Baseline studies are important in efforts to improve the quality of development assistance. Baseline information is useful at different phases in the project cycle – for early-stage planning, for intermediate monitoring and for final evaluation. This handbook, primarily intended for SIDA staff, will also be useful for consultants and others connected with development assistance. It will stimulate and facilitate more baseline studies by SIDA.

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BASELINE STUDY HANDBOOK

Focus on the Field

By Solveig Freudenthal
and Judith Narrowe

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Baseline Study Handbook

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SIDA, 1992

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Foreword

In recent years, SIDA has focused more attention on the final stage in the project cycle – that of evaluation. To this end, specific guidelines have been drawn up which are intended to aid evaluators to conduct useful and pertinent evaluations (Lewin 1992). The guidelines define operationally the concept of evaluation and provide practical pointers for commissioning and conducting them.

It has been pointed out however, that evaluations, coming as they do at the close of a project, can most efficiently accomplish their purpose when they are based on specific project-oriented data collected at an earlier point in the project cycle – as close as possible to the initiation of project support. Such data, often called **baseline** data collected in **baseline studies** tell, among other things, 'what things were like' before the introduction of the new support. They consist of project-oriented information about the 'beginnings' which makes evaluation of the 'ends' both meaningful and possible. Baseline studies thus must be seen as a first – and necessary – step in the continuum of activities which comprise the **evaluation process.**

In addition to accumulating information which is essential for evaluations, **baseline studies** can also be used to collect information about the needs, resources, and priorities of the intended beneficiaries. They can thereby contribute to more efficient **planning** as well as **monitoring** of specific development interventions. Baseline information can thus be useful at several points in the project cycle – for early-stage planning, for intermediate monitoring and for final evaluations.

The Baseline Study Handbook, *Focus on the Field*, has been written by Solveig Freudenthal and Judith Narrowe, Development Studies Unit, Department of Social Anthropology, Stockholm University. It is primarily intended for SIDA staff, but it will also be useful for consultants and others connected with development assistance. The fact that the handbook presents baseline studies from an anthropological perspective highlights the necessity of integrating social aspects into all development projects.

Stefan Dahlgren
Head of SIDA's Evaluation Unit

A Word about this Handbook

This Baseline Study Handbook, Focus on the field, contains general information about baseline studies as well as practical directives as to how to commission and conduct them. It is meant to assist programme officers at SIDA and/or their counterparts in SIDA's programme countries to commission baseline studies. Because of their importance in the evaluation process, such studies should be done **as a matter of course** and as a routine aspect of programme and project planning in all sectors.

Focus on the field contains four chapters. **Chapter one** is a short presentation of **what** baseline studies are, **why** they are important, **when** they are to be conducted and who will need the baseline information. **Chapter two** is a step-by-step guide for how to commission baseline studies. Included here is a model **terms of reference** to be referred to when commissioning the study. These terms of reference – in particular the scope and focus section – are the main focus of chapters two and three and are, indeed, the essence and prime emphasis of this handbook.

Chapter three consists of several rather comprehensive lists of baseline questions which are intended to clarify and expand upon some of the points mentioned in the scope and focus section of the terms of reference. The lists include questions which will facilitate identifying **benchmarks and indicators**. Such information is the basis for future **evaluations**. The lists also include questions which focus on issues of local concern and which encourage the beneficiaries or target groups to identify their needs and problems and their resources and opportunities. Information of this type, collected with the active participation of the target population, is invaluable when planning and implementing the impending intervention, where and when such is planning is needed.

Chapter four focuses on the **how** of baseline studies. It includes an elongated discussion of the **methods** which might be – indeed, should be – used when conducting them. We include one appendix in which we suggest a model table of contents for the final report, and conclude with an annotated list of relevant references. What we omit are questions regarding costs and cost effectiveness. It is understood that such analyses and calculations will be conducted by economists when the specifics of the intervention have been determined.

It is likely that the information in this handbook will be useful for the consultant and the team conducting the study. *Focus on the field* should therefore be attached to the consultant's terms of reference.

Chapter 1

Baseline Studies: the General Framework

1.1 Baseline studies: what and why

A BASELINE STUDY is a collection of primary and secondary data which describes and analyzes the socio-economic conditions in a particular site at a particular time. It is conducted within the framework of a proposed development intervention and has several purposes:

First, evaluation. Most traditionally, **baseline information** is crucial input for evaluations. It is collected at an early point in the project cycle and is utilized as **benchmarks** and **indicators.**

> **Benchmarks** are defined as statements or facts describing the situation at the present time which can be used as reference points when measuring or judging change.

Benchmarks are identified **before** the introduction of the proposed intervention to describe conditions in the area in which the proposed intervention will take place. They are then referred to **after** the intervention has taken place. **Benchmarks** provide the basis of comparison which is necessary – indeed, required for conducting meaningful evaluations.

In addition to benchmarks, baseline information is also used to identify indicators.

> **Indicators** are statements/measures /signals which demonstrate that some project-related objective has been reached.

Based on the broad goals of the intervention as expressed in the country programme – better health, less soil erosion, improved living standard – more specific phenomena must be identified which signal or 'indicate' that these goals have been reached – more live births, increased agricultural yields, the appearance of corrugated tin roofs. They can also indicate that the goals have not been reached – less housing per inhabitant, decreased yields, widespread despondency or delinquency.

Both benchmarks as statements describing the situation 'then' and indicators as statements describing the situation 'now' correspond to the first function of baseline studies, that of facilitating evaluations.

An extended discussion of benchmarks and indicators as well as sector-related examples of both will be found in chapter three.

Second, monitoring. Baseline information can be used for **monitoring** purposes during the implementation of the intervention. The information in the baseline study encourages project personnel, extension personnel and others to be on their guard, continuously assessing 'where we are' in terms of 'where we

began', and whether 'what we want to happen' is in fact happening – and if not, why not?

Third, planning. Another type of baseline information – that regarding the needs, problems, opportunities and resources of the intended beneficiaries – can also be collected for **planning** purposes – in those cases where the proposed intervention requires such input. This information will help **specify and concretize the goals and objectives of the proposed intervention** and can lead to a more precise specification of the kind of support which is needed as well as the particular activities which can be initiated to accomplish these objectives.

Many of the information-collecting methods suggested below encourage the direct participation of the beneficiaries or target groups. One valuable result or by-product of these types of methods is that they activate and mobilize several categories of participants – various members of the community, extension personnel, local administrators – and encourage them to contribute both to the planning as well as implementation of the intended intervention.

It might be that information of this type – that relating to the local socio-economic situation – is found in **appraisals, feasibility studies, needs assessments** and other types of studies. Where such information is available and it is adequate and sufficiently in-depth, a baseline study may be conducted mainly to identify benchmarks and indicators for monitoring and evaluation. If, however, no such studies are available, the baseline study will include this information, and other types of socio-economic appraisals will not be needed.

Box 1

Why do a baseline study?

1. To *evaluate* the project

The baseline study will identify project-specific **benchmarks** and **indicators.** Both benchmarks and indicators will be referred to when evaluating the project in order to measure change and identify impact.

2. to *monitor* the project

The information in the baseline study can be used during the implementation process in order to assess progress and make any necessary adjustments. The questions to be asked are: are activities proceeding according to work plan? are the objectives of the project being accomplished?

3. to help *plan* the project

The baseline study will – if need be – specify and concretize the objectives as well as the type of support needed. The baseline can then recommend activities which will accomplish these objectives. This will necessitate identifying locally perceived resources and opportunities as well as needs and problems as defined by the several groups among the intended beneficiaries.

1.2 Baseline studies: their scope and focus

SEVERAL FACTORS WILL affect the scope or extent of the baseline study as well as the focus or issues dealt with. First to be considered are the objectives and time frame of the development intervention toward which the baseline is directed: is the baseline connected to the **long-term** development objectives in an area? to the more **intermediate** goals of a specific sector? to **impending** local implementation of concrete objectives?

Secondly, the scope or extent of the questions to be asked must be defined. Note that the extent or comprehensiveness of the questions need not coincide with size or scale of the project. An example: the scope of information needed for a multi-sectoral integrated rural development project in a limited area can be far more extensive than that needed for a single-sector nation-wide programme with a limited purpose – say, a health programme whose goal is to expand vaccination services.

One vital question often raised is whether in-depth baseline studies of this type are at all possible to conduct within large-scale, country-frame programs where SIDA contributes support to specific sectors at the ministerial level. This handbook – *Focus on the field* – answers this question in the positive. Wherever a 'field' exists, that is, wherever a certain population or a collection of particular types of facilities can be identified, in-depth studies can be conducted on a sample of units considered representative of the total field. By narrowing the scope and deepening the focus, valuable information can be obtained on the basis of which useful and fairly reliable generalizations can be made.

Focus contends therefore that baseline studies, whatever the scope of the planned intervention, are needed to zero in on **particulars** both with regard to the expressed goals of the project as well as to the needs and potentials of the intended beneficiaries. Baseline studies seek to break down **general** terms – 'the rural poor', 'beneficiaries', 'the people', 'women'. They identify **particular** situations and the **particular** interests, goals and needs of the **several** groups within the community – men and women, young and old, those who own land and those who do not, various ethnic groups, pastoralists and farmers, highlanders and lowlanders. They can also expose some of the conflicting interests within and among these groups. Where collective terms appear in these guidelines, it is understood that they are to be differentiated and disaggregated.

Finally, *Focus on the field* is a tool which can counteract the tendency – endemic among information-collectors – to collect too much information. It forces a focus on particular **people** in particular **contexts** at a particular **time** and in conjunction with a particular development intervention. **A question which must be asked in all contexts is** *why is this information necessary?*

1.3 Baseline studies: when to conduct them

MOST GENERALLY, **the baseline study should be conducted after the sector and project area have been identified but before the actual project has been initiated.** Seen within the project cycle, this falls between the idea memorandum or

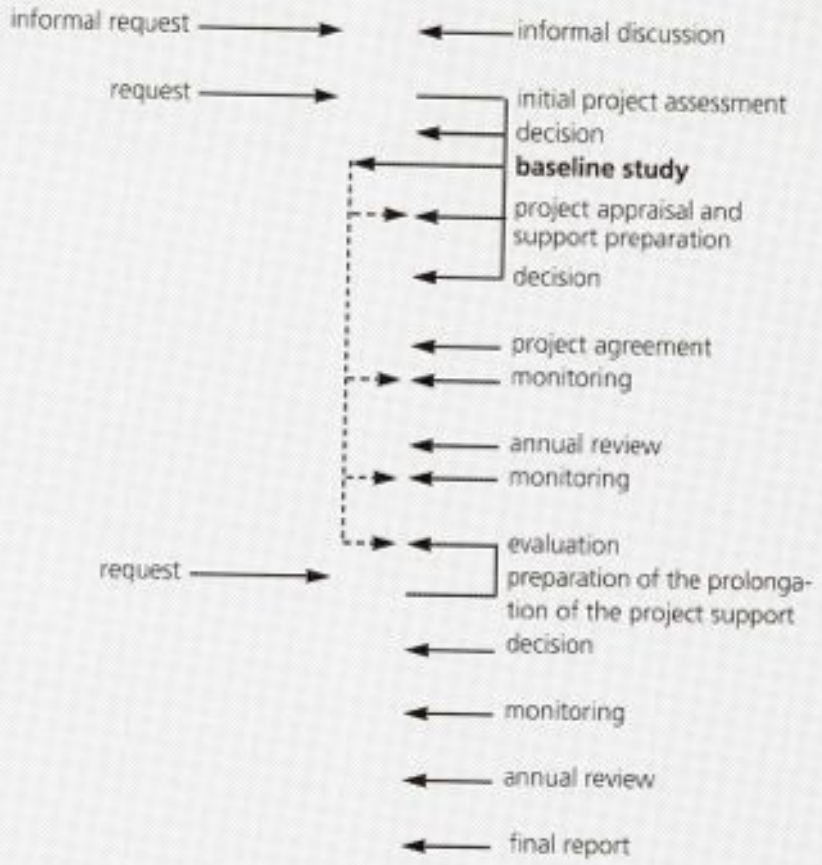
initial project assessment (idépromemoria) and the project support memorandum (insatspromemoria), see figure 1. One good reason for commissioning and carrying out a baseline study shortly after the need for a particular intervention is identified is that it can examine the general goals and objectives implied in the documents and can, if need be, clarify and concretize the goals and express them as more realizable objectives.

The results of the baseline study are also valuable input which should be utilized when drawing up the project plan of operations or other workplans. The 'fresher' or more recent the information, the more useful. It is thus advisable that as little time as possible lapses between completion of the baseline study and project start.

Warning: There is another powerful, practical and indeed, ethical reason for conducting baseline studies as close to project start as possible. Consider the following scenario: a baseline team comes to the field, collects benchmarks, engages people in identifying their problems, needs and resources, encourages them to propose solutions, raises levels of energy, enthusiasm and expectation. The team then leaves and nothing happens. The credibility of the project planners sinks and it is difficult if at all possible to convince people that their input was important and that something is going to happen eventually.

One last point: While the terms 'start' and 'project beginnings' are often heard, they are more often than not misnomers in the context of development assistance. Development and change and indeed specific projects and interventions have been going on to a greater or lesser extent in all places in which SIDA has been engaged. Little is 'really' new. Still, because evaluations by definition necessitate defining a **beginning**, the baseline study professes – arbitrarily perhaps – that *now is the base-time* on the basis of which future changes will be measured and evaluated.

Figure 1. The full course of a project.



1.4 Baseline studies: who will need them

BASELINE INFORMATION is needed for many types of development interventions – those supported directly by SIDA, as well as those introduced by non-governmental organizations. Regardless of the scope of the intervention the information will be useful for:

- **Evaluators,** when conducting **evaluations** of the project will need to refer to the clearly articulated **benchmarks and indicators.**
- **Project planners and project managers** will use the information about local resources, needs and problems in order to **plan** realistic and realizable activities. They will also use the information to **monitor** the project during the course of implementation.
- **Programme officers and development cooperation personnel** will use the baseline to follow the progress of the project at all stages. They will also see to it that the baseline is made available and uti-

lized in the course of the evaluation.

- **Local populations and extension personnel,** particularly in cases where the baseline study has encouraged the active participation of the local population, should be encouraged to use the **benchmarks and indicators** as well as the general information and analyses regarding the site in order to plan and monitor activities and to provide concrete points of departure from which to measure change.

Commissioning Baseline Studies: A Step-by-Step Guide

Step 1
Decide whether a baseline study is needed.

THE DECISION as to whether or not a baseline study is needed is based on the type of information which is already available. *Focus on the field* posits that a baseline study and benchmark information is mandatory if meaningful evaluations are to be conducted. In the event that an appraisal/needs assessment/feasibility study has already been carried out and well-articulated socio-economic benchmarks have been identified, a baseline study might be unnecessary. Experience shows however that such data are often missing, perhaps because baseline studies are not (yet) conducted as a matter of course – as indeed they should be.

Step 2
Write the terms of reference.

THE TERMS OF REFERENCE are the primary **guide** which leads the team as it conducts the study and the only means the commissioning agency has to monitor /control the final product. It is therefore crucial that the terms of reference specify in as clear terms as possible the **purpose** of the study, the actual **issues** (scope and focus) to be explored and the **methods** to be used to accumulate the information. There is undoubtedly a clear relationship between the quality of the terms of reference and the quality of the finished study. Vague, complicated or unrealistic terms of reference will produce similar studies. It is therefore of utmost **practical** importance to devote extra time and effort to compose well-thought out, realizable and understandable terms of reference.

> "Every minute put into writing terms of reference is worth it".

What follows is a sketch or a model terms of reference. The model includes the organization of the headings or topics as well as a short description of the contents of each topic.

The Proposed Baseline Study: Terms of Reference

A. Background

DESCRIBE AND BRIEFLY summarize the proposed project, including its history, the role of the supporting and implementing agencies, the general goals and specific objectives as well as strategies for implementation. **Background information of this type can often be found in the initiating memorandum, project document and/or other types of available reports.**

B. Objectives

THE BASELINE STUDY is being conducted to accomplish one or more of the following purposes:

- to identify benchmarks and indicators which can be used as a point of reference for future **evaluations.**
- to provide information which can be used to **monitor** the project in the course of implementation.
- to provide information for **planning** the project where such is needed. This includes an assessment of the goals of the proposed project to determine whether they are realistic and realizable. It also includes information about local concerns and, on the basis of these concerns, specific recommendations regarding the type of support or activities needed.
- to accomplish whatever other goals the particular sector/ministry deems important, e.g. mobilization of the target group.

Specify which of these objectives are relevant for the study at hand.

C. Scope and Focus of the Baseline Study

MOST GENERALLY, **scope** refers to the comprehensiveness of the coverage of the baseline study – how many villages, how large a population, how many districts will be included. **Focus** refers to the type(s) of issues to be addressed and questions to be asked. The scope and focus will affect the design of the study, the personnel needed to conduct it, the types of methods to be used, and the amount of time needed to conduct the study.

The types of issues to be focused upon in the baseline study include – but are not limited to – the following general categories:

- **socio-economic information**, including demographic data disaggregated according to gender, ethnic group, income; data regarding community and household organization, urban/rural relationships, means of livelihood/occupation.
- **sector-specific information**, including, for example, land tenure systems, availability/accessibility of health clinics, literacy rates.
- **issues of local concern**, including needs, constraints and opportunities as perceived by various categories of people in the project area.

Detailed lists of questions regarding socio-economic and sector-specific information as well as questions which will specify and clarify issues of local concern are found in chapter three.

D. Team/personnel

WHO IS GOING TO conduct the baseline study will largely depend upon the type of study, the particular sector and the type of expertise needed. In most cases a team will be needed. The team should consist of a three to four person 'core': a local or expatriate social scientist, preferably a development anthropologist or sociologist, who is formally responsible for the study; a sector-specific expert or technician; and two (male and female) locally-based personnel who are well acquainted with the ecological and socio-economic conditions in the area. It is imperative that the team members are **gender-aware.**

E. Methodology

IT IS ADVISABLE TO USE a combination of methods, those which lead to the identification of benchmarks and those which generate, probe, check and evaluate data with the local population.

It is likely that the team will want to decide upon its own mix of methods in accordance with the particular project, the particular area and the skills and previous experience of the team members. Some or all of the following methods, however, will be useful when conducting the study:

- review of available information
- direct observation
- participant observation
- semi-structured, 'conversational' interviews with informants
- group interviews with households, occupational groups, segments of communities (genderized)
- public meetings
- workshops
- informal surveys
- life histories
- ranking techniques
- diagrammatic methods
- visuals

An extended description of these methods, including the advantages and disadvantages of each, is found in chapter four.

F. Time plan

IT HAS BEEN SUGGESTED that the baseline study be conducted between the idea and the support memoranda. Other factors, however – what is occurring on the local scene with regard to agriculture, holidays, etc., – must also be considered (see step 4, page 16).

How long should the study take? It is useful to divide the study into three stages: before the field, in the field, and writing and presenting the report. While local circumstances as well as the nature of the particular study can affect the time frame (and everything else), in most cases, one week is needed for reading background material, several days to train the team, one month to conduct the field stage of the study and two weeks to write the report.

It is important to set a deadline for completion of the draft as well as the final report.

G. Reporting

THE FINAL REPORT can be composed in two stages – **a preliminary or interim report** which can be left in the project area and utilized by local personnel as a tool in planning the project, and a more **formal, final report** to be 'published' and presented at a formal de-briefing or seminar.

Begin with a summary of relevant findings. Include (hand-made) charts, diagrams, and other devices which can organize and summarize the information. It is often helpful to include several ethnographic examples – people's verbatim descriptions of local resources, local analyses of problems, representative life histories – in the body of the report. Benchmarks, indicators and recommendations should be listed separately.

Indicate the methods used, the questions asked and the individuals or categories of individuals interviewed (see model **table of contents** in appendix 1). **This information is the starting point for future evaluations and must be clearly stated in the report.**

Step 3
Choose the team

AFTER THE TERMS of reference have been written, decide the range of competency of the consultant who will conduct the study. It is preferable that a team will be engaged to conduct the study.

The composition of the team will depend upon whether the project focuses on a single issue – credit to farmers in a particular district – or a complex of issues – a multi-sectoral rural development project and/or whether the issues require particular expertise.

The answers will determine the size and composition of the team. Most likely, the broader the scope of questions asked, the broader the scope of expertise needed on the team.

The team should include both **outsiders and insiders**, that is experts who reside outside the community or project site, and those who reside in or near the community. The views of both are important:

Outsiders tend to pose uncomfortable and/or naive questions about what 'everybody' knows. They can encourage – or provoke – people to problematize and/or contemplate the 'obvious' and they avoid the tendency to take 'culture' for granted and not 'see the forest for the trees'. Outsiders can also be thought to have fewer vested interests in the outcome of the project and a more objective attitude than insiders.

Insiders' views are invaluable for several other reasons. First, they encourage local knowledge and wisdom to come to the fore. Second, they engender a local commitment to the forthcoming project and place some degree of responsibility for the implementation of the suggested activities with local administrators and residents of the community. They thereby reduce the danger of the baseline (and perhaps the project as well) as being seen as the province of the experts – expatriate or otherwise. Engaging knowledgeable insiders also strengthens the take-over capacity of local organizations and institutions and thereby contributes to the sustainability of the intervention.

A word on team-building: although the team's previous experience will affect the number of days needed, some amount of time – three to five days – must be set aside for the team to review the nature and function of the baseline study as well as to become familiar with the specific procedures and methods to be used.

Step 4
Decide when to conduct the baseline study

'WHEN' REFERS TO several time frames. In addition to when in the project cycle the baseline study should be conducted (between the idea and the support memoranda), several other types of 'whens' must be considered before initiating the study:

- When is the information needed, that is, when will the decision about the proposed intervention be made?
- What are the weather conditions in the project area?
- What is occurring in the social and religious calendar? Are people celebrating? fasting?
- What is occurring in the agricultural calendar? Is this a labour-intensive time of year? Do people (men, women) tend to be busy/hungry/sick at this time of year?

Step 5
Review the final report

MAKE SURE THE REPORT includes the information requested in the terms of reference:

- Benchmarks and indicators clearly defined and easily identifiable.
- Information regarding 'local concerns' adequate to plan and/or initiate activities.
- Realistic recommendations.

Step 6
Disseminate and utilize the baseline information

THIS STEP IS CRUCIAL. Once the report is completed, it must be made available to planners and to those charged with monitoring the project. At a later stage, it must also be available for evaluators.

While somewhat premature, doing the following will enhance the usability of the baseline when conducting the evaluation: first, ask the same questions of the same categories of informants as those questioned in the baseline study. Where possible, the evaluation should also be conducted at the same time of year and under similar conditions. Use of similar methods is also advisable.

Second, check the 'state of the benchmarks': what changes have/have not occurred?

Third, are the indicators which have been identified in the baseline study apparent? noticeable? In other words, are there indications that the activities suggested in the baseline study have had the intended results? Can other indicators be identified which indicate other, perhaps unintended effects?

For an extended discussion of evaluations, see Lewin, 1992.

When deciding the "when", keep this in mind!

From: Agroforestry Extension Training Sourcebook, CARE International, 1989:39

Chapter 3

Specifying Baseline Information:

Deciding the Scope and Narrowing the Focus

WE NOW COME TO the core of this handbook – the kinds of information to be gathered when conducting the baseline study. The questions presented here relate to the scope and focus part of the Terms of Reference. They are meant to help the programme officer identify some of the issues and/or questions to be focused on in the baseline study.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first focuses on data related to the socio-economic conditions/situation in the study site. This data can be used for each of the three purposes of the baseline – for evaluation, monitoring and planning.

The second focuses on sector-specific information which will be useful mainly (though not exclusively) for the identification of benchmarks and indicators.

The third section focuses on issues of local concern – that is, the problems and constraints as well as resources and opportunities as identified and analyzed by the target group(s). This type of information will contribute to the planning of the project. The actual collection of this information – due specifically to the methods used – will encourage the participation and mobilization of the local people and will enhance local capacity to plan and implement the project.

The questions appear in two forms – as **'lists'**, and as probing questions or **'whys'**. The lists are to be used as guides and should be complemented with more detailed sector-specific lists. Several of the lists – particularly those in the 'sector section' – conclude with suggested **indicators**.

Some comments on benchmarks and indicators

BECAUSE BENCHMARKS and indicators are the raison d'être – certainly one of them – of baseline studies, we begin the chapter with some definitions:

Benchmarks have been defined as **statements or facts which can be used as reference points when measuring or judging change**.

Indicators are **statements or measures which are used to demonstrate that some project-related change has taken place**. Some indicators are direct and statistical, essentially changed (up or down-graded) benchmarks. An example: in a project begun in 1979 whose objective was to increase awareness of family planning in a particular area, the baseline study indicated that 75% of women in the age group 25–30 were unaware of family planning techniques. In 1989, 75% of women in the same age group in the same area were aware of – and were practising – family planning.

Indicators can also be expressed in social terms or as behavioral changes: in a project designed to improve household hygiene, possible indicators might be the

appearance of covered water jugs and food storage units, increased use of latrines, and increased interest in and attendance at health clinics.

Some indicators are indirect and relate to changed beliefs and attitudes. They are as important but less observable than the type of statistical indicators enumerated above. One example will suffice:

At a village meeting, lack of fuelwood was identified as a major problem. The village government set aside certain areas in the village for fuelwood production and, in time, the enclosed woodlots produced an increase in the fuelwood supply (indicator 1).

In addition to this, the village women, traditionally in charge of collecting fuelwood but by the same tradition not permitted to control land, in fact took charge of managing **and** controlling these woodlots. This change in roles (indicator 2) can be seen as an indicator – albeit indirect – of social change.

Some indicators – the previous example included – cannot be defined beforehand but emerge as indirect or 'unintended consequences' of an intervention. An example: women suddenly begin planting less nutritious cassava in a traditional maize area and many more children are found to suffer from malnutrition. Members of an 'indicator sensitive' and culturally competent baseline team suspect that these phenomena may be indications that a project focusing on 'improved agricultural techniques' is the cause. It turns out that the team is right; the new techniques require so much of the women's time that they have less time to care for their children and have had to cultivate less labour-intensive – and far less nourishing cassava.

What is important is that the baseline study identifies indicators which are project relevant, timely and comprehensible, oriented towards action and measurable at a reasonable cost.

To the main purpose of this chapter, information related to the scope and focus section of the terms of reference:

3.1 Socio-economic information

WE BEGIN WITH a warning: while the questions and issues listed below appear in quite separate categories, it must be emphasized that the baseline study is describing a social 'whole'. It must be kept in mind, therefore, that each question or issue is affected and related to many others and all are affected by the context.

Second, cause and effect linkages are difficult to determine. Social life does not occur in a controlled laboratory. Whether change is due to the intervention or to ever-present 'other factors' is hard to say.

Third, we repeat the point made above regarding the tendency to ask too many questions and collect too much (often) irrelevant information. To avoid this, one question should/must precede all others: 'why is this information needed?', 'what will it contribute to the project?'

> A wise motto is: *more is not necessarily better*. Is this information important – or 'just' interesting?'

The information below will be useful for evaluating, monitoring and planning the project.

3.1.1 GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION about the population at large, disaggregated according to gender, age, class, religion, ethnic groups, language(s), area.

- size
- birth rate, death rate
- age distribution
- density
- settlement patterns
- migration flows – in-out, seasonal, labour

3.1.2 INFORMATION ABOUT THE 'COMMUNITY'

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

- type of community – urban/rural, small/large, ethnically homogeneous/heterogeneous
- organization and administration of the community
- leadership, traditional, state/national
- power structure and hierarchies within the community
- formal and informal groups and organizations, including committees working with line ministries

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

- means of livelihood
- types of economic enterprises – small/large scale
- numbers and types of employment – genderized
- labour force
  - availability of labour force – genderized and broken down according to season
  - general health status
  - number of years of schooling, literacy levels
- income distribution
- economic significance of commons

INFRASTRUCTURE

- available transportation (animals, vehicles)
- quality and access to roads
- types and number of markets
- access to extension service
- daycare facilities, schools
- health care facilities

How large are the categories of the population (age groups, ethnic groups) in relation to each other? What population changes can be identified in the recent past? Why have these changes occurred? How does the local community fit into the national/district structure? How is life here different today from say, twenty years ago? different for whom? why?

3.1.3 INFORMATION ABOUT HOUSEHOLDS

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

- average or typical size
- household composition and organization
- hierarchies and power structures
- residence patterns

What constitutes a family? a household? Recent changes in composition? Why?

ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

- division of labour according season, gender and age, including type of labour contributed by children

- livelihood systems and strategies
  - farming – cash, subsistence
  - livestock
  - fishing
  - trees
  - horticulture
  - artisans/handicrafts
  - marketing
  - salaried work including local administrators
  - combinations of the above
- approximate budgets for several types of households
- capital inputs (resources)
  - equipment
  - credit

What is the spread of various means of livelihood in the community – mainly farming? pastoralists? agro-pastoralists? (subsistence? cash?). How do various households combine these various means of livelihood? Have any changes occurred in recent years? Why? What kind of survival strategies are used in times of catastrophe?

Which members of the household – men, women, young, old – perform which tasks? Who is responsible for what? How do various members of the community define their resources and who owns/controls/has access to which resources? **Who devotes how much time to which task?** If women, for example, were to participate in a woodlot planting activity, how would that effect their other tasks? Would they devote more/less time to feeding their children? tilling their gardens? attending meetings?

3. 2 Sector-specific information

THE FOLLOWING LISTS are organized according to the sector divisions at SIDA. They reflect the policy by which SIDA's specific sector divisions cooperate directly with counterpart ministries in programme countries. Once again the lists below are to be seen as **guides** and are not complete. More detailed lists can be obtained from the various sector divisions at SIDA.

Most of this information will be readily convertible to benchmarks and indicators.

3.2.1 NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DIVISION

LAND CHARACTERISTICS

- vegetation, including forests
- water resources, including availability, quality, quantity (according to season)
- soil properties
  - fertility
  - salinity
  - acidity
- soil erosion
  - causes
  - effect(s) on local community
  - degree of degradation

What has the community/government done to arrest soil erosion? How effective have these measures been? Why? Why not? What are the constraints? suggested solutions?

TENURE SYSTEMS

- land tenure: own, rent in/out, control, access to
- tree tenure: own, rent in/out, control, access to
- size, number and quality of parcels per household
- national (statutory) policies with regard to land ownership and/or land-use
- customary land-use policies

How is land/tree tenure affected by membership in various ethnic groups? by gender? by age? What kinds of changes – if any – can the various members of the community identify with regard to tenure practices? What has caused these changes?

LAND USES

Agriculture

- crops
  - types and purposes
  - annual, perennial
  - ratio between subsistence crops and cash crops
  - preferred crops, reasons
  - yields
- current cultivation/management/harvesting techniques
  - mechanization
- irrigation

Trees and forests

- tree crops
  - species and yields
  - cultivation/management/harvesting methods, genderized
- use of forests
  - fuelwood, fodder
    supply
    time needed to collect
    quantities consumed
  - timber
  - food
    quality
    quantity
    time needed to collect
  - industry
  - medicines
  - non-forest tree products
- supply and distribution of tree-derived raw materials
- current technology
- religious and traditional purposes
- degree and causes of forest degradation
- wildlife habitats
- species and spread of flora and fauna
- watershed properties

Livestock

- type/amount/quality/distribution of livestock
- current ranching practices
- type and condition of water source
- type and source of fodder: grazing and/or stall feeding
  - amount and quality of land used for grazing
  - seasonal, yearly grazing patterns
- social meaning of livestock – as dowry and/or security
- types of products
- markets for products
- importance in budget or as source of income

Fisheries

- water resources: marine, inland (supply)
- water quality
- water supply
- different uses of water resources
- types and quantities of fish stock
- fish as source of food
- fish as source of income

Commons

- size in relation to community
- seasonal uses and users

INDICATORS FOR PROJECTS RELATED TO NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: SOME EXAMPLES

Agriculture

- increased yields of crops
- larger area improved by irrigation, terracing, etc.
- halted soil erosion

Forestry

- less time needed to collect fuelwood, fodder
- increased supplies of fuelwood, fodder, live fencing
- increased income from sales of forest-based products

Livestock

- increased soil erosion due to overgrazing
- pollution, drying of water holes and streams
- increased supply of livestock products

3.2.2 HEALTH DIVISION

Government-sponsored health services

- hospitals, numbers of beds per population
- clinics and health stations (indicate type)
  - numbers, accessibility, condition of equipment
- health care personnel
  - numbers of doctors, nurses, midwives, other
  - distribution per population
  - level of education
  - drugs and pharmaceuticals
  - cost, availability of essential drugs
- health education programmes
- vaccination services
- programs for control of endemic diseases

Indigenous health practitioners

- folk curers, traditional birth attendants
- traditional remedies
- cooperation with/participation in national health services

Community health status

- general state of health in community:
- food supply and nutrition, life expectancy
- most common illnesses of children:
  - type, frequency, treatment
- most common illnesses of adults
  - types, frequency, treatment
- infant mortality rates per 1000 live births
- child mortality rates (numbers of deaths among children under 5 years per year per 1000 inhabitants)
- major causes of death
  - infants
  - children under 5 years: boys, girls
  - adults – men, women
- maternal and child health immunization
- alcohol and drug-related problems
  - affected population: age, gender
  - sources and costs
  - measures to combat problems

Household hygiene

- availability and quality of latrines
- frequency of use of latrines
- garbage and waste disposal systems
- availability and quality of water supply (seasonal)

INDICATORS FOR HEALTH AND HYGIENE PROGRAMMES: SOME EXAMPLES

- decreased mortality rates
- increased numbers of health clinics
- improved/additional equipment
- improved training of personnel
- increased use of health facilities
- covered water and food storage

3.2.3 EDUCATION DIVISION

Physical facilities

- number and types of schools: public, private, parochial
- condition of buildings
- responsible for upkeep and maintenance
- accessibility
- numbers of classrooms
- classroom furniture: types, quality, supply

Budgets

- buildings, equipment, maintenance
- cost per type of school
- instructional materials (books, other)
- administration
- per capita budgeted expenditure per district
- teacher salaries, disaggregated according to level, locale
- teacher training costs, disaggregated according to level, locale
- percentage of national budget
- school fees: amounts, how collected

Personnel (genderized)

- teachers
  - trained, untrained, at each school level
  - specific subject training
  - geographic distribution
  - teacher support services, including in-service training
  - teachers' attitudes toward their work
  - deployment of certified teachers
  - non-teaching source of income
  - teacher-pupil ratio
  - teaching loads
  - health status
  - percentage of expatriates
- administrators
  - numbers, distribution, area of expertise

Enrolments (genderized)

- numbers and percentages of total at national, district, community levels
- enrolments in primary, secondary, higher, boarding schools
- adult and vocational education
- distance education
- class size
- promotion rates
- school-leaver/drop-out rates
- average distance to primary/secondary school

Teacher training institutions: general education

- primary level teachers
- secondary level teachers
- higher education
- research facilities

Training institutions: specialized fields

- extension services in health, agriculture, forestry, fisheries, etc.
- cooperation among training institutions

Instructional materials

- books
  - ratio of students per book, workbook
  - condition, year of publication
  - availability of teacher's guides
- availability and quality of maps, charts, radios
- curricula

Achievement

- examination performance by grade, gender, region, subject, inter/intra-district variation
- literacy rates
- test/examination results

What are the general attitudes toward education? secular, religious? attitudes towards government and other schools? What has affected these attitudes? changes in recent years? What is the extent and nature of communal/parental involvement in school planning? parental involvement in school activities? What do children do when not in school?

INDICATORS FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES: SOME EXAMPLES

- enrolments, genderized
- size and educational level of teaching force, expenditures
- literacy rates, genderized
- drop-out rates, genderized

3.2.4 INFRASTRUCTURE DIVISION

Water

- water supply
  - distance to water source
  - availability and accessibility, seasonal variations
  - rates of use in terms of natural replacement
  - quality: purity/pollution/salinity/acidity rates
  - quantity
  - technology and affordability
  - quantities used by household for
    irrigation,
    agriculture
    home gardens
    livestock
  - used for industrial enterprises
  - water rights: family, group, community
- water supply technical facilities
  - available technical personnel
  - organization for maintenance and operations
  - availability of spare parts
  - drainage facilities
  - quality of soils near water source/facility
- incidence and nature of water related diseases
- health facilities and health education/information

Environmental sanitation

- Availability and quality of latrines
- Frequency of use of latrines
- Garbage and waste disposal systems

Transportation

- types and numbers of vehicles
- traffic density and frequency
- noise levels
- current level of air, soil and water quality

Housing

- number of inhabitants (age, gender, socio-economic class, ethnic groups) in the area
- quantity, quality and density of present housing
- residence patterns
- current level of air, soil and water quality
- roads leading to the area

INDICATORS FOR WATER PROJECTS AND PROGRAMMES: SOME EXAMPLES

- chemical quality of water
- quantity available per user per day
- proximity of water point to place of use
- availability and reliability of water supply throughout the day and year

3.3 ISSUES OF LOCAL CONCERN

THIS THIRD AND FINAL section focuses on questions which are meant to elicit local opinions about local needs, resources obstacles and possible solutions. This type of information is useful when planning the impending project and/or activities. Most importantly, it encourages the local population – the beneficiaries or target group – to become actively involved in the project.

> Participating in the process of planning is in itself an important product.

3.3.1 CURRENT SITUATION AND NEEDS OF THE LOCAL POPULATION

SPECIFY AND CLARIFY the needs/problems of the various categories of the local population.

How do each of these categories of people – men, women, young, old, high/low caste, various ethnic and/or religious groups, richer/poorer – rank or prioritize these need/problems? How do they think that the problems came about?

3.3.2 LOCAL RESOURCES AND OPPORTUNITIES

WHAT ARE IDENTIFIED as local assets or resources – social, cultural, material, technical, occupational? What potential labour force is available in the course of the year, that is, who has time to do what and when?

Who – among the various segments of the population – owns/manages/controls/has access to the material/technical resources?

Which of these resources can be used as input in the project? How?

What local organizations, committees, institutions, leaders (formal, informal) groups can be mobilized?

What indigenous and technical knowledge and skills can be utilized as input in the proposed project?

3.3.3 LOCAL OBSTACLES AND CONSTRAINTS

WHAT RESOURCES are lacking? Specify: financial, material (including land), labour, time, knowledge and skills. What other constraints might exist – government policies – or lack of such? local traditions and/or practices?

3.3.4 SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

ON THE BASIS OF an identification of needs and constraints, resources and opportunities, what kinds of activities can be started which will fulfil the needs?

What kinds of outside support will be needed to accomplish the goals of the project?

Which groups in the population might gain/lose due to the introduction of the support?

Make sure to ascertain the needs of all segments in the population. Avoid allowing one group/person/member of the family to speak for another.

From: Agroforestry Extension Training Sourcebook, CARE International, 1989:51.

Chapter 4

Field Methods for Conducting Baseline Studies

IN ORDER TO GATHER information which will lead to an understanding of the complexity of the socio-economic and cultural environment, no one method nor even one type of method is sufficient. We thus suggest including quantitative, as well as qualitative, 'interactionary' or participatory field methods.

An important term and principle in this context is triangulation. The term refers to the practice, used originally by surveyors, of combining methods to cross-check data. Triangulation permits us to find out whether informants say the same things about their needs and their views in personal interviews as they do in impersonal surveys.

An additional point: any method or mix of methods will be more efficient in terms of information generated if the team conducting the baseline study is well acquainted with the language as well as the culture of the field. Time is short.

> A backlog of knowledge is crucial if field opportunities are to be utilized. "You just don't have the time to learn everything".

Most often, however, baseline teams must rely on a translator to assist them to conduct the study. Translators introduce several problems: the translator's membership in a particular ethnic group, class or caste can affect other people's views of him, her and the team, and can directly affect the kind of information received. The actual translation is also problematic: can the team rely on the translation?

The following repertoire of methods is suggested:

1. Review of available information

THE PURPOSE OF THIS REVIEW is to find out what is already known and to specify what remains to be found out. Such information may be found in governmental publications and other legal documents, designs and evaluations of similar development interventions, desk studies, statistics, anthropological monographs, and so forth.

2. Direct observation: a 'walk-around'

THE METHOD OF DIRECT observation does not rely on information offered directly by informants, nor does it require a personal long-term involvement with them. Direct observation involves taking note of events, objects, physical and other characteristics of the people and the environment in the project area. It also involves careful notations of activities and other social phenomena – what people (who?) are (or seem to be) doing all day and at various times of day . The observations should be made systematically; they should be repeated on several occasions – at the start, mid-way and at the conclusion of the study.

Direct observation can also be used as

a point of departure for formulating questions, as a basis for selecting informants, and as a means to check information received by other methods.

Direct observation offers many opportunities to identify benchmarks.

Useful because:

- There is no language barrier.
- There is minimal intrusion on local people's schedules.
- Observations can reveal conflicts/attitudes/facts people are not conscious of or are reluctant to admit.
- It yields information about the rhythms, patterns and artifacts used in everyday life.
- It provides leads which can be picked-up for use in interviews.

Watch out for:

- Seasonal and observer bias.
- Being watched can change the way people perform their ordinary routines.
- There is a tendency not to systematize observations over time.
- Because 'believing (or knowing) is seeing', lack of familiarity with social and cultural phenomena might result in missing important information or misinterpreting that which 'seems' obvious.

3. Participant observation.

AS THE NAME IMPLIES, the researcher – who has some command of the local language – consciously both **observes and participates** in the life of the local community. In the course of developing rapport with the people, he or she makes on-the-spot observations of everyday life, asks spontaneous context-oriented questions, and attempts to gain a holistic view of the community **as the members of the community see it**.

Because it traditionally requires long-term immersion in the field, **this method is used more in spirit than practice** in the short-time framework allotted to the baseline team. The goals and **perspective**, however, of participant observation remain. The perspective insists, first, on the primary importance of the ideas, values and knowledge as well as the practices of the members of the community, and, second, that these ideas and values together constitute the **cultural or communicative system** which gives meaning to life in the community.

Participant observation in the form of several days or preferably a week of living in the village and participating in its daily life can accomplish this goal – in part; the experience can give the team members a first-hand and non-academic appreciation of the practices, rhythms, and tensions of life there, and provide a viable and valuable basis for further questions, observations and analyses.

4. Semi-structured, open-ended interviews.

THE OPEN-ENDED, topically semi-structured interview – 'focused conversation' or 'talk'– is perhaps the most useful method for conducting baseline studies. Before beginning the interviews, the team will have chosen the topics – and perhaps even the specific questions – to be touched upon.

Interviews can be conducted with **individuals chosen at random**, with especially knowledgeable individuals, called **key informants**, with members of

individual households and with members of several households in **neighbourhoods**.

'Key ' informants

Key informants are persons with particular skills, persons in positions of leadership (formal and informal) in village political and/or administrative units, activists or representatives of particular groups in the community (older women, high-school youth) and individuals who for one reason or another are in a position to know 'something special' about the community. Such 'experts'– those who might know something about and have opinions must be sought out; each can offer valuable and **particular or slanted** information about the community.

Key informants are particularly suitable for asking why questions with regard to surveys or previously collected information. They might also be particularly good sources for identifying other key informants and for making recommendations and/or suggestions for activities.

Useful because:

- Key informants are found in every community.
- Face-to-face interviews encourage confidentiality, are flexible and can be repeated when and if the team finds the need.

Watch out for:

- Elitist bias on the part of both interviewer and interviewee! Assumptions of 'shared ideas'– while perhaps valid, must, for the sake of accuracy, be avoided.

Small-group interviews

The goal is to probe, explore and identify needs, to create a spirit of **dialogue** between the team and the informants and to generate information regarding facts and attitudes.

Once this is determined, focus on the particular needs and views of particular persons: if both men and women are involved in an activity, interview them separately and together. It is likely that they will have different opinions of the importance of the activity.

Bear in mind that one member – however much or well she or he speaks – **does not speak for the rest**. Women's and children's tasks and opinions, for example, must be consciously sought, focused on and recorded. Women's knowledge of resources and needs will differ from men's; younger people might well see things differently from their elders.

Great care must be taken to avoid questions – and ways of asking them – which offend or insult the informants. Some time might be valuably spent learning the more basic values and rules of social interaction in the community – prior to initiating interviews.

Public group meetings

These can be formal, pre-arranged meetings or traditional gatherings. If a meeting with the entire community is unwieldy or cannot be arranged, the team can meet with smaller units – neighbourhood groups, age groups, women, men, youth. Where women might be reluctant to engage in public discussions with men, the team should make sure to arrange separate meetings for women. Such smaller meetings could

be held first and spokespersons for these smaller units could then inform the general meeting of their concerns and suggestions.

These general meetings have several purposes. They introduce the team and the team's task to the community, dispelling some amount of gossip and myth-building. They can also be used to identify the social groups in the community and to begin to understand the relationships among them. They provide a forum where the broad range of opinion in the community can be heard and perhaps nascent conflicts can be identified.

Another goal of the meeting is to begin to identify needs and problems as well as opportunities, local knowledge and local resources. What can be/has been learned from activities already going on in the community? Resources and assets, problems and needs can also be ranked by various persons or groups at the meeting.

A person in the community such as a school teacher or local leader who is familiar with meeting procedures can be engaged to help facilitate discussion. Local people might be more likely to seriously consider new options if they are mentioned by a person who commands their respect on this topic. Outsiders' more hypothetical suggestions might be less valuable.

Make sure that the time and place of the meeting and the day of the week are acceptable to the local people and that people are informed of the meeting far enough in advance so that they will be able to attend.

Useful because:

- Public meetings are familiar and traditional means of communication and eliciting information.
- A large number of people can be reached in a relatively short period of time.
- The meeting introduces the team to the community and encourages direct interaction between the team and community as a whole.
- The meeting generates energy as well as recognition of a community issue. It can encourage community concern, commitment, consensus as well as reveal conflicts.
- Previously unknown (by the team) 'key informants' – important and/or knowledgable members of the community – might appear whom the team will want to interview.

Watch out for:

- Hidden agendas. Some groups might use the meeting to bring up their own concerns at the expense of others. These hidden agendas can be very hard for a baseline team to recognize.
- Local leaders might dominate the discussion and give a distorted picture of the local situation.
- It might not be culturally acceptable for all people – women, low caste, certain ethnic groups – to speak or even attend a public meeting, nor to make critical remarks in public.

5. Workshops

WORKSHOPS ARE small-group activities which have a variety of forms. Most tra-

ditionally, they are skill-building and skill-testing sessions. They can also be used as a kind of focus-group session involving people with a particular background or with a particular interest – older women, charcoal makers, health extension workers.

Workshops often increase awareness, focus on or identify problems and needs in the community, and identify and perhaps plan to implement solutions. More directly than group interviews, workshops encourage the completion of the feedback loop – from problem identification to analysis to (suggested) solution.

Workshops can be held at any stage in the baseline study for one or several of the following purposes: to identify resources, to define needs and problems, to devise or 'brainstorm' solutions, to present and check findings and to learn specific skills needed to monitor, manage and implement activities.

6. Informal Surveys

BASELINE STUDIES – certainly those which cover large areas – can benefit from sensitively constructed, surveys administered by trained local enumerators. The baseline team can administer the survey to 30 to 50 persons and can include 10 to 20 questions regarding the proposed project and related topics. Quantitative data collected via surveys can be used to identify **benchmarks**.

Some knowledge of cultural attitudes and values and sensitivