. Introduce participants to the story they are going to tell.** The objective is to get participants to understand and tell the history of their community.
- 3. Discuss ideas.** If you have enough people, divide participants into groups of two to five people and ask them to interview each other (see Section 1.8) within the group to explore the history of the community.
- 4. Draw flip chart boxes.** Ask the groups to draw boxes on a flipchart (it can be 4-6 boxes to start with). Note: instead of drawing 4-6 boxes, steps of the story can also be drawn on sticky notes and stuck on a flipchart. This method gives a bit more flexibility to integrate changes and make the story evolve.



5. Draw community history in boxes. Ask each group “How would you start the story of your community?” and ask them to draw that first idea in the first box. Ask them about what would be the next step of the story, and ask them to draw it in the second box. Continue until each group has completed their particular narrative on the history of the community.

6. Group presentations. Ask the groups to explain their storyboard to another group.

7. Storyboard changes. If the groups want, make changes to the storyboard to integrate suggestions or improve it.

8. Introduce Participatory Photography and Participatory Video. This can be done if there is time at the end of the session or as a separate session.

9. Introduce how to use both the photo cameras and video cameras. Begin training of community participants in how to take photos

and video footage. Encourage participants to explore the equipment themselves so they are familiar with the on/off/record buttons, where to put headphones in etc. (Appendix 6)

10. Filming of community history. Ask the participants to capture images and film of their village history to demonstrate their storyboard. This activity can be as long or as short as the time available but is just a chance for participants to become familiar with using the equipment.

11. Edit the photos and films. Demonstrate and ask the participants to make a Powerpoint presentation with the photos and to edit a film of their village history. The filming, photography and editing can be an ongoing activity that sits alongside other activities during the training session.

12. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~



ACTIVITY 3

WHAT ARE THE CURRENT CHALLENGES IN THE COMMUNITY?

✓	Objectives: to introduce the idea of system viability; to explore the current challenges faced by the community
⌚	Duration of activities: 3 hours / half day session
👤	Who's involved? 4+ community participants

How to facilitate

1. Survival strategy discussion. Hand out the six survival strategy picture cards (Appendix 9) to the group one by one and ask them to interpret what each picture shows. Use this to initiate a discussion about each survival strategy and as

they answer draw the system viability diagram on a flip chart. Make sure when drawing the diagram you link the different strategies so there are three pairs of strategies illustrated (Figure 9).

2. Briefly introduce the concept of system viability. Explain the six different survival strategy pairings (existence and co-existence, ideal performance and flexibility, resistance and adaptability) in more detail and provide examples. Some examples could relate to the community history storyboards.

3. Stick up survival strategy picture cards or photos. Ask the participants to stick the picture cards up onto the systems viability chart in three pairs.

4. Explain how the six different survival strategies show how healthy/viable a community is. Explain that they need to be in balance to make the community viable. You can use the example of a human body or a house and explain how removing one part of the system undermines the viability of the whole system.

5. Community balance game. Organise six players each representing a survival strategy (with each survival strategy name written on a label and stuck on their forehead). They have to maintain their community in balance by holding with just one finger a tray with a glass of water balanced on it. This represents the community. They have to walk from one point to the other, carrying the tray, resisting challenges (other participants and facilitators tickling them, putting a hand over their eyes, having them walk over a stick, etc.). They need to keep the community in balance bringing as much water as possible to the arrival. Stress the importance of balancing the six viability strategies for a viable community.

6. Map challenges and threats. Split participants into two groups. Ask each group to draw a community map. Then ask them to identify environmental and social challenges that are impacting on the community and write these on sticky notes. Then ask them to stick these on their maps.

7. Presentation of challenges. Ask each group to present the challenges they have identified and show where these occur within the community.

8. Link challenges and threats to survival strategies. Ask the participants to take each challenge they have identified, discuss among the group and then give it a score from 3 high, 2 medium to 1 low against each survival strategy and therefore decide which survival strategy(ies) solution is the most appropriate for that challenge. Ask them to place each challenge sticky note within the most appropriate survival strategy on the system viability flip chart diagram from step 1. Note if it fits within more than one strategy then copy the sticky note so it can be put in more than one survival strategy. Ask them to explain why they have chosen to place them where they have to initiate a discussion related to survival challenges. To speed this step up you can group the challenges

9. Film and photography challenges. If you have PV and/or PP equipment, ask participants



Figure 9 - Making a simple systems viability diagram



to capture images and footage representing their challenges. This allows them to practice with the equipment and will also give them the opportunity to engage with the wider community. This activity can be as long or as short as the time available. Material collected can be edited into a short film or photostory.

10. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~

ACTIVITY 4

IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY PRACTICES FOR SURVIVAL: WHAT ARE THE PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS APPLIED IN THE COMMUNITY?

Identifying community owned solutions

	Objectives: to introduce the idea of community owned solutions; to explore the practices communities have developed in order to cope with current challenges; to further clarify the concept of system viability
	Duration of activities: 3 hours / half day session
	Who's involved? 4+ community participants

How to facilitate

1. Introduce the idea of community owned solutions (using Box 1). This is an opportunity for community participants to investigate what actually works well within a community.

2. Identify community solutions. If you have enough people, divide participants into small groups. Ask each group to discuss community practices which work well and that they are proud of.

3. Group discussion on community owned solutions. In a plenary, ask participants to rate the practices identified according to the degree of community ownership using the criteria in Box 1 (See also Appendix 7).

4. Select community owned solutions. Collectively select the practices that have the greatest support from the participants as a whole. They should be the ones that have the highest degree of community ownership. These will form the basis of all the next activities.

5. Link community solutions to survival strategies. Ask the participants to take each solution they have identified, discuss among the group and then give it a score from 3 high, 2 medium to 1 low against each survival strategy and therefore decide which survival strategy(ies) is the most appropriate for that solution. Ask them to place the solution sticky note within the most appropriate survival strategy on the system viability flip chart diagram. If it fits within more than one strategy then copy the sticky note so it can be put in more than one survival strategy. Ask them to explain why they have chosen to place them where they have to initiate a discussion related to survival strategy solutions. To speed this step up you can group the solutions.

6. Fill out the Community Solutions Table. The 'Community Solutions Table' is a way of organising information for you, but can also help participants to keep track of their findings. A blank table is given on the following page. You should make sure that an appropriate description for each solution is provided, including which survival strategy it addresses (Appendix 8).

7. Film and photograph solutions. If you have PV and/or PP equipment, ask participants to capture images and footage representing their solutions. This activity can be as long or as short as the time available. Material collected can be edited into a short film or photostory.

8. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~

BLANK COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TABLE

Survival strategies (Activity 4)	Community owned solutions (Activity 4)	Indicator (Activity 5)	Threshold (Activity 5)	Status (Activity 5)	Indicator score (Activity 7)	Solution score (average score of the indicator scores) (Activity 7)	Does it lead towards a good future? Rank 3 to 1 (Activity 7)	Is it easy to document in video and photostory (in 6 months)? Rank 3 to 1 (Activity 7)	Are there champions? Rank 3 to 1 (Activity 7)	Final score (Activity 7)

ACTIVITY 5

IDENTIFYING INDICATORS AND THRESHOLDS OF COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

	Objectives: to identify indicators of community owned solutions; to identify thresholds for indicators
	Duration of activities: 2-3 hours
	Who's involved? 4+ community participants

How to facilitate

1. Introduce the idea of indicators and thresholds. Prepare a short activity asking participants to say how they assess and measure certain things in their everyday life, for example sickness or health, happiness or sadness, far or close. Then ask them what are acceptable limits (thresholds) for these.

2. Identify indicators of community owned solutions. If you have enough people, divide participants into groups of 2 to 5 people and divide the community solutions identified in Activity 4 between the different groups. Ask participants to come up with a way of measuring each solution. To facilitate the process you can ask some of the following questions:

- What is the situation right now in the community regarding this solution? Is it satisfactory or not?
- How would you describe it in your own words?
- How would you know if the situation is changing and that the solution is working well or not?
- What would be the signs?

These descriptions can provide many different ways of measuring a solution.

3. Decide upon thresholds. For each indicator developed, ask the participants to decide upon a threshold. This can be done by asking participants, for each indicator, whether the community is doing:

- Very well
- Well
- Not very well

To visualise this step, you can draw a scale from not very well to very well for each indicator, and ask each group to place the current community status on it.

You can discuss with participants what is the tipping-point between acceptable and unacceptable and ask them to place this threshold level on their scale.

4. Present indicators and thresholds to the whole group. Allow participants to present their indicators to the rest of the group, discuss them collectively and reach an agreement on ways of measuring the community owned solutions.

5. Fill in the "indicator" and "thresholds" columns in the Community Solutions Table.

6. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~





Identifying community
owned solutions

ACTIVITY 6

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE FUTURE CHANGES THAT THE COMMUNITY MIGHT FACE?



Objectives: to identify the key drivers of future changes



Duration of activities: 3 hours



Who's involved? 4+ community participants

How to facilitate

1. Introduce the concept and key ideas of Future Scenarios. Present the ideas to the participants.

2. Identify drivers of change. If there are enough people, divide participants into groups. Ask participants to discuss potential future changes and to identify the drivers of these changes. Provide participants with a timeline – 15-20 years into the future. Emphasise that drivers can be both internal (within the village/community/area) and external (coming from outside). You can keep the STEEPV (Society, Technology, Economy, Environment, Politics and Values) framework in mind when facilitating so that participants explore a range of drivers, but ensure that discussions are not exclusively geared towards these categories.

3. List the drivers of change. Ask participants to list or draw the drivers in a table and possible future changes in these drivers (see the table on the following page for an example).

4. Rank the drivers according to their importance. Ask participants to identify the drivers which are the most important, based on their potential impact on peoples' lives and environment. Does the way that it evolves make a major

difference in the overall vision for the future, or does it make a relatively minor difference? Ask participants to rank importance of each driver from 1 (not important) to 3 (important).

5. Rank the drivers according to their uncertainty. Ask participants to identify which factors or drivers are the most uncertain for the future. Ask participants to rank uncertainty of each driver from 1 (certain) to 3 (uncertain).

6. Report back and select the most important and most uncertain drivers of change. Get each group to share their list of drivers with importance/uncertainty with the whole group.

7. Draw best case and worst case scenarios. Ask participants to draw best case and worst case scenarios of the future based on the two top drivers of change. You can ask them to draw one picture of each scenario in two separate boxes or to draw a storyboard.

8. Report back and discuss the futures. Get participants to share their final future scenarios. Ask participants to explain how they went about putting together the scenarios and what it tells the audience.

9. Film and photograph future scenarios. If you have PV and/or PP equipment, ask participants to capture images and footage representing the potential future scenarios. This activity can be as long or as short as the time available. Material collected can be edited into a short film or photostory.

10. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~

EXAMPLE OF A TABLE TO LIST DRIVERS, POSSIBLE FUTURE TRENDS AND IMPORTANCE/UNCERTAINTY VALUES

Drivers	Assumptions about development in the future	Importance (1 = not important to 3 = important)	Uncertainty (1 = certain to 3 = uncertain)
Population growth	Increase until 2020 then tapering off	2	3
Loss of language	People can only speak English	2	2
	People are able to speak a mixture of English and Portuguese or People are able to communicate fluently in Makushi, English and Portuguese		
Leadership	Good strong leadership, free from corruption	1	2
	Poor leadership, corruption is rife		
Dietary changes	People stop growing their own food and rely on imported goods	1	1
	People grow only staples such as cassava and rely on other imported goods or People diversify their crops and grow a range of vegetables, grains and fruits		

Identifying community owned solutions



Photo: Andrea Borgarello

ACTIVITY 7

IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICE

	<p>Objectives: to select the top community owned solutions</p>
	<p>Duration of activities: half day</p>
	<p>Who's involved? 4+ community participants</p>

How to facilitate

1. Introduce the idea of Best Practice. You can explain that a community owned best practice must score very highly in the following criteria:

- Does it lead towards a good future?
- Is it an easy practice to capture through video and photostory?

- Is there somebody who can represent and execute the best practice very well? Is there a champion for the best practice?

Ask participants if they would like to add any other community owned criteria that defines a best practice, such as:

- Does this practice have positive impacts on the community?
- Is the status of the community over the chosen threshold?
- Could this best practice be potentially easy to share with, and implement in, another community?

2. Enter criteria into Community Solutions Table.

In the Table, add one column for each criteria you have chosen. Write down/draw the criteria at the top of the column (Appendix 8).

3. Rate the practices according to the final criteria.

One practice after the other, collectively rate the practices according to these different criteria. When there is more than one indicator



for a solution, an average needs to be taken to provide a single score for each solution. This allows for effective comparison across solutions (Appendix 7).

4. Select the practice(s) which has the higher score. Through this process, it is now possible to choose the practices that have the highest score.

5. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~

- Resources
- Travel logistics
- Any other constraint
- Identify solutions, through discussion with the group, for the constraints identified

4. Identify clear tasks. Determine the tasks that will need to be undertaken to document the best practice within the community. Each task identified could be written on a sticky note and stuck onto a flip chart.

5. Develop a plan. Ask the group to order the tasks in a sequence to help develop a plan of tasks. The sticky notes can be moved around so that the tasks sit in the order they will be undertaken.

6. Give responsibilities. Facilitate the group to identify who is responsible for delivering each task and ask the group to write their name on the corresponding sticky note. Responsibility can be given to more than one person depending on the task.

7. Duration of tasks. Facilitate the group to identify how long each task will take and when in the coming weeks and months it should be undertaken.

8. Review the plan. Review the whole plan again with the group and have a final discussion to agree the plan considering the constraints identified at the start of the session. Ask the group to reorder the plan, amend the timings or responsibilities if necessary. It is important that a consensus regarding the plan is reached and that all participants are happy with their responsibilities within the plan. Once this occurs, agree the start date for the plan to begin.

9. Record the plan. Ask the community participants to record the plan either as a storyboard or a list on a flip chart so that it can be referred to during implementation of the plan.

10. Feedback on session. Give participants the opportunity to reflect on the activity ~

ACTIVITY 8

PLANNING DOCUMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICE

	Objectives: to plan the documentation of the best practice using visual methods
	Duration of activities: 2 hours
	Who's involved? 4+ community participants

How to facilitate

1. Remind the participants the purpose of documenting and sharing the best practices.

2. Storyboard the best practice(s) that will be captured. If there are enough people, divide participants in groups of 2 to 5 people. Ask participants to draw an initial storyboard for their best practice.

3. Plan investigation and recording of each scene. Ask participants to think, in as much detail as possible, about the logistics to capture their best practice(s). Consider the following:

- Time
- People

You are now at a stage where you have a core group of community participants familiar with the concepts and techniques for identifying, recording and sharing community owned solutions and best practices. With this core group of individuals, there is the potential to undertake a much wider activity for engaging the whole community. This is an opportunity to add to the 'database' of community owned solutions and best practices. This can be done through formal sessions involving more people, repeating the work that has been already been carried out in activities 1 to 5, or it might involve community participants working informally with the wider community, adapting the concepts and techniques in ways which are more suitable for the variety of individuals who may wish to be involved.

This is a great opportunity for the whole community to identify a wider breadth of community owned solutions, and provide more details on the best practices already identified. It is highly recommended that any further community engagement involves distinct groups (women, men, elders, youth, different livelihoods specialisations, etc.) so you are able to develop a fuller understanding of the practices in the community. This will also help facilitate the next stage of the Handbook, where a number of best practices are chosen for implementing within the wider community ~

IDENTIFYING FURTHER COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS

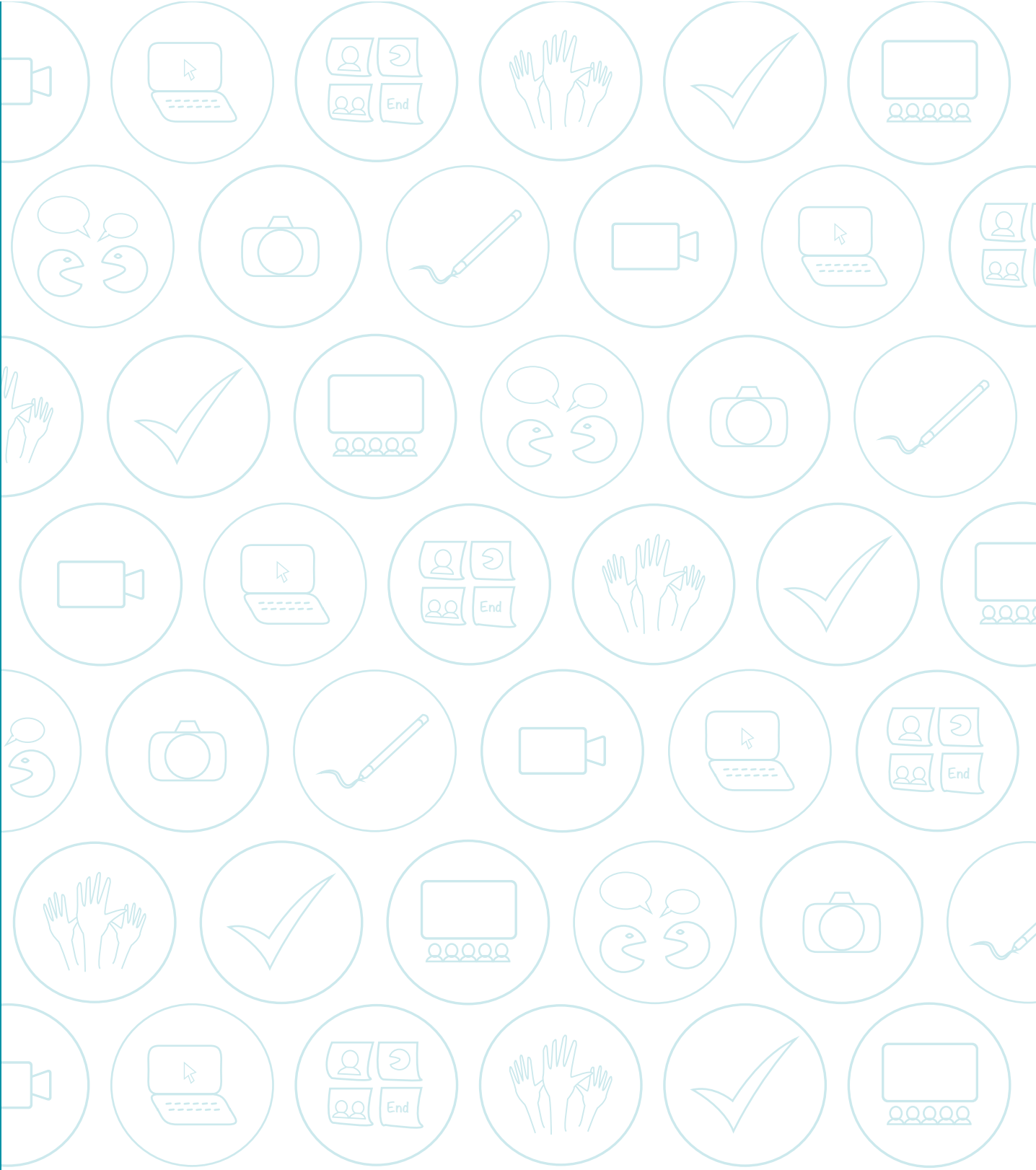


NOTES

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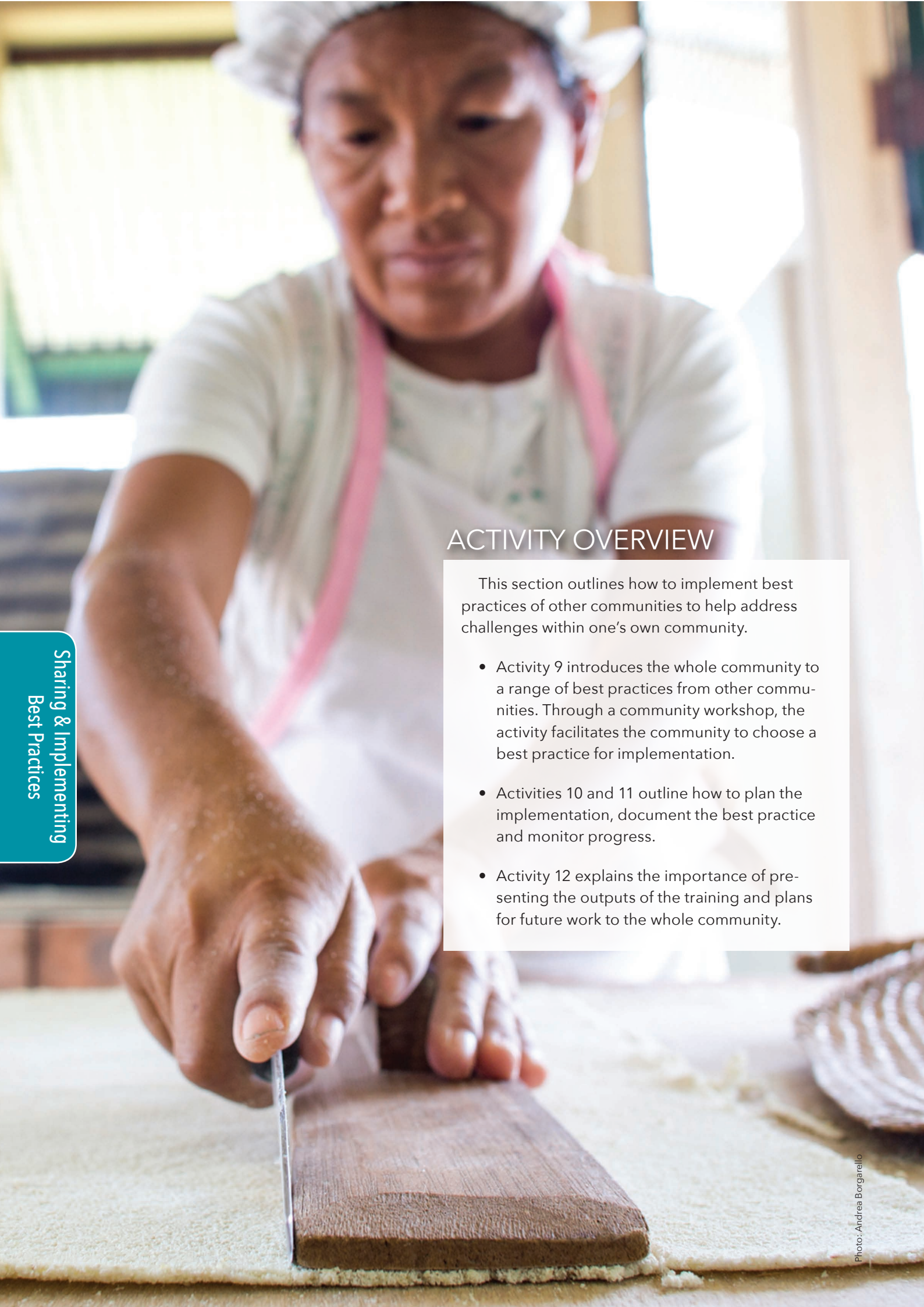
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SECTION 3

SHARING & IMPLEMENTING BEST PRACTICES



ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

This section outlines how to implement best practices of other communities to help address challenges within one's own community.

