INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS, MANAGEMENT AND ALLIED SCIENCES (IJBMAS)
A Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
www.ijbmas.in
ISSN: 2349-4638
Vol.5. Issue.S2.2018 (Nov)

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH TOOLS FOR PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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Abstract
Voluntary Organizations/ NGOs/ to identify the problems and needs of the poor and needy in the community. The major objectives of the Participatory community assessment is to effectively plan, implement and evaluate the community problems and needs, to document service coverage and gaps in service delivery and to advocate for policy change. Prepare a plan of action that will promote understanding among interested stakeholders, including Government Departments, non-governmental organizations, community structures/ groups, religious bodies, etc.
There are many participatory research tools are available. But this article discusses about the following research tools i.e. Transit Walk; Community Mapping; Body mapping; Trend diagrams; Lifelines; Seasonality diagrams; Daily activity chart; Venn diagrams; Interventions map; Causes and effects chart; SWOT Analysis; Family tree; Voting and ranking and Focus Group Discussion.
The major uses of PCA are visual tools useful in illiterate group also, strong communication; powerful people are heard and addressed; Increased community involvement; Increases the effectiveness of the program in the community; Qualitative information; Increasing utilization of resources; Community resource mobilization; Community understand the needs and problems; Community responsibility increases. The major Barriers in PCA is 'Experts 'are very less, Gatekeepers in the community, 'Time Management'!, More expenditure, Literacy among participants.
The participatory community assessment is an important activity for the researchers and they know the problems and needs of the community in the participatory way. All the people actively involve and share about their experiences for their better future. Based the findings the researcher should bring the new interventions to come over the present issues. It is one of the tools in social science research but many researchers have not focused on the participatory methods due to less time and money. These tools provide the appropriate information about the issues and problems of the community. The research should have to focus on the participatory research methods to do the studies at the same time educate the communities on their own needs and problems.

Introduction

An assessment is a specific way to identify problems, needs, and strengths in a community to make decisions, set priorities, set objectives, and explore ways to take action. Participatory Community Assessment is a method of assessment used by the voluntary organizations/ NGOs to identify the problems and needs of the poor and needy in the community. It is a process of building partnerships with the stakeholders by promoting meaningful participation to identify the problems, needs and solutions. It is a vital opportunity to bring together key participants, stakeholders for their active participation helps to feel ownership and commitment. Thereby identify their community problems and also the solutions by their collective action. It enables to see the reality in the lives.

The major objectives of the Participatory community assessment is to effectively plan, implement and evaluate the community problems and needs, to document service coverage and gaps in service delivery and to advocate for policy change. To prepare a plan of action that will promote understanding among interested stakeholders, including Government Departments, non-governmental organizations, community structures/ groups, religious bodies, etc.,

According to a United Nations report (1979) participation refers to sharing by people in the benefits of Development, active contribution by people to development and involvement of people in decision making all levels of society'. Participatory community Assessment is an alternative approach to research. It is principle of the ordinary people is capable of critical reflection and analysis and their knowledge is both essential and valuable in any research. The assessment depends up on the collective investigation of problems and issues with the active participation of the community. Collective analysis in which the community develops a better understanding not only of the problems and collective action by the community to solve the identified problems. The participatory community assessment believes that the local people are experts than the researchers who came from outside.

Importance of Participatory Community Assessment

It is intended to enable local communities to conduct their own analysis and to plan and take action (Chambers R. 1992). It involves development researcher learning together with villagers about the village. The aim of PCA is to help to

strengthen the capacity of villagers to plan, make decisions, and to take action towards improving their own situation to also helps to sustainable development, reduce the pilferage's, self learning's, mutual accountability.

