

Method 7: Picturing “Resilience” & “Vulnerability”

Purpose

It became clear during the 1st Round of Fieldwork for the 2002/3 PPA that ordinary people *do* think in terms of “risk/vulnerability” to becoming poor(er).

This activity helps us:

- Identify the circumstances people associate with households’ differential capacity to resist impoverishing shocks/forces

Each Livelihood Team is to conduct this exercise *at least twice* during the 2nd Round of Fieldwork.

Process

Step 1: Assemble ten to twelve participants (roughly equal numbers women and men). While they are still together, explain vulnerability as ‘being at risk of becoming poor(er).’ Afterwards, explain how the exercise will be conducted and what we seek to learn through its several steps.

Step 2: Split the women and men into two gender-desegregated teams. Then, ask both to imagine and draw a household that is relatively *able* to prevent itself from becoming poorer when bad things happen (e.g. when sickness strikes or a harvest is lost). Every element of this ideal household should be drawn around it. Skills, etc. can be symbolically represented.

Provide the group with a double sheet (taped together) of flip-chart paper. Some prompting may be helpful to get the activity started. Thus, the facilitator may ask:

- *Who* should be in the centre of the picture (that is, who is at home)? Ask, “Is there a woman in the picture? Where is she? Is there a man? Where is he? Are there many children, or just a few? How many boys vs. girls?”
- *What is the compound like?* What is the house made of? What other constructions exist? Is there a toilet and, if so, what kind? Is there a granary? What is/where is the household’s water source?

The facilitator should then back out of the activity so that participants are free to discuss issues and create their picture. If everyone is successfully engaged in the activity (i.e. no one is being excluded/muted), then the facilitator may wish to leave the area for ten to fifteen minutes. Regardless, the role of the facilitator and recorder should be confined to listening and asking pointed questions, such as:

- *What productive and reproductive assets are owned by a household that can resist impoverishing shocks & forces?* Does it, for example, own livestock (if so, what kind and approximate numbers), a boat, fishing nets, a bike, a kiln or a car?
- *How does the household make a living?* Are members engaged in diverse livelihoods? Do they receive remittances (i.e. do they have diverse sources of income)?

Step 3: Ask both groups to draw a household that is relatively *unable* to prevent itself from becoming poorer when bad things happen.

This step may seem redundant. However, it is vital because *only through comparing pictures of resilience versus vulnerability can we verify that every element in the first is purposeful* (i.e. people consider it an important factor affecting level of vulnerability).

Step 4: Ask participants to circle the five most important factors that make a household more or less capable of resisting impoverishing shocks/forces.

Step 5: Interview the drawings. Every element of the drawings should be examined. For example, the facilitator should ask if there is a relationship between:

- How the house was drawn (i.e. its material, size and/or location) and vulnerability
- The type of water source and vulnerability, etc...

Additional key questions to ask might include:

- What is the relationship between poverty and vulnerability (i.e. a household's capacity to resist impoverishing shocks/forces)?
- Do most households in the community more closely resemble the "resilient" or "vulnerable" pictures? How so? Is this changing over time? How so? Why?
- What is the relationship between family size and vulnerability?
- What is the relationship between productive assets and vulnerability?
- What is the relationship between social capital and vulnerability?
- Are polygamous households more or less vulnerable to impoverishing shocks/forces?

Step 6: After bringing the women and men back together, summarise each team's key findings – paying special attention to where and why their drawings differed from one another. This step is important because it simultaneously constitutes:

- A final opportunity for "triangulation"
- An opportunity for dialogue between women and men about what makes their households more resilient versus vulnerable to impoverishing shocks/forces

Close the activity when participants are tired and ready to end.

Remember:

- Desegregate (ask, "Are these conclusions representative of conditions in this community? What are the exception?")
- Always ask, "why, why, why?"
- Explore changes over time