- Activity 9 introduces the whole community to a range of best practices from other communities. Through a community workshop, the activity facilitates the community to choose a best practice for implementation.
- Activities 10 and 11 outline how to plan the implementation, document the best practice and monitor progress.
- Activity 12 explains the importance of presenting the outputs of the training and plans for future work to the whole community.

ACTIVITY 9

CHOOSING A BEST PRACTICE TO IMPLEMENT

	Objectives: to review the key concepts of community owned solutions; to present the best practices from other communities; to facilitate the community to choose a best practice to implement
	Duration of activities: 4 hours
	Who's involved? The whole community

How to facilitate

- 1. Introduce the aims of the workshop.** Explain what the objectives of the workshop are and how it will be run.
- 2. Review key ideas of community owned solutions.** Go through the concept of community owned solutions, emphasising the usefulness of sharing best practices amongst communities.
- 3. Present the community challenges.** Present the challenges that have been identified, in Activity 3 to the community.
- 4. Present the different best practices.** Present best practices from other communities, either as films or photostories.

5. Discussion on these practices. If needed, you can divide participants into groups. Ask participants to have a discussion about each of the best practices. Encourage them to consider the following questions:

- Will the best practice be useful for the community? If so, why?
- Is there someone that can champion the implementation of this solution within the community?
- Does the community have the people and resources to carry out the solution?
- Does the community have the time to implement the best practice, in the first instance for the next six months?

6. Choose a best practice. At the end of the discussions, ask participants to choose a best practice. If appropriate, you can ask them to rank each best practice and explain their choice. Obtain consensus from the community on which best practice they would like to implement.

7. Identify a champion. Once the best practice has been chosen, facilitate a group discussion to help identify who in the community will be the champion(s) for the best practice. Ideally a group of people would be identified to implement the best practice.

In some communities, the steps in this activity may need to occur over more than one workshop. In this case, you need to ensure that as many of the same community members are available for multiple workshops and that you have plenty of time to fit in the activities during your visit ~

ACTIVITY 10

PLANNING IMPLEMENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION OF THE BEST PRACTICE

	Objectives: to identify the activities required to implement the best practice; to come up with a plan of implementation
	Duration of activities: 2 hours
	Who's involved? Community participants, best practice champion(s)

How to facilitate

- 1. Review the best practice material.** Present the photostories, videos and other information related to the implementation of the best practice with the community participants and those individuals involved in implementing the best practice(s) i.e. the best practice champion(s).
- 2. Storyboard the implementation of the best practice(s).** Depending on how many practices are being implemented, you can divide community participants and champions into small groups and ask them to draw an initial storyboard for the implementation of the best practice(s). For example, each box of the storyboard could be one month.
- 3. Storyboard the documentation of the implementation of the best practice(s).** Divide community participants into small groups and ask them to draw an initial storyboard for the documentation of the implementation of the best practice(s).
- 4. Plan documentation of each scene.** Ask participants to think, in as much detail as possible, about the logistics to document the implementation. The following should be considered:

- Time
- People
- Resources
- Travel logistics
- Any other constraint
- Identify ways of addressing, through discussion with the group, the constraints identified

5. Identify clear tasks that will need to be undertaken to implement and document the best practice. Each task identified could be written on a sticky note and stuck onto either of the two storyboards.

6. Develop two plans. Ask the group to order the tasks in a sequence to help develop a plan for both the implementation and documentation. The sticky notes can be moved around so that the activities sit in the order they will be undertaken.

7. Give responsibilities. Facilitate the group to identify who is responsible for delivering each task and ask the group to write their name on the corresponding sticky note. Responsibility can be given to more than one person depending on the task.

8. Duration of tasks. Facilitate the group to identify how long each task will take and when in the coming weeks and months it should be undertaken.

9. Review the plans. Review the plans for implementation and documentation again with the group and have a final discussion to agree the plans considering the constraints identified at the start of the session. Ask the group to reorder the plans, amend the timings or responsibilities if necessary. It is important that a consensus regarding the plans are reached and that all participants are happy with their responsibilities within the plans. Once this occurs, agree the start date for the plan to begin.

10. Record the plans. Ask community participants to record, using visual methods, the plans and produce a paper copy of each of the plans on a flip chart so that it can be referred to during implementation and documentation activities ~

ACTIVITY 11

DETERMINING INDICATORS TO MONITOR PROGRESS



Objectives: to identify ways to measure progress of the implementation of the best practice



Duration of activities: 1 hour



Who's involved? Community participants, best practice champion(s)

How to facilitate

1. Introduce the purpose of monitoring progress. Discuss with the group that one of the roles of the community participants is to help support and monitor how things are going during the implementation of the community owned solution. Indicate that you will return regularly (we suggest the minimum should be after two months and then six months) to see how things are going. However, between those periods the community participants are key to monitoring how things are going.

2. Identify key questions to monitor progress. Facilitate a discussion, recording ideas on a flip chart, to develop a list of questions that could be asked to measure how progress is going during the implementation of the best practice. These questions can then be used as indicators to monitor the implementation. Below is a list of general questions that can be used to help the discussion:

- Has the champion(s) implemented the tasks that they agreed to undertake? *Yes or no*
- How are the tasks going? *Very well, well, OK, badly, very badly*
- Are tasks completed? *Yes or no*

- Are tasks completed well? *Very well, well, OK, badly, very badly*
- Are tasks completed according to the timeframe? *Yes or no*
- Do things need to change? Does the plan need to change? *Yes or no*
- Has the plan been changed? *Yes or no*
- Are people enjoying the tasks? *Yes or no*
- Is there support from the wider community? *Yes or no*
- Is there support from stakeholders outside the community? *Yes or no*
- Is there awareness of the implementation of best practice from stakeholders outside the community? *Yes or no*

3. Identify how progress should be monitored.

Facilitate a discussion on the following:

- How often should the questions be asked? E.g. every week, every two weeks, after specific tasks/activities have been completed etc.
- Who will be asked the questions? E.g. community participants, champions etc.
- Which method will be used to record the questions? E.g. written notes, through video etc.

4. Record and review. Record the conclusions of the discussion on a flip chart. Facilitate a final discussion reviewing the monitoring plan to ensure that a consensus has been reached and that all members of the group are happy, agree to the plan and know who is responsible for carrying out the monitoring and when ~

ACTIVITY 12

COMMUNITY SCREENING AND FEEDBACK

	Objectives: community participants to present and screen the outputs of their training; to gather feedback from the wider community; to inform the wider community of the plans for further activities
	Duration of activities: 1-2 hours
	Who's involved? Community participants, wider community

How to facilitate

1. Review key ideas of community owned solutions. Go through the concept of community owned solutions, emphasising the importance of sharing best practices amongst communities.

2. Community participants present the outputs from their training. These can be their storyboards, short films and photostories of the challenges, solutions and future scenarios identified. If appropriate, you can also prepare a short PowerPoint presentation on what was done in the training with the community participants.

3. Discussion on presentations. Facilitate a discussion with the wider community on their views and opinions of the work with the community participants.

4. Community participants to present their plans for future activities. This can be done orally, through a storyboard or PowerPoint presentation.

5. Discussion on presentation of future plans. Facilitate a discussion with the wider community on their views and opinions of the future plans. Ensure community participants record, either as written notes or through video, the feedback and encourage them to adjust their plans if required ~



NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

This section outlines how to monitor progress of how the community participants have been working, to evaluate the implementation of the best practice and to assess the impact of the engagement.

Engagement with the community should take place for at least six months. During this time, there should be a mid-term evaluation, ideally after two months, and if possible, again after four months. At the end of six months, there should be a final evaluation visit.

If possible, each evaluation visit should start with an introduction meeting with the community to reintroduce the work and discuss the aims and plans of the visit.

In addition, further training and support can be provided to the community participants if necessary. Lastly, screenings of materials gathered should be shown to the community and particularly to people featured in films or photostories to get their comments and make sure they are happy with the footage, photos and interview material.

- Activity 13 reviews what the community participants have been doing since the last visit
- Activity 14 evaluates how the documentation of the community's own best practice has gone
- Activity 15 evaluates how the implementation and documentation of the best practice from another community has gone
- Activity 16 evaluates the impact of the best practice implementation on the wider community





Photo: Andrea Borgarello

ACTIVITY 13

EVALUATION OF WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING SINCE THE LAST VISIT



Objectives: To review what the community participants have been doing since the last visit



Duration of activities: 2 hours



Who's involved? Community participants

How to facilitate

- 1. Review of activities.** Ask the community participants to discuss what has gone well and what hasn't gone well. Ask them to capture this on a flip chart with a smiley face category and a sad face category.
- 2. Individual reflections.** Ask each individual how they feel and whether they would like to add anything more to the discussion.
- 3. Solutions discussion.** Facilitate a wider discussion and ask them to identify solutions to any of the issues that have been raised ~



ACTIVITY 14

EVALUATION OF BEST PRACTICE DOCUMENTATION

	<p>Objectives: To review the recording of the community's own best practice community owned solution; to identify further training requirements in key concepts and techniques</p>
	<p>Duration of activities: 3 hours</p>
	<p>Who's involved? Community participants</p>

How to facilitate

- 1. Storyboard.** Ask the participants to develop a specific storyboard for what has happened with their own best practice documentation.
- 2. Compare with original plan and storyboard.** Ask the participants to present their storyboard and compare it to their original plan.
- 3. Discussion.** Facilitate a discussion with the community participants regarding the effectiveness of how the documentation has gone. You can use a happy and sad face flip chart to capture the discussion and use the following questions to stimulate discussion:

- What logistical challenges did you face?
- Were people always available?
- Did you have the time to record and edit?
- Were there any technical problems?
- Did you always understand what you were doing?
- At screenings and when reporting back to the community, did everyone under-

stand the materials? If not, why?

- Were the materials too long or too short?
- What is the quality of the materials?
- Could the quality be improved?
- Has documentation of the best practice had any impact on how the best practice is organised and communicated?

4. Review the monitoring plan. Review, with community participants, the agreed monitoring plan and agree changes to the plan for the next stage of monitoring.

5. Identify if further training and capacity building is needed. Identify, with community participants, if and where further capacity building is required.

6. Develop a plan of activities. Develop a plan during the visit to deliver further training if required and give support for the documentation of the local best practice ~



ACTIVITY 15

EVALUATION OF BEST PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION AND DOCUMENTATION

	Objectives: To discuss and record how the best practice implementation from another community has gone; to evaluate how the documentation of the implementation has gone
	Duration of activities: 2 hours
	Who's involved? Community participants and best practice champions

How to facilitate

1. Storyboard. Ask the participants to develop a specific storyboard for what has happened with the implementation and documentation of the new best practice from another community.

2. Compare with original plan and storyboard. Ask the participants to present their storyboard and compare it to their original plan.

3. Discussion. Facilitate a discussion, recording ideas on a flip chart, regarding how the best practice has gone. You can use a happy and sad face flip chart to capture the thoughts of the group and the following questions to stimulate the discussions:

- What has gone well?
- What has gone badly?
- What has been the biggest challenge to implementation?
- How could things be improved?

4. Planning. Facilitate a discussion with the group that reviews the implementation and documentation plan. Ask the group to amend the plan, activities and timetable to make the implementation of the best practice work better if this hasn't already been done as part of on-going tasks. Facilitate a final discussion reviewing the implementation plan to ensure that a consensus has been reached and that all members of the group are happy and agree to the plan ~



ACTIVITY 16

EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF BEST PRACTICE IMPLEMENTATION ON THE WIDER COMMUNITY



Objectives: To identify the important changes that have occurred within the community as a result of the best practice being implemented



Duration of activities: 4 hours



Who's involved? The whole community

How to facilitate

1. Decide on the technique to use. Depending on the context it may be more appropriate to interview individual community members or to work in focus groups with 6-8 people from different genders, ages etc. to gather information on the impact of the best practice implementation.

2. Determine questions to ask. The table on the following page provides some example questions that can be used to facilitate discussions and assess the impact of the best practice implementation on the community.

3. Community meeting. It is a good idea to hold a community meeting to allow the community participants to report their activities to the community, to screen the films and photostories, and to use the opportunity to get feedback on the impact of the best practice implementation. If you choose to do this then the following steps can be followed.

4. Reintroduce the concept and key ideas of community owned solutions and how the workshop will be run.

5. Screening of the best practice community

owned solution film or photostory from another community.

6. Presentation of the local team's storyboard and films of the best practice implementation to share with the community what they have done.

7. Group discussions. Divide participants into groups. Ask each member of the group to tell, from their perspective, what changes they have witnessed as a result of the best practice being implemented within the community. The stories should be recorded as written notes. Once every individual has told their story then the group should discuss the stories and different people's viewpoints and as a group decide which is the most significant story and why.

8. Reporting back. Ask each group to present their chosen story to the whole community.

9. Community discussion. Facilitate a community discussion about the effectiveness of implementing the best practice.

10. Feedback. Feedback from this session should be discussed with the best practice champion(s), and the community participants to see whether the implementation plan should be amended or not ~

People or group interviewed (information on age, gender, position in the community, etc.)	Have you been part of making films or photostories?	Have you seen any films or photostories?	Do you know what a community owned solution is and do you know which solution is being documented in the community?	Have you heard about the community owned solution, shared by another community, that is being implemented here?	Have you been to any of the activities of this implementation?	Do you think it is a good or bad thing that the solution from the other community is being implemented here?	What benefits do you think it will have for the community?	Do you think it will still be going in a year's time?

Monitoring Progress

CONCLUSION

This handbook has been designed to provide practitioners with an approach and techniques to help communities respond to both current and future challenges. It allows a practitioner to build capacities within a community, for the community themselves to identify their own strengths and solutions to these challenges and for the community to implement best practices from other communities.

The handbook is an evolving document that the authors hope will be adopted and adapted in the future to help support the identification, recording, sharing and implementation of community owned solutions. It is hoped that community owned solutions will galvanise communities to face social and environmental challenges on their own terms, without waiting for, and depending on, external assistance ~

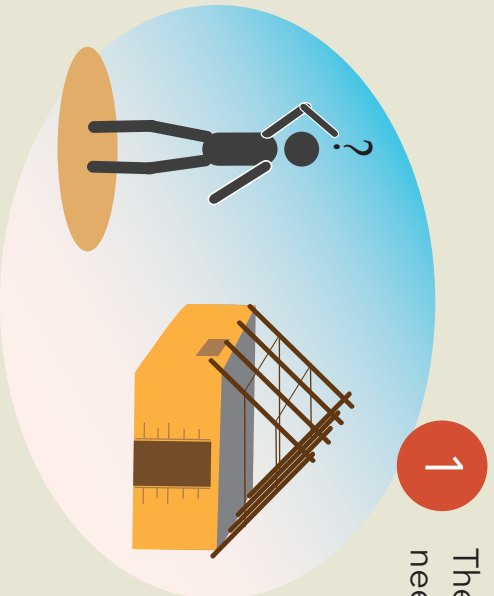




SECTION 5

TECHNIQUES APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. COMMUNITY OWNED SOLUTIONS HANDOUT



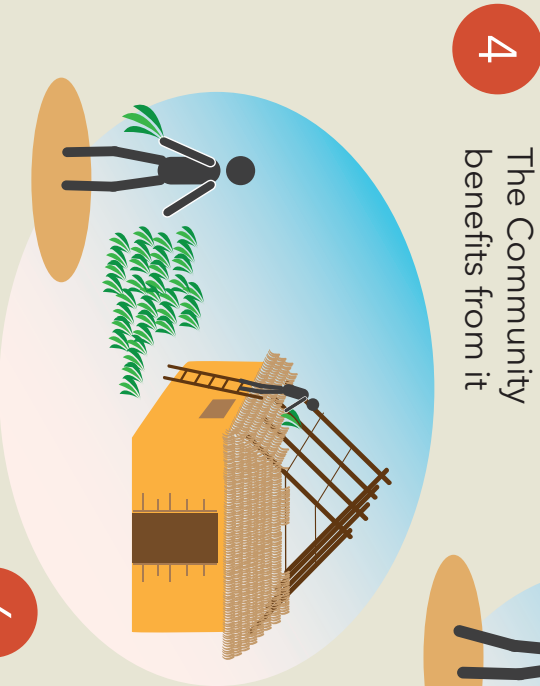
1 The Community needs it



2 The Community does it



3 The Community controls it



4 The Community benefits from it



5 It's fair and good for the environment

6 The solution is self reliant and not dependent on long term external support

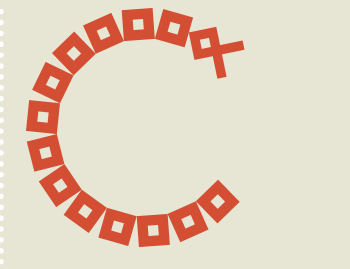
APPENDIX 2. PROJECT COBRA CONSENT FORM



I understand what the main aims and objectives of the project are.

I understand who the project partners are.

I understand who the local members of the project team are.



I understand my role in the research. That I am being asked for information in group discussions and individual interviews through video and for my picture to be taken.

I understand that my picture and video footage maybe used in the production of videos and stories by the local team.

I understand that these pictures and videos may also be used by other project partners for research and sharing information e.g. the project website.



I understand that my picture may be taken.
- I agree to be videoed
- I agree to be photographed
- I agree to an audio interview

I understand that my role in this project is voluntary and that I can refuse to provide information and that I am free to stop participating at any time.

I feel informed about the research and have had a chance to ask questions to clear any concerns. I know that I can ask questions at any time about the research.

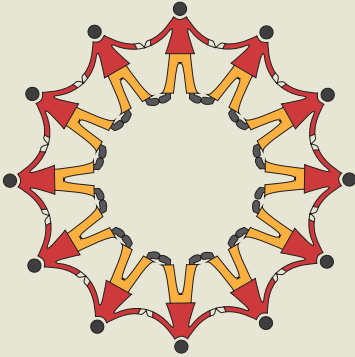


Date:
Name:
Team member:
Participant:

By signing this form I agree to participate in the research of this project and consent to all the above.

APPENDIX 3. ICEBREAKERS AND ENERGISERS EXAMPLES

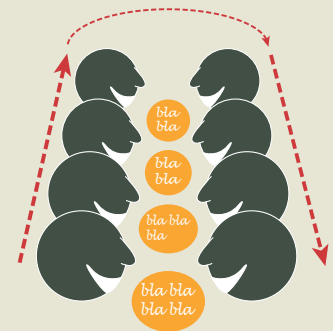
PASSING ON THE ENERGY



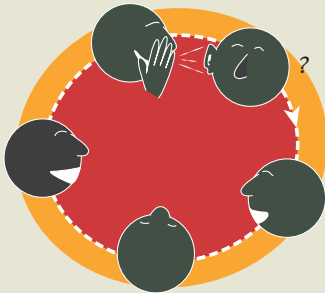
1. Place everybody standing in a circle holding hands. One person starts and squeezes another person's hand, passing on "energy" to that person.
2. The person whose hand has been squeezed squeezes the hand of the person next to them in the circle and so forth. In this way the "energy flow" circulates in the circle.
3. The person can also decide to 'bounce' energy back. To do this they squeeze twice the hand of the person who has just passed them the energy. In this case the flow of energy circulation is inverted. Energy can also be bounced to another person of the circle who is not next to us by looking at the person we want to pass the energy to and shouting "boing".
4. If a person doesn't pass the energy correctly, or takes more than 2 seconds to pass the energy, they are eliminated from the circle. The game lasts until only one person, the winner, remains.

SPEED DATING

1. Arrange everybody face to face in two lines. It can be sitting or standing.
2. On "go", ask the people who are facing each other to start talking, introducing each other for example. People have 1 minute.
3. After one minute, time is over and participants move on to the next person.
4. Carry on until most people have been able to exchange a few words.



THE CHINESE WHISPER



1. Place everybody standing in a circle.
2. One person chooses a short sentence, and whispers it to the ear of the person standing next to them. The sentence shouldn't be heard by anybody else, and can only be told once.
3. The person who is being told the sentence listens carefully, then repeats it to the next person, and so on.
4. The very last person says out loud what he/she has heard. In big groups, often the sentence has radically changed, which makes the whole group laugh out loud.

THE LAST PERSON STANDING

1. Place chairs in a circle. There should be one chair missing compared to the number of participants.
2. One person stands in the middle and calls for people with one common feature to stand up. For example: "people with long hair" or "people with a red T-shirt" or "people who like milk".
3. As people stand up, they immediately have to run for someone else's chair, so does the person standing in the middle!
4. Once all the chairs have been taken, there will be one person without a chair. This person will be the next person standing in the middle, and calling for the next "similar people" to stand up and exchange chairs. The game can carry on for as long as you want, until everyone is energised and laughing.



APPENDIX 4. EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

It is important to evaluate whether participants really understood the aims, concepts and techniques within the training, to monitor progress with the participants as you work with them and to evaluate the impact the activities have had on the wider community. It is also important for you as a practitioner to regularly reflect on what you have done and use the feedback to improve the activities. Evaluation can be used to provide feedback within or after the following training and participatory techniques:

- Training sessions
- Interviews with individuals
- Focus groups
- Community workshop
- Informal discussions
- Screenings of the films or photostories

WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Steps to follow:

- Give all participants or community members a piece of paper or a sticky note.
- Ask them to write any feedback they want to give about the activity, screening etc. You can provide guidance questions such as 'What did you like?' and 'What didn't you like?' to help people focus their feedback.
- Ask them to put their comments on a board, wall or sheet of paper hung up so that everyone can read the comments.

SPOKEN FEEDBACK

Steps to follow:

- Ask the participants or community members to give their comments about an activity, screening, specific question etc.

- In a focus group or workshop context, it is important to encourage as many participants or community members to speak as possible so facilitating individuals to speak is key. This can be done by directing questions to individuals or facilitating them to speak as part of a wider discussion.
- Developing more of a conversation rather than an interview makes people feel more comfortable and often provides more useful feedback.

DRAWING FEEDBACK

Steps to follow:

- Provide pens, pencils and flip charts.
- Ask an individual or group to provide feedback or to evaluate progress by developing a drawing or storyboard.
- Ask them to talk through their drawing or storyboard to the group.

OBSERVATION

Steps to follow:

- During any activity, interview, focus group or workshop it is important to have a member of the team observing what is occurring, the dynamic of the individuals and what is discussed.
- After the activities it is important to reflect with the team on what has been observed and what feedback has been given through written, spoken or drawing feedback.

APPENDIX 5. PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES & TECHNICAL TIPS

WORKSHOPS**What is it?**

A meeting organised on a specific topic, to share information and discuss this topic with people. It can consist of discussions, lectures and other activities such as games or film projections.

When to use it?

At the beginning of community engagement: to share information with the communities, to discuss the aims of the engagement and question the interest of the communities for participating, to gain information on specific aspects/themes.

During the process of community engagement, to allow different opinions to come up.

At the end of the process of community engagement: to share and discuss results, to evaluate the process, to agree on how to communicate the findings to external audience.

Number of people

Large group of people (from 10 to 40 approximately)

Time

2 to 5 hours

Benefits

- To actively involve a large group of people in reflecting over a specific theme.
- To give people information on a specific theme and to receive feedback and information from them as well.
- To foster discussion among participants on that theme, and to confront different views and perspectives.
- It is an effective process to reach out to a wider group of people.

Limitations

- Shy people might not participate actively in discussions.
- Can demand a lot of preparation and organisation.

FOCUS GROUPS



What is it?

A small group of people focusing on and discussing about one specific topic.

When to use it?

At the beginning of the process of community engagement: to gain background information and opinions on a particular issue.

During the process of community engagement: to explore in depth issues that have been raised during the project.

At the end of the process of community engagement : to evaluate the project.

Number of people

6 to 8 people, preferably homogeneous groups (e.g.: women in the same age group, men from the same social background...)

Time

1 to 2.5 hours. After that, people can get tired and lose focus.

Benefits

- It's participatory and empowering.
- People can dynamically exchange and confront their ideas. New positions can come up.
- Shy people can feel more comfortable to express their views in smaller groups, provided groups are as homogeneous as possible, depending on the context specificities.

Limitations

- Can be dominated by some people.
- Shy people might still be uncomfortable expressing their thoughts. Some people might not express their deep feelings even in a small group.
- Outcomes might not be applicable to the wider community.
- Focus groups can create an artificial environment that can influence responses.
- The outputs rely mainly on the skills of the facilitator to make people at ease and willing to express themselves.

INTERVIEW



What is it?

One-to-one conversation between two people, where the interviewer asks pre-defined questions. Normally, the same questions are asked in the same order to several different people in order to compare the answers and gather rich and complete information on a topic.

When to use it?

During the process of community engagement: when precise and in depth information from single participants is needed, with the objective of comparing answers.

At the end of the process of community engagement: to evaluate the project.

Number of people

2 people

Time

Ideally maximum 1 hour.

Benefits

- The range and depth of information: by comparing how different people answer we gain information of different ideas and perspectives.
- The information can be compared with information gathered in the focus group discussions.
- More intimate, less intimidating, allows people to express their position without being afraid of getting in conflict with other people.

Limitations

- Only one person's perspective.
- Interviewees and interviewers can get carried away and not necessarily answer the question.
- Time consuming.

INFORMAL DISCUSSION



What is it?

A conversation more or less related to the initiative. It doesn't follow a predefined set of questions; can be considered as "off the record".

When to use it?

Informal discussions happen any time and everywhere.

At the beginning of the process of community engagement: to present a person with the initiative's goals, ask his/her opinion; to get to know the context and the people in an informal way. Informal discussions can be the first phase towards the definition of more structured interviews.

During the process of community engagement: allows a great variety of information, and often unexpected information. People can express their doubts or problems in this informal context.

At the end of the process of community engagement: get people's views on the initiative without the pressure of a bigger group.

Number of people

Usually small number.

Time

Variable.

Benefits

- Hearing the voice of people who felt uncomfortable in formal contexts.
- Getting information you wouldn't have had within a predefined formal structure.
- Developing greater rapport and trust with interviewees.

Limitations

- The "off the record" context can limit the formal and accurate recording, and eventual use, of the information. If you find the information crucial and want to use it officially, ask for consent, and/or arrange for a follow-up interview or their participation in more formal workshops.
- Unpredictability.

ORGANISE A WORKSHOP OR A FOCUS GROUP

Step 1. Define the goals



Many workshops or focus groups are a waste of time because there's no clear goal kept at the centre of the discussion. So the first step is to decide what topic you want people to work on.

Step 2. Decide who will attend



This will depend strictly on your goals. If your goal is discussing a local practice that some people think could be a best practice for example, it is important to involve people who have different experiences and also potentially different ideas and positions of that possible best practise. It is mandatory to make a list of who needs to be there and at what time. This will also ensure not to have people wasting their time by coming to a workshop or a focus group where their presence is not needed.

Duration of the workshop or focus group has to be announced ahead to allow people to organize themselves. Try to be as specific as possible, but leave a few openings for last-minute additions.

Step 3. Choose the location



Location depends on how many people are participating. The venue must be easy to reach for everyone, big enough to allow everyone to sit comfortably, and quiet enough so that people can concentrate. Make sure this venue is acceptable for any member of the community.

Step 4. Create an agenda



Create an agenda means to develop an outline of how you'll achieve the workshop's goals. It is very useful to create a list of main points to discuss, and then break down each larger point into details that you want to communicate to your audience.

Taking pictures or video recording discussions and activities is important in order to collect data emerging from the workshop. It is also useful to make a list of which group discussions and activities you'll have at which point in the workshop. It is important to define how much time you will allow for each exercise. Make sure your activities are appropriate for the size of the group, and ensure that your venue has the resources needed to run sessions (blackboard, space to run exercises, enough chairs, etc.)

Step 5. Conduct the Workshop or focus group



The facilitator should start by introducing him/herself and briefly outlining the purpose of the discussion. Within a small group, participants should be asked to introduce themselves to the group. This should be brief and clear (name, place where the person lives, it can be also the occupation...). Discuss and ask the participants to sign the consent form at this stage. A good moderator is one who facilitates discussion among the respondents but who does not dominate or lead the group.

Focus groups are often recorded or video recorded to assist in the analysis of the data and this should also be mentioned at the start of the group. People shall agree and be comfortable. The camera shall be placed discreetly. There will be occasions where recording is not possible or people don't allow it, and then the researcher may choose to employ a note-taker or write notes himself/herself. Stimulus material such as display boards, images or music can be used to provoke discussion.

It is good practice for the moderator to remind the group of the basic 'rules' regarding confidentiality and anonymity of the topics or stories raised during the discussion. It is often helpful to remind participants that they should feel free to be able to debate, disagree and critique, and that there is no right or wrong way of thinking. Participants are also free to leave at any time.

Step 6. Evaluation



Evaluation of how your workshop went is very important. In order to evaluate the workshop you can create a questionnaire to give to all participants at the end of the event, and give them plenty of opportunity to share their opinions on how well it went. Evaluation can also be carried out as a debriefing at the end of the workshop or focus group.

Step 7. Communication of insights emerging from the workshop



It is also important to have a plan to communicate the information which emerged or the decisions that were reached during the workshop. People who participated need to know that their hard work actually resulted in a decision or action, and it is important to keep people who didn't participate updated as well. Also, you need to keep people informed about what's happening after the workshop has ended. You need also to lower the expectation level. Being transparent doesn't mean making plans that won't happen !

ORGANISE AN INTERVIEW

Step 1. Recruiting the people you want to interview



The question you need to answer is “Who might have the information I’m looking for?”

Another important aspect is that you need to make sure that you have targeted a diverse range of people who might have different opinions or perceptions based on their own experiences and context.

Step 2. When and where to interview



Interviews should be carried out when people have time and are not pressed by other activities. The best time for the interview should be discussed and defined with the person you interview. When choosing the location you want to make sure that it is somewhere the interviewee will feel comfortable, such as in their own home, or in the place they are describing to you. If you are asking information about farming practices, for example, it can be useful to be in the field; the person you are interviewing can show you places, farming techniques, etc. and he/she can be inspired by being in the environment they are talking about.

Sometimes it can be very useful, instead of interviewing a person in one place, to take a walk with the person while interviewing him/her. In this way the person can take you to see the places/activities he/she is describing. This can help us to better understand what the person is describing and can help the person to be more precise in the description.

Step 3. Recording, video recording or taking notes



Taking notes during the interview requires great skill to be able to note down the appropriate material, while also paying attention to the interviewee and thinking about your next question. If you have the possibility of conducting the interview in pairs, one can ask the questions and the other one can take notes. Another option is recording.

Recording allows you to concentrate what the person is saying without having to write. Video recording also allows you to keep track of gestures and expressions. But people can be shy and not feel at ease being recorded. You always need to ask permission (see ethical considerations in section 1). In the event of taking a walk with the person, make sure you can record the information almost in real time by taking notes right after or even better during.

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Tips to carry out an interview

- It is important to make sure, before starting to ask questions, that the interviewee knows what the project is about. Make sure people you interview know everything they will say will be kept confidential unless they allow to use it and that they have given consent to be eventually recorded.
- You should also establish how long the interview will last with the interviewee and stick to that time.
- Remember that an interview is not an interrogation; you should try making the other person feel at ease and enjoying talking to you.
- Even if you have a pre-set list of questions, try not to fire them at the interviewee. Give them a chance to develop their ideas and also to ask for clarification if necessary.
- Even if you are nervous, make sure that you listen to the responses and interact with the other person.
- Do not ask complicated questions at the start of the interview. Instead, open the interview with some uncomplicated, simple questions (for example name, profession, number of years lived in the village, etc.).
- When framing your questions, try to make them as open-ended as possible. This prevents very short answers and gives the respondent the chance to develop his/her own ideas on the topic. Try not to give your personal opinion, as the interviewee might stick to it and be afraid (or too shy) to say something different.
- When dealing with aspects which may embarrass the other person be prepared to move on to another issue if the interviewee is clearly very uncomfortable with the direction of the interview.
- At the end of the interview, you should provide the interviewee with an opportunity to ask you questions and explain again if necessary how you will use the recorded material.

NOTES

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APPENDIX 6. VISUAL METHODS FOR CAPTURING INFORMATION AND TECHNICAL TIPS FOR PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY AND VIDEO

PARTICIPATORY VIDEO

What is it?

Representation of issues or activities through video. Video clips can be compiled to tell a story in the form of a film.

When to use it?

To bring people together to explore issues – allows a specific group or community to come together and work collectively on representing a specific issue/ concern.

To communicate with wider stakeholders – allows effective communication with other groups, communities and decision-makers.

Benefits

- Comprehensive information capture and communication through visual and audio
- Can reveal unexpected outcomes.
- Creative.
- Can be motivating and fun for participants.

Limitations

- Expensive – equipment can be costly, although low quality video footage can now be taken with mobile phones.
- Time-consuming – training in equipment use and the capture/editing/ sharing of information can take a lot of time.
- Engagement with the information captured can be affected by the quality of the filming, editing and screening.
- Participants need to be literate, especially when using computers for editing.



PARTICIPATORY PHOTOGRAPHY

What is it?	Representation of issues or practices through photos. These can be compiled (with or without written text) to tell a story in the form of a photostory.
When to use it?	<p>To answer specific questions, either individually or in a group – shooting photos can allow people to represent a specific issue/concern.</p> <p>To share outputs of an activity with other groups/communities (for example through a photostory).</p> <p>To visually document a community owned solution, a particular indicator, thresholds, a best practice, etc.</p>
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can give more vivid and rich information compared to writing. • Commenting on photographs can foster group discussion.
Limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need of technical and relatively expensive material: cameras, printer, computer. • If the use of computers is needed, participants need to be literate.



PARTICIPATORY DRAWING



What is it?

Representation of issues or practices through pictures (with or without written text). This is carried out by the participants themselves.

When to use it?

To answer specific questions, either individually or in a group - creating a drawing can allow people to represent a specific issue/concern.

Developing storyboards - putting ideas together in the form of a story.

Benefits

- Cheap - can be used when only basic materials of pen, pencil and paper are available.
- Allows individual expression of ideas, concerns, opinions.
- Group drawing, for example through storyboards, fosters discussion.

Limitations

- Representing ideas through drawings is not always as easy as it sounds. You must give very clear and easy guidance at the beginning.
- Interpretation of drawings is very open and free and its relevance to the project's objectives is open to you and the participant's interpretation.
- Participants may be astonished and not really sure of the objectives and the outputs of such an activity.
- People may soon be discouraged if the expected outputs are too high.

STORYBOARDING

Storyboarding consists of drawing a scheme for the different scenes we want to include in a participatory video or in a photostory. Storyboarding plays a very important role in putting together ideas about the topics to be investigated, how they will be captured (whether to use drawings, photos and/or film) and what locations and people will be involved. The format of the storyboard (sequential boxes) lends itself to developing a story over time that people can draw, put in queries and comments and write notes over time.

Storyboards can then be used as the guide for filming, photographing and editing. However, you do not need to stick strictly to the story. It is adaptable and you can change, add or delete different



aspects of the storyboard as you start filming/photographing and encountering new situations - this is all part of the action learning process. To note that it is always possible to go back to the sketches made during the storyboarding and photograph/skan/video one or more sketches for later incorporation into the videos or photostories.

FILMING & PHOTOGRAPHING

In PV and PP, filming and photographing is the way in which information is collected. Some filming/photographing may involve interviewing people and/or recording a group discussion. It can also be used to illustrate the theme of discussion by, for example, directly filming aspects of this theme, and/or engaging individuals in a role-playing activity i.e. acting.



Tips for filming and photographing

- Take time to get to know your camera/video camera and the basic functions. Read the instruction manual if necessary. Use it as much as possible, even for personal use, so you get used to it.
- Make sure all the equipment is ready to use before the first PP or PV activity. You should insert the battery and memory card (and make sure batteries are charged).
- When opening the camera to put in the memory card or battery, dust, water, sand, etc., could get in and damage it. So try and do this indoors, or by protecting the camera.
- Keep memory cards dry, out of direct sunlight and away from extreme heat and cold so they don't get damaged.
- To keep things simple, keep the camera/video camera set on 'Automatic' mode for the activities, don't use the manual settings.
- When outdoors, wind can distort the sound. So try to protect the microphone - sometimes some sponge wrapped around the head of the microphone can be effective.
- Tell participants never to film a scene or subject for less than ten seconds, as it will be too short to use at the editing stage.
- Most people new to filming will zoom in and out and pan across a scene. If necessary, let participants make this mistake once: when they view the result, they will realise for themselves how shaky the footage/picture is. Make the point of **NO ZOOMING OR PANNING**. Teach people to stop shooting/recording, find their new scene, then start recording/shooting again.
- If there is a very bright background (like the sky through a window), even when the subject is lit up, they may appear very dark (under-exposed). The cameraperson is responsible for the shot and must move or ask the subject to move so that the light is shining on their face rather than from behind them.
- When someone points to something or talks about something (object or place) during the interview, the cameraperson should wait until the end and then film it. Don't follow the direction of the pointing initially.
- When filming interviews try to keep them as short as possible: it will be easier to edit them and they will be more comprehensible for the audience (and very long interviews can be boring and hard to follow). Instead of making one long interview make two smaller ones.
- Sometimes it can be useful to film the same interview twice in two different settings (indoor and outdoor) for example: in case one turns out to have bad sound or light the other one can be used or parts of the two interviews can be mixed to make up a good one.
- Show participants the different kinds of shots they could use (see Appendices p.79-80).
- Make sure the participants film some general shots and take some general photos of the village to illustrate or provide context, including more light-hearted scenes or cultural activities (e.g. local musicians, songs, dance, daily activity). This helps to lighten the tone and maintain viewer interest. They can also act as cut-aways in the editing. Similarly, it is useful to capture ambient sounds for editing.
- Label the memory cards so it is easier to log details of clips and photos.
- When the memory card is finished, lock the files (see technical instructions for your camera).
- It is vital to keep a good storage system of clips, photos and sounds on the computer. Set up a filing structure and make sure the whole team is aware of the structure.
- Data filed on the computer should be burned onto a CD or DVD at least once a week to ensure that copies are made in case of loss/damage.

EDITING

Editing normally takes place in two stages. The first involves a paper edit, where all video clips/photos are viewed and descriptive notes are made on individual pieces of paper which are then physically arranged in the order of the final story. This allows participants to discuss how they would like the different video/photo material to be represented and the story to be told. This can engender significant discussion and allow participants to think about extra features, such as narration, music, that could be added to enhance the message. The final paper edit can then be used as a template for the computer edit of the video/photo material into a final film or photostory. Editing of the video material into a film or the photographs into a photostory involves a significant element of evaluation.

The first stage of editing is organizing the video footage and photographs. It is very important to keep track of what you have filmed or photographed on every memory card. Include the length of time for each video clip. A sample logging schedule includes: clip/image n°, length of time, description, location, keywords, quality/remarks. Logging of video and photographic material should be done on a regular basis, at least once a week.

As the video/photographs are collected and logged, you can start making lists, dividing your footage/images into different categories, selecting footage/images that have been chosen through community screenings, and other material that is important for the final film/photostory. Things to consider:

- Main themes or storyboards filmed - these form the framework of your film. Think about: a) What kind of film/photostory are you making? b) Who are the different audiences? There may be multiple audiences served by the same film.
- Key events: interviews, mapping exercises, etc.
- Any nice shots, or music or general scenes and possible cut-aways (e.g. animals walking past, children playing, etc.).



- Any shots of people filming or using a camera. If there is no second video camera then perhaps you could take photos and scan them into the computer for including in editing. A digital camera will make this even easier.

Once you have a list of video footage and/or images, you can do a paper edit. A paper edit for PV involves making a timeline for your film where the video shots/images are on the right, and the audio, including music and narration if necessary, to go along side divided off to the right. The time line runs from top to bottom. Using sticky notes or small pieces of paper, each video clip, image, audio is laid down at the point in which they should appear in the film. The original storyboard could be used as a guide at this point. The paper edit allows people to discuss how they would like the different video material to be represented and the story will be told.

A paper edit for photos involves disposing yellow sticky notes in the place where photos should appear in the photo-story. The order on the sticky notes respects therefore the chronological order of the story, and under each picture the narration, if necessary, is included. Just as with video editing, the original storyboard could be used as a guide, with people discussing how they would like photos to be shown and the story to be told.

Once the paper edit has been agreed, it's off to the computer to do the actual editing on software to make the final film or photostory.

There are many different kinds of software

How to find and share community-owned solutions | A Handbook

SCREENING & SHARING

Screenings of the video material and sharing the photographs is a critical step in the visual methods process. It allows people to see the material collected and give consent for it to be used. Once video footage and photos are edited into a film or photostory, screenings allow participants the opportunity to critique the narrative, suggest what to exclude, and what is missing. It is a form of sharing knowledge and views and can stimulate much discussion (which can also be fed into another cycle of filming and editing, and eventually production of the final film/photostory).

For in-depth information on Participatory Photography (PP) and Participatory Video (PV), we recommend the following excellent sources:

Insightshare is an organisation that specialises in PV. Their website, www.insightshare.org, has a wealth of information, including their PV Handbook. <http://www.photovoice.org/>

Most video screenings can use the low-tech options if a projector is not available:



- Simply plug in small active speakers to the video camera through the headphones socket. Speakers must have their own power source; therefore batteries are needed (those without batteries do not actually amplify the sound and will not be loud enough). The camera flip-out screen can be used to show the footage to groups of up to ten people. This set up is okay for showing back footage

immediately to the group who have just shot it, but is not usually sufficient for larger community screenings.

- Use a laptop computer to screen the material. This can either be done by plugging the video camera directly to the laptop and showing the footage from the camera or downloading the video clips onto the laptop and screening them from there.

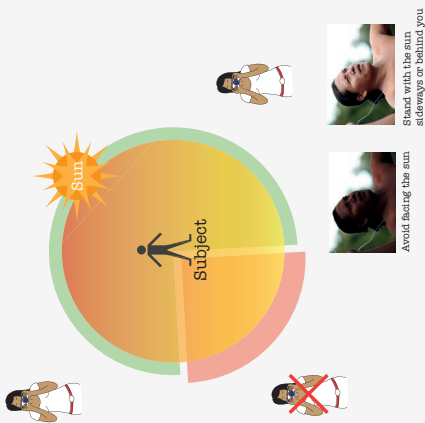
Most sharing of photographs can use the low-tech options as well:

- The digital camera screen can be used to show the photographs to groups of up to eight/ten people. This allows pictures to be shown to the group right after having shot them, but is not usually sufficient for larger community sharing of pictures.
- Use a laptop computer to show the material. This can be done by downloading the images on the laptop, either by inserting the memory card directly in the computer or using a USB cable to connect the camera with the laptop.
- A third option is printing the images (on regular paper or on proper photographic paper). This option requires printers to be available in the field or the possibility to take a trip to a place where photos can be printed. Using printed images can be very useful: images can be hung on walls, or scattered on a table or on the floor, people can touch them, confront them more easily, and keep them afterwards.

5 TIPS FOR A BETTER PHOTOGRAPH

1 Watch the light!

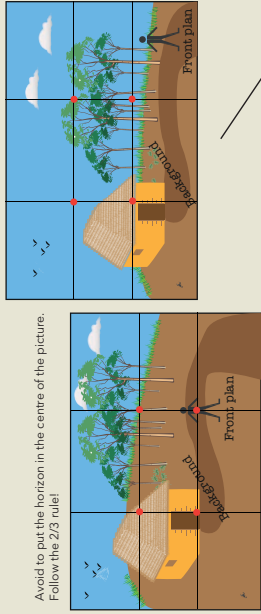
Do not face the sun!
Mornings and sunsets are the best



2

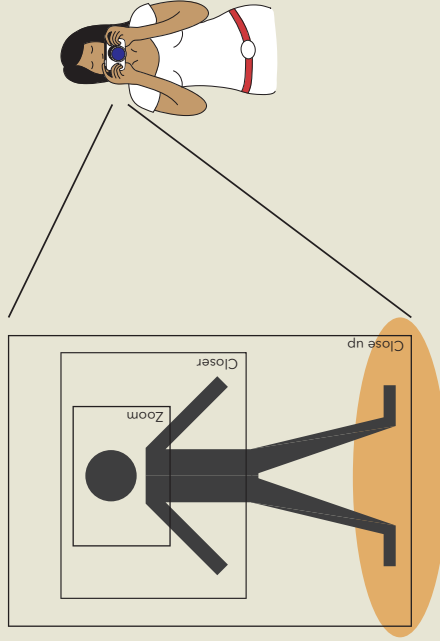
Analyse the scene

There is more than the subject.
Consider the background too!



Close ups are good too!

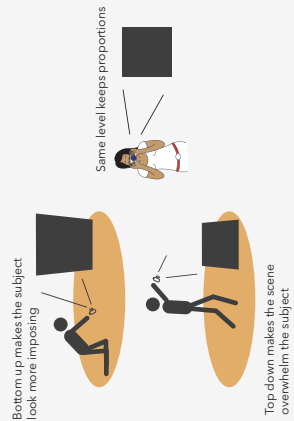
Get as close as possible to your subject.



4

Angle matters

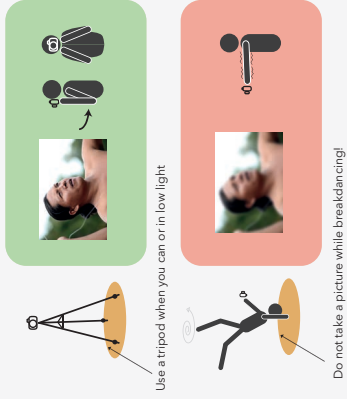
Think about the meaning
you want to give to your subject



3

Don't shake!

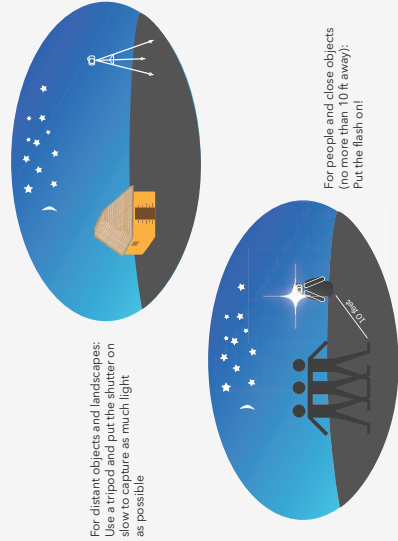
Hold your breath and keep your elbows tight when you press the button



5

In the dark...

This is where it gets more challenging!



5 TIPS FOR A BETTER VIDEO

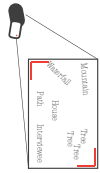
1

Team up!

Find your role, organise your team



Scene Director
Organises the scene, leads the interviews, directs the shooting



Visual Assistant
Takes care of all the visual elements of the scene, from the bottom left corner to the top right corner



Camerasman/Sound Engineer
Shoots the scene, manages the sound prior and after shooting the scene

2

Sound is king

Shooting in plain nature is not for rookies



Make sure the microphone is plugged in

Ensure everyone (and everything) is silent before you record

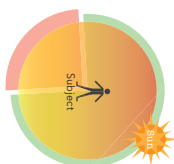
Check the sound with the earphones

Before moving on to another scene, listen again to the video! Shoot again if needed!

3

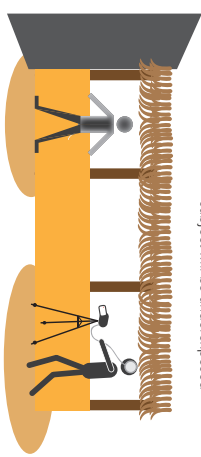
Watch the light

If the light outside is too strong, your subject will be underexposed



Avoid shooting towards the sun

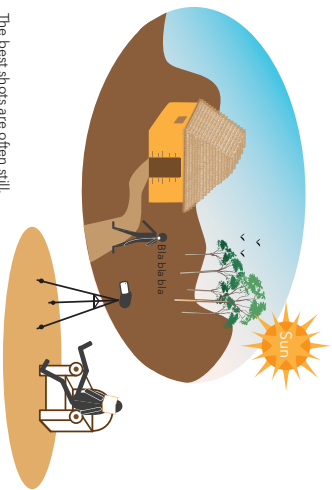
Inside (or in a beraib) don't shoot towards bright windows or openings else your subject will be underexposed



4

Stand still!

It is not because you shoot a video that you should absolutely move!



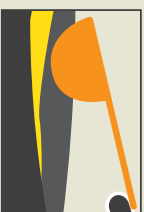
The best shots are often still. Let the camera capture the movements of the scene, don't force it yourself!

5

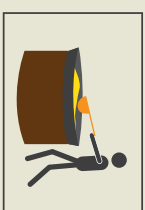
Zoom in, zoom out

You can tell a lot with zooms

Focus on the action first and then zoom out on the scene



or...

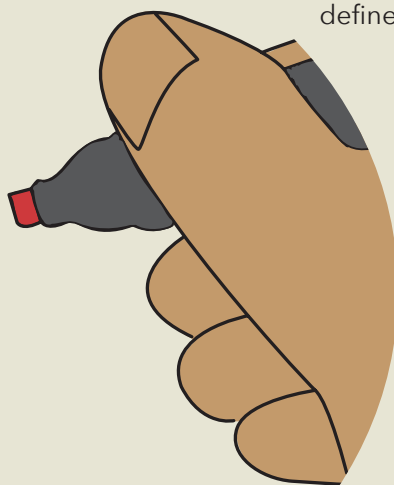


A good zoom should be very slow and a tripod should be used to avoid trembling at maximum zoom!

Focus on the whole scene before the action



APPENDIX 7. TIPS FOR RATING DIFFERENT CRITERIA



detailed. Rating from 0 - 4 or 0 - 6 is probably a more manageable range and has a clearly defined "middle".

Rating with shades of colour

You can ask participants to rate with shades of colours. For example, you could pick shades going from pale yellow to dark red. Pale yellow could be associated with "completely disagree", orange to "a bit of both" and dark red to "completely agree", for example.

Rating with stones, beans, coins ...

Ask the participants to give a lot of stones to the things they strongly agree with, no stones at all to the things they completely disagree with and a few beans for the things they feel are "a bit of both". Give the same exact amount of stones to the group(s) to make the rating comparable.

Many questions cannot be answered by a straight 'yes' or 'no'. To answer questions, room must often be left for different shades of grey, as sometimes people partially agree, are not sure, disapprove but are not opposed to it, agree but have some reservations, etc. This is why, in this Handbook, tips on how to rate things are provided, as rating activities are suggested to be carried out. These are just suggestions. It is up to you to find a rating method that will work with the participants.

Rating from 0 to 1 / 0 to 10 / 0 to 6, etc.

You can ask participants to rate on a scale from 0 to 1 or 0 to 10, 0 being "completely disagree", 10 being "fully and entirely agree", 5 being "a bit of both". Numbers 1 to 4 are different levels of disagreement, numbers 6 to 9 are different levels of agreement. You can use any range of numbers, **the most important thing being that ratings mean the same from one group to the other.** If not, it makes it difficult to compare the outcomes of the rating exercise between the groups. For instance, make sure that 0, 5 and 10 all have the same meaning for the different groups.

Note that rating from 0 to 10 can be too

Drawing faces

Ask the participants to draw a very happy face for the things they completely agree with, a very sad face for the things they completely disagree with and a neutral face for "a bit of both", with all different levels of smiles in between.



Divide in different piles

Ask participants to divide the different elements they need to rate in different piles. You could have at least 3 piles, one for "completely agree", one for "completely disagree", and one for "a bit of both".

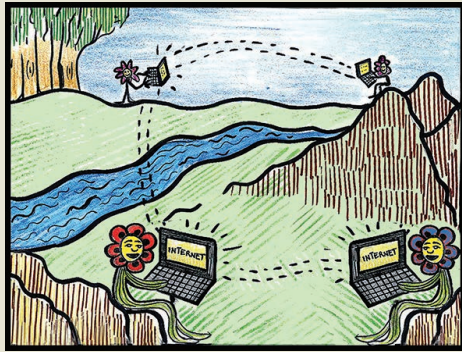
Voting

Going through each element that needs to be rated or ranked, you can ask participants to vote for their favourite elements.

APPENDIX 8. EXAMPLE OF COBRA'S COMMUNITY SOLUTION TABLE INCLUDING SOME CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE TOP BEST PRACTICES

Survival strategies	Community owned solutions (Activity 4)	Indicator (Activity 5)	Threshold (Act. 5)	Status (Act. 5)	Indicator score (Act. 7)	Solution score (average of the indicator scores (Activity 7))	Does it lead towards a good future? (Rank 3 to 1 (Activity 7))	Is it easy to document in video and photostory (in 6 months) (Rank 3 to 1 (Activity 7))	Are there champions (Rank 3 to 1 (Activity 7))	Final score (Activity 7)
Resistance	Farm demonstration plot	Traditional knowledge of teachers, parents and representatives of how to make a farm	60%	80%	3	2.3	3	3	3	11.3
		Pledging of the parents, representatives, teachers and students	50%	100%	3					
		Accessibility to farm	1 hour	4 hours	1					
	Fire management	Adult population that has the knowledge to manage fire	80%	75%	2	2	3	2	3	10
		Youth population that has the knowledge to manage fire	30%	10%	1					
Flexibility	Tourism cooperative	capacity and knowledge of the members of the cooperative	50%	80%	3	2.75	3	3	3	11.75
		Capacity of providing services to tourists	50%	60%	2					
		Income and benefits to the community	Little	More or less	3					
		Promotion of cooperative activities	Little	More or less	3					
	Vegetable gardens in the community	Knowledge of the production system of vegetable growing in adults, teachers and students	60%	70%	2	2	2	2	3	9
		Local demand from restaurants, students and teachers	55%	60%	2					

APPENDIX 9. PICTURES ILLUSTRATING SYSTEM SURVIVAL STRATEGIES



Adaptability



Coexistence



Ideal performance



Resistance



Flexibility



Existence

APPENDIX 10. KEY LESSONS LEARNT

During Project COBRA the handbook concepts and techniques were tested with six communities from the six different countries of the Guiana Shield. The period of engagement, the size, capacity and context of the community, the numbers and skills of the facilitators and the location of community engagement was varied to determine the key characteristics of successful engagement. A comprehensive analysis and evaluation of the engagement across the six communities was undertaken to improve the handbook and to determine the key lessons for future engagement. The key lessons learnt are described below.

1. Ideal **composition** of team delivering the training:
 - At least two community facilitators for peer-to-peer learning - trained community facilitators, ideally with similar cultural backgrounds as the communities to be engaged, provided the most effective means of transferring concepts and techniques to the new communities and it worked best when there was both a man and a woman;
 - At least one local or national CSO individual supporting the engagement - the CSO should have extensive experience of engagement with the local community and local logistics and inter-cultural practices in order to maximise the smooth running of the training;
 - At least **two practitioners** with in-depth knowledge of concepts and techniques - ideally at least one with extensive experience of community engagement and one in charge of translations if necessary.
2. **Direct communication in the same language** - where facilitators and participants shared the same language the transfer of concepts and techniques was most successful. If this is not possible then have a translator who can effectively translate the content of the activities and concepts. It is also important that all guidebooks, software etc. are at least in the national language within which the community is situated. One cannot assume that people will be familiar with the English language.
3. Mixed group of community participants with **young people and elders, men and women** - our experience demonstrated that a mixed group was more effective at both understanding the concepts and techniques and sharing them among the wider community. Elders often had the trust and respect of community members, while youth would more readily be able to engage with the technology. Mixed gender and age groups would be able to engage sections of the community which would otherwise not feel at ease in participating e.g. if a man tried to approach women participants.
4. **ICT skills of community participants** - ideally at least two community participants should be familiar with ICT ahead of the engagement. If this is not possible then additional training trips are required.
5. **Team continuity** - ideally the community participant team engaged in the first visit should continue for the full engagement process. However, this is not always possible due to personal commitments but it should be encouraged and emphasised at the start of the engagement.
6. Minimum of **three visits over six months** - for effective community engagement and the transfer of concepts and techniques this is the minimum level of engagement but ideally four or five trips should be undertaken. It should be noted that some success can occur with fewer trips, especially if all the other criteria above are met, but it should be recognised that the chances of a successful engagement will be increased with more visits.
7. **Engagement should take place in the community** - techniques and concepts can be more rapidly related to the community

context if engagement occurs within the community rather than at another location. In some cases, however, training may need to take place elsewhere due to logistics permissions, and/or facilities. If this is the case, mechanisms for keeping in touch with participants should be prioritised.

8. **Power supply and infrastructure** - if communities have a reliable power supply and appropriate meeting areas then the engagement is likely to be more successful as the engagement is highly dependent on the use of visual communication technologies (e.g. video cameras and projectors) and editing tools (e.g. computers).
9. **Wider community engagement** - full community involvement in choosing the best practice, active support from the community leaders, the use of champions to demonstrate the best practice, good communication from the community participants with the wider community and the regular holding of community events to promote the engagement are all supporting factors in providing effective engagement with the wider community.

If, as a result of particular circumstances, the conditions within the community do not meet all of the ideal characteristics outlined above, then it is important that more energy is invested in making sure that the other factors are supported in order to maximise the chances of successful community engagement.

GLOSSARY

Champion: a person who can represent a best practice, who can execute it, who knows all about it and believes in it, and who is very willing to share her/his knowledge with other people.

Community: a clearly identified group of individuals that identify themselves as a community as they are brought together by a similar geographical location/ethnicity/belief or any socio-ecological aspect that gives them a sense of belonging to the same group and sharing of similar issues.

Civil Society Organisations (CSO): Civil Society Organisations are organisations that are set up by groups to help support certain aims or goals of a community or society.

Facilitator: someone who is able to coordinate the activities of a group of people during events such as workshops. A facilitator does not usually contribute their own ideas to proceedings, but instead helps all group members to equally participate.

Focus group: this is when a diverse group of people is brought together to participate in a guided discussion about a particular issue so that their opinions can be shared and recorded.

Indicator: an aspect of a situation which can be used to measure specific characteristics which can then be used to inform people's decisions.

Informal discussion: an exchange of information and opinions between people without a predefined set of questions to answer.

Interview: an interview usually involves two parties where one or more individuals have a set of predefined questions for which answers are sought from

Participatory techniques: ways of doing things which involves a group of individuals all equally contributing at the same level without a hierarchy.

Photographic camera: a device used for capturing a fixed picture of something, someone or a situation. All photographic cameras nowadays are 'digital', which means that one will need a computer to download, share and print the photographs.

Community practitioner: a person, either internal or external from a community, who works with communities at the local level in order to solve community issues.

Community participants: group of people who is going through Activities 2 to 6 in this Handbook. They are called community participants because they are directly engaging in the use of participatory visual methods, and to form an understanding of community solutions. This group can be a group of few individual, up to a whole community if logistics allow it.

Consent form: a letter which requires the approval, usually through a signature, of individuals is the information collected from these individuals is to be used by those collecting the information

Criteria: a number of descriptions which can be used to define a certain task.

Environment: everything that surrounds an individual and/or a community, including physical things such as forests and rivers, and social things such as institutions.

Video camera: a device used for capturing moving images of something, someone or a situation. All video cameras nowadays are 'digital', which means that one will need a computer to download, share and print the photograph.

Workshop: this is when a diverse group of people is brought together to learn, interact, and /or exchange information through the guidance of one or more facilitators.

Threshold: the point at which a situation goes from being acceptable to being unacceptable.

MESSAGE FROM THE AUTHORS

“We hope that through using this handbook your work with communities is enriched and the communities you interact with are empowered to recognise and practice their own community owned solutions. We have found that using participatory video and photography is a great way to promote interaction and engagement among people. It is not always easy at the beginning, as people sometimes are shy or afraid of new things, but after a while you’ll see that things will start to work and through the very process of investigating and capturing best practices, community members rightly feel a sense of pride and empowerment.

The key aspect of this approach is community to community communication of best practices, through films and photostories, allowing communities to adopt practices that have a greater chance of success now and in the future as the practices are already working for communities and are implemented by communities themselves without any external support. Please encourage communities to add their best practices to the database of films and photostories on the Project COBRA website (www.projectcobra.org) to help share experiences more widely. The advantage of hosting the films and photostories on the Project COBRA website is that communities will have ongoing control over the films and photostories as the website is not part of a profit-making enterprise. Communities will be able to add, update or remove material whenever they wish. Through the ‘Creative Commons’ licence, Project COBRA will never sell the material because Project COBRA is at the service of communities in order to promote their

long-term survival in the face of current and future challenges.

We also hope that the approach of supporting communities to develop and implement their own solutions will be adopted by funders and policy makers so please encourage and support the communities you work with to help influence their future by reaching out to decision makers with the films and photostories they make.

Our work in developing this handbook has been incredibly rewarding and an important personal and professional experience for us all. We’d like to thank the community participants and communities we have worked with for the warmth and enthusiasm they have shown us and for sharing with us their community owned solutions that are lessons to us all of how to live equitably and sustainably with your environment.”

Andrea Berardi

Elisa Bignante

Jay Mistry

Matthew Simpson

Céline Tschirhart

Caspar Verwer

Géraud de Ville

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMUNITY RESEARCHERS

Helping to develop the approach documented in the COBRA handbook was a challenge. Documenting that process and then trying to train others how to use the approach to identify their own solutions proved to be even more interesting. For many of us this kind of work was new and our capacities were built in many ways. We have a bias in promoting the use of this handbook as it is the culmination of three years of hard work. The final phase of completing this handbook included traveling to five different countries, attempting to communicate in more than eight different languages and teaching the use of new technologies in an attempt to refine the exercises and make them more user-friendly. We think we have succeeded.

"I believe that the use of COBRA practitioner's handbook has become easier for any individual or community to follow, after we have used and experimented with delivering the materials from the various drafts in the Guiana Shield communities. It particularly helped in simplifying the language, making it perfect for community use."

Ryan Benjamin

"Working on participatory videos was one of my dreams. It is an effective way of communicating information to others and the steps highlighted in the handbook makes it easy for someone to learn how to use camera equipment and engage others in sharing and putting ideas together. Working with the handbook was helpful while in the communities and I am confident that the handbook is an important tool to have for helping communities."

Rebecca Xavier

"I believe that the handbook is an excellent tool for researchers; non-governmental agencies etc. to use as a guide when they are having workshops in local communities as it has many examples for ice breaker activities and suggestions on how to lead the discussion for certain topics."

Bernie Robertson

"This is a very good tool to use to carry out any kind of work with communities and it is set out very simple. I found it very useful during the training sessions with our community partners and helped me build my presentation skills, as demonstrated by some of the exercises. One thing I have noted with this handbook is that it presents many activities to keep your workshops lively and energized. This way people can be very open to sharing and learning at the same time."

Grace Albert

"The handbook contributes in the building of capacities at different levels. It can be looked at as a companion to guide you on the what, how and when to do things; depending on the setting of the exercise or your participants or audience. As the handbook changed overtime it has become simpler to understand, I strongly feel that it can be a very useful tool for any community practitioner who is willing and keen in teaching fellow members and communities and other organizations and agencies. The manual presents a lot of activities/ exercises which are participatory and the approaches of using visual methods are the key aspects within the handbook that makes it easy to work along with and easy to use. I wish to see the manual reach many groups to teach and build on the approach documented herein to help communities find the solutions to their challenges."

Lakeram Haynes


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COMMUNITIES WE HAVE WORKED WITH IN DEVELOPING THIS HANDBOOK

- Antecume Pata, French Guiana
- Apoteri, Guyana
- Fair View, Guyana
- Katoonarib, Guyana
- Kavanayén, Venezuela
- Kwamalasamutu, Suriname
- Laguna Colorada, Colombia
- Maturuca, Brazil
- Rupertee, Guyana
- Tumucumaque, Brazil



"The COBRA handbook could play a very meaningful role in helping the community leaders and people to find solutions to their issues of everyday management in developing their communities. It opens the opportunity for you to see yourself from your own eyes and how you could make your own assessments and adjustments to your planning strategies."

Sydney Allicock, Member of Parliament, Guyana

"The handbook presents a lot of activities/exercises which are participatory and the approaches of using visual methods are the key aspects that makes it easy to use. I wish to see this manual reach many groups to teach and build on the approach documented herein and help communities find their own solutions to the challenges they face."

Lakeram Haynes, Project Manager

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