Communities can develop own capacity to deal with their problems, Self imposed changes have permanence as compared to those imposed from outside, develops self reliance, self confidence, competence and managerial ability and finally it enables people to discover their strengths, increase their aspiration levels, mobilize and channelise their resources for productive purpose

Principles of Participation

1. Go to the people
2. Live with them
3. Learn from them
4. Serve them
5. Love them
6. Plan with them
7. Start with them what they know
8. Build on what they have

Process of PCA

The investigator meets with the village administration, and key villagers to discuss the objectives, expected outcome, processes, and requirements in conducting joint PCA in the village. The team also explains how the PCA results can be used in planning, implementing, and managing initial village development activities in the village. The researchers discusses with the village administration and key communicators the criteria for organizing a PCA composite team made up of staff, and key villagers including women. The roles of the villagers (lead the PCA process) and researcher (provide technical assistance and facilitates the PCA process) are discussed and agreed upon.

The researcher or the organization has prepared a topic to have a discussion with the community. The community key personals involve in this discussion and find out the practical community-driven interventions are most successful when the community has a central role in identifying issues and defining interventions. Participatory community assessments stress the identification and nurturing of community assets that will support positive health changes. They are focused on strengths and resources, and needs. Community Assessment promotes realistic, effective, and feasible interventions to protect and improve the well-being of the children and families who bear the greatest impact Social problems. An Assessment includes the development of sound recommendations to promote shared understanding among interested parties, which could include government ministries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international aid organizations, religious bodies, the public and private sectors, and community groups. All have a stake and play a role in addressing and responding to the needs of children and families destabilized by social problems.

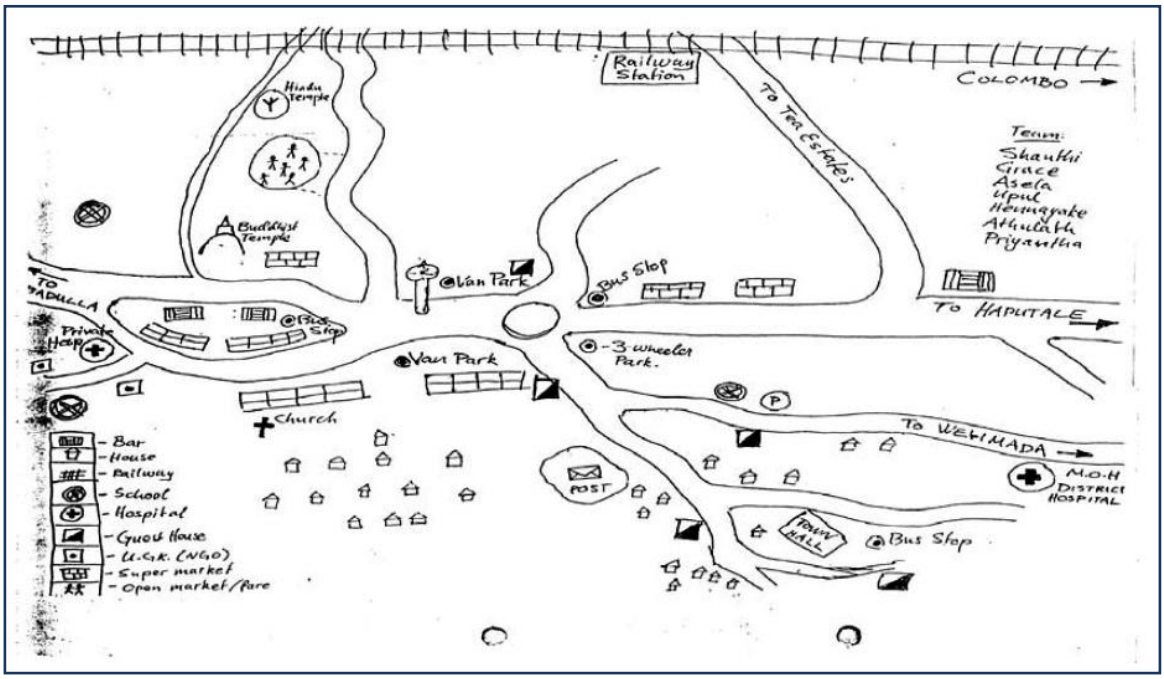
The major Participatory Research Tools discussed are

1. Transit Walk
2. Community Mapping
3. Body mapping
4. Trend diagrams
5. Lifelines
6. Seasonality diagrams
7. Daily activity chart
8. Venn diagrams
9. Why Is It So?'
10. Interventions map
11. Interviews
12. Focus Group Discussion

Transact walk is a participatory research tool, it means walk through a community or local area to identify different places, people and activities in the community. When we conduct a study, if the entire team member walks around the village or community, automatically we can find out the available resources and gaps in a particular village. Transact walk are useful to identify what people do and where they do it. Provide people with first-hand knowledge of an area and key locations. Observe how people interact with each other. Find different places in the villages. Observe the environment for example sanitary conditions, availability of goods. Identify the different people in the community or location can be found for example street children, daily labour, community leaders or key organizations. Meet and talk with people in the community or location.

After transact walk we have to draw a social map of the particular place. So that we identify the community needs of the particular place.

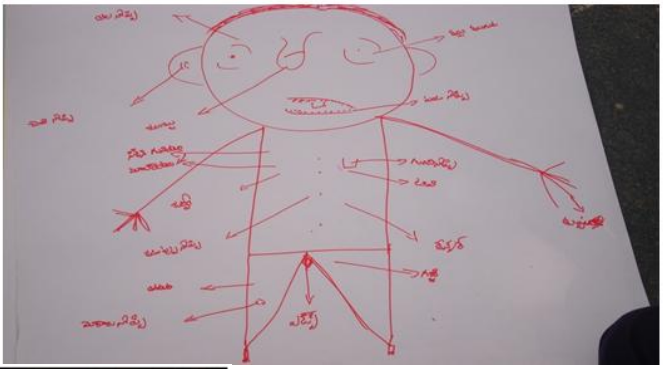
Community mapping is a visual method of showing the relative location of households and the distribution of different types of people (such as male, female, adult, child, landed, landless, literate, and illiterate) together with the social structure and institutions of an area involves in drawing a map of their community and marking on important features, for example religious institutions, markets, schools and health centers. The investigator facilitates the discussion when they drawing their own village map. The basic use of this map is all the community members will see the design of their village/ community, identify the existing services and gaps in their community. Highlight the different views of a community and their desires towards development the community. This exercise throws a light on their community needs.

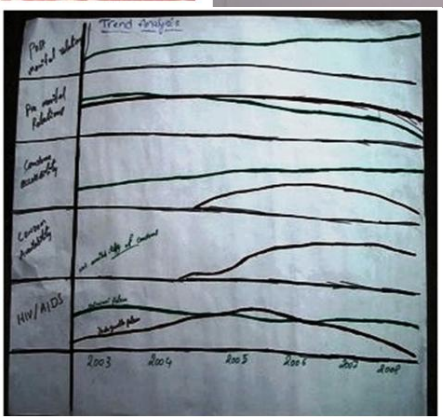


Body mapping involves community members drawing a "map" of a human body and marking on the body parts. Then they identify the health problems in that body map. Finally the investigator identifies the major health problems occurring in the community.

This tool is helpful to identify the health problems of that community. The communities members are also understand how their bodies work, especially in relation to sexual activity, reproduction and sexual health. They also identify the biological problems between the men and women through the participatory observation. The above images draw by the women about their health problems in their body.

Trend diagrams are diagrams that show changes or trends in the community. The group of key personals makes a diagram with the major issues and its severity from the previous years. Ex; migration in 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016. The diagram shows the status of decrease or increase of the migration of the particular villages. Based on the intervention the investigator may get the data from the community people. This tool is also useful for the community people they understand the changes of the problems in their villages.

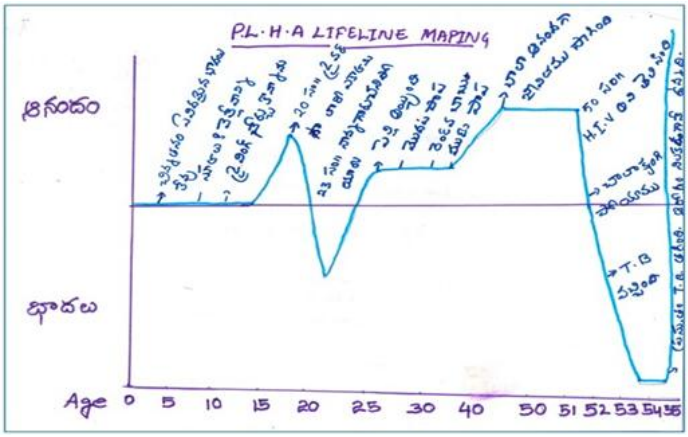




The above diagrams was drawn by the village elders about the changes of their villages from 2003-2008. When the incident is increased that trend will be high and when the incident is decreased the trend will be down. The above graph presents that the HIV/AIDS has been increased in their villages from 2003 to 2008.

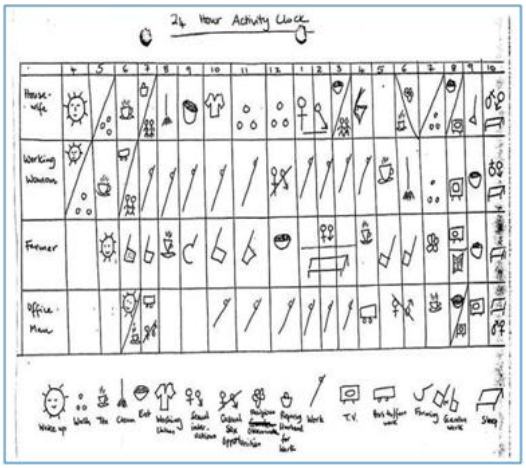
Lifelines: Life line is a participatory activity which collects the information about good and bad things happened in a life of a person. Some people call this as river of life. When we ask the respondents to draw their life line, they will write all the things happened in their life. It can explain the living conditions of those people. Life lines shows major events and experiences in the lives of people that are important to them. It helps the respondents to reflect on their own and other people's experience. The respondents are also understood the changes occurred in their life. The researcher should give the white papers to all the respondents and ask them to write their ages in one side of the white papers. And another side they write happy and sad movements. They based on their age they mention the incidents in their life. It helps them to identify the incidents in their life.

Lifeline is focus on people's feelings and memories and experiences. It is not important to find out absolute truth about the persons lives. Mark positive events above the lifeline. Mark negative events below the lifeline. It helps to look at how people past experiences affect their vulnerability. This activity starts from the age of 5 years to till date. When they get the happiness in their life the lifeline go high and when they get the sorrow in their life the line will come to down. After completing of the drawing they may know how many ups and downs are there in their life. It helps the individuals to know about their self. If there is same problems for many people in the same community the investigator prepare an intervention to reduce the severity of the problem.



The above diagram is the model of the lifeline a participatory research tool. Hear a person write down the sorrows and happiest movements in her life. The above diagram shows that information about a PLHA of Visakhapatnam

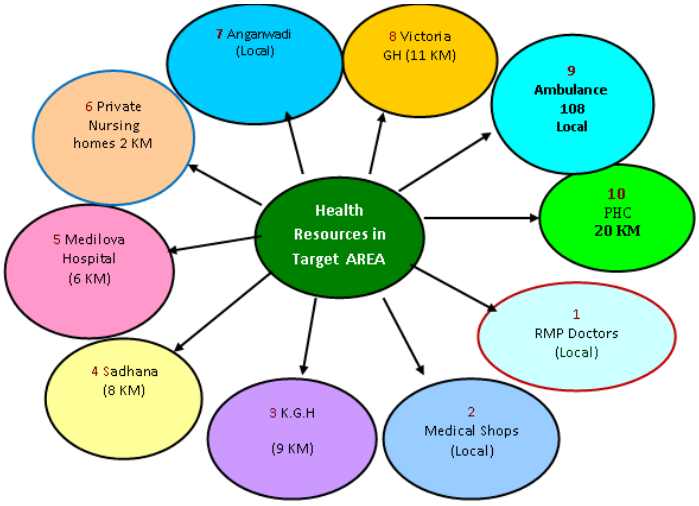
Daily activity chart will be prepared by the respondents with the information of how people spend their time over the course of a day. Time can be shown in hours or parts of the day, for example morning, afternoon or evening. Participants can create daily activity charts for themselves. They can also create them for "typical people" in the community such as a schoolboy, business person or farmer. It may be useful to assess the individual and their activities in a day. If any person in the community is in risk the facilitator may suggest him to correct himself from that vulnerability. This charts shows that work difference between men and women and students.



The above chart presents the information about the daily activities of the daily wage labours.

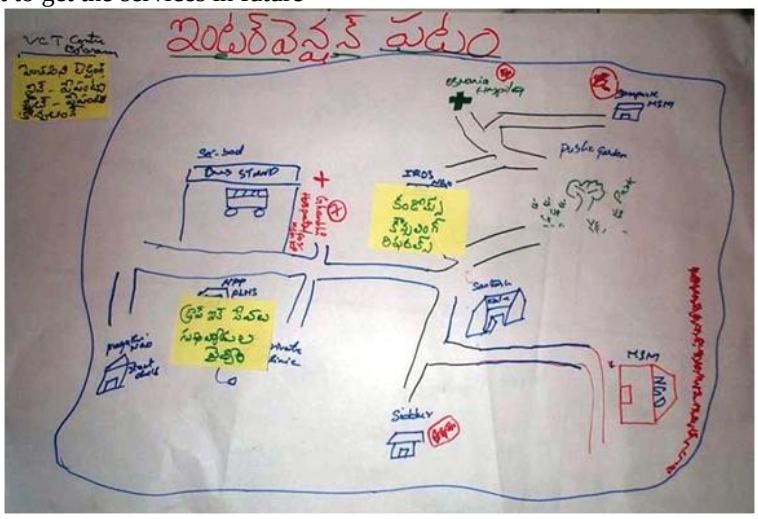
Seasonality diagrams show the changes in community life across the seasons. These might include general changes – for example, the weather or economic opportunities. It also related in what season people get more diseases in their community. What season they have more migration. When children are not attend the schools. It also Identify the links between aspects of community life and issues relating to sexual health and HIV/AIDS; Show how people's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS can vary during the year and be related to other factors in the community. Identify the times of year when community members are available to work on HIV issues, identify what affects sexual behavior and how these issues can be addressed, in terms of HIV prevention.

Venn diagrams use different sizes of circles to represent the relationship between different people, institutions or aspects of community life. Venn diagrams are useful for communities to look at the importance of different people, institutions or services on the lives of community members; and discuss people's views on the community services that relate to health, education, employment and issues of availability and accessibility.



The above Venn-diagram was designed by people living with HIV/AIDS by giving the ranks to the available health care facilities in their village

Interventions Maps. These are the maps drawn by the people in the community with the help of investigator to identify the services providing the by the government and particular NGOs in that village. It helps to identify the available services in the community and nearby places thereby all the stakeholders uses the services available in that community. It also finds out the services in duplicate. The villagers found the gaps of the services in that village and prepare an action plan to meet the NGOs and Government to get the services in future



Interviews. An interview is a conversation between the two people to know about the something from other person. In common parlance, the word "interview" refers to a one-on-one conversation with one person acting in the role of the *interviewer* and the other in the role of the *interviewee*. The interviewer asks questions, the interviewee responds, with participants taking turns talking. Interviews usually involve a transfer of information from interviewee to interviewer, which is usually the primary purpose of the interview, although information transfers can happen in both directions simultaneously.

The major types of the interviews in assessment are personal interviews, structured interviews. The investigator builds rapport with an Interviewee to get the information from that place.

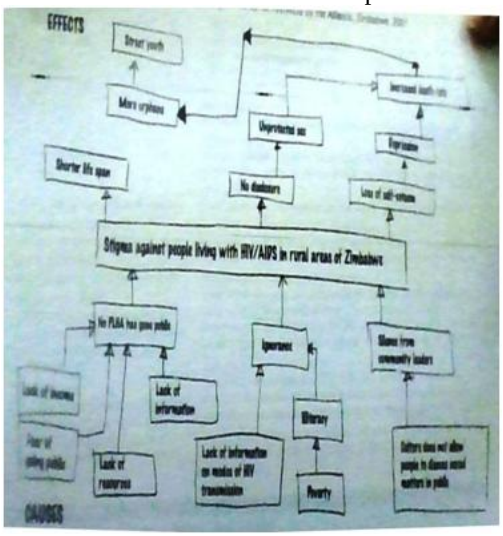
Focus group discussion. A focus group discussion (FGD) is a good tool to gather people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest about their communities.

The group of participants is guided by a facilitator who introduces topics for discussion and helps the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion amongst themselves. There strength of the participants for FGD is not more than 12-15 members. The uses of the FGDs are live discussion among the participants about the problems, needs and issues of their communities.

The majority opinion will be taken as finding. FGD can be useful in providing an insight into different opinions among different parties involved in the change process, thus enabling the process to be managed more smoothly. It is also a good method to employ prior to designing questionnaires.

Causes and effects diagram: This is a participatory research tool to identify the causes and effects of the problem. This tool is rise awareness and concern about the effects of the problem, explore the relationship between the causes and effects of a problem and begin to identify ways to address a problem. During the group discussion select a problem to discuss among the group, then ask them to identify the causes and effects of the particular problem.

Ex: if you can take a tree shape the causes are the roots and the effects are the fruits. It shows the importance where we have to work. It shows that if work on the roots, automatically the fruits will be good. Draw or write each one on the diagram underneath the problem. Then find all the cause of the problem. Then finally we may suggest that these causes should be treated first to solve the problems.



Agree/Disagree

This tool involves participants standing next to different statements relating to a particular problem to show if they agree or disagree with the statements. It may help the researcher to identify whether people have similar or different attitudes and why. Understand the possible consequences of people's different attitudes in relation to the particular problem. The agree/disagree game is particularly useful for exploring attitudes about gender, culture, tradition and values. Before the activity the researcher should identify at least 5 statements to test the attitudes of the respondents. Write three circles in a room i.e. I agree, I Disagree and I don't know. When the researcher asks a question to the respondents will go and stay in particular place. Then you can ask why you have chosen that option. Choose statements about which people will have different opinions. This makes the activity more lively and useful. Welcome disagreement among the participants and allow enough time for everyone to participate fully. Don't move on to the next statement too quickly. It is important not to let your own attitudes influence the activity

Why is it so. This tool helps the participants to discuss about the present conditions, practices and taboos of the village or community. The facilitator ask the participants why is it so?' and ask them to draw and or write the reasons for practicing of the taboos. The facilitator and the respondents always think about 'why is it so', adding further reasons up to the correct reason. The facilitator also shares his experiences regarding the taboo with the participants. If the taboo is unethical the facilitator tries to stop that practice from the villages.

SWOT

SWOT Analysis is an important and useful participatory research tool to know about the one's self and also know about particular information about the NGOs/institutions. SWOT means Sstrengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strength means the ability to deal with difficult situations or to maintain a moral or intellectual are skills, values, support from family and community. Weakness means lack of strength or a character or something that can't resist the individuals knows the requirement but not having that quality. Characteristic skills are called weakness. Opportunity means a chance to set circumstances that makes it possible to do something and changing the weakness as strength. Threat means a statement of intent to inflict pain, injury, damage or the hostile action on someone in retribution for something done or not done. Sometimes it is not in the control of human being hands but they need to understand the threat by self-awareness. When an individual and organizations drawn their SWOT analysis they may understand about the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats. Then they modify the weakness as strengths with support of opportunities. The bellow table presents the information about the major strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats of human beings life.

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats

• Family is supportive • Leadership qualities • Good friends • Observation skills • Compassion and helping nature • Positive thinking • Adjustable nature • Good presentation skills • Patience • Job experience • Computer skills • Communication skills • Coordination skills • Convenience skills • Documentation skills • Team building and Team Work skills • Learning attitude • Mingle with all the people • Cultural programmes • Hard working • No stage fear • Explain my views to others with frankness • I read / work for long hours • Confidence at goal Time Management • Action plan for the month or year • Strong devotional	• **Weakness** • Inability to present work • Less writing skills • Too much adjustable nature • Not having close friends • I will trust everybody • Unable to maintain regular contact with friends and other well-wishers • Responsibilities and economic burdens • Expected more respect from others • Difficult to speak loudly • Documentation skills • Documentation in English • Fluency in English • Health problems • I hesitate to make friendship with new persons • Less commuter skills • Communication skills • Coordination skills • Convenience skills • Coming late to college / office
• **Opportunities** • Getting seat in Andhra University • Library facility • Good friends • Living in town • Increase the interaction levels with Professors and show the interest • Active Participation in class room • Learning attitude • Internet browsing facility • Computer lab facility • Spoken English	• **Threats** • Family problems • Poverty • Family responsibilities are high • Unable to manage time • Age and Marital status • Communication

Family Tree

Family Tree is a one of the important participatory research tool. This tool will be helpful to get the information from the orphan children and destitute women. The respondents draw a tree map. Then they write the father side relatives onside and another side they write the mother side relatives. It helps them to identify the relatives in the society. It is one of the important tools in HIV/AIDS sectors. Because the relatives may not visit the houses of HIV affected families. It is also useful to the general children to remind the relatives when they are in the problems. It may also conduct with the destitute women to know about the family relations of the women.

The above map was drawn by a children affected by

HIV/AIDS while identifying their family members and relatives in the society. This is a brainstorming activity to identify their family members and their relatives. They may contact their relatives when they have a problems

Matrix Scoring (Direct Matrix Ranking)

This tool uses a grid to compare and list things in order to importance. For example, if a community is collecting information about different HIV prevention strategies, this tool can help show the different prevention strategies and the criteria for choosing one prevention strategy over another. Matrix scoring provides a way to score and compare different things against the same criteria. The selection of criteria for scoring is a very important part of this process. Help the participants take enough time to discuss and agree the criteria.

Voting and ranking

It is an important tool in Participatory Research. The researchers prepare questions and ask one by one. The answers might be very good, good, average and bad. Before asking the questions, the researcher simply explains the duties of the respondents. The respondents simply write the number in the place of answer. If their response is very good they write the 1, if the answer is good they write 2, if the answer is average they write 3, if the answer is bad they write 4 and if the answer is very bad they write 5 in a slip and keep that slip in a box which meant for the voting. If their answer is 4 that means it is bad. It is like voting. It has more confidentiality. They simply write the number and keep in a voting box. After that the researcher will collect the slips and analyse the result. It may call ranking. Ex: how is the administration in University? Answers might be very good, good, average, bad, and very bad.

The following is the model questionnaire for conducting the voting and ranking in the participatory research. The simbols may use in the place of bad, average and very good

	Indicator	☹ bad	😐 good	☺ very Good	No of participants
	Physical Health				
	Psychological Health				

Uses of PCA

1. Visual tools useful in illiterate group also
2. Strong communication
3. Less threatening
4. Least powerful people are heard and addressed
5. No personal disclosure
6. Increased community involvement
7. Increases the effectiveness of the program in the community
8. Qualitative information
9. Increasing utilization of resources
10. Builds community capacity and confidence
11. Community resource mobilization
12. Community understand the needs and problems
13. Community responsibility increases
14. It helps stake holders
15. It analyze the problems
16. It finds solutions
17. Motivates people to take initiative to improve their situation
18. Local key population actively involve to address the community needs

Barriers in PCA

1. 'Experts 'are very less
2. Gatekeepers in the community
3. 'Time Management'!
4. Unrealistic goals
5. More expenditure
6. Literacy among participants
7. Experienced persons

Conclusion

The participatory community assessment is an important activity for the researchers and they know the problems and needs of the community in the participatory way. All the people actively involve and share about their experiences for their better future. Based the findings the researcher should bring the new interventions to come over the present issues. It is one of the tools in social science research but many researchers have not focused on the participatory methods due to less time and money. These tools provide the appropriate information about the issues and problems of the community. The research should have to focus on the participatory research methods to do the studies at the same time educate the communities on their own needs and problems.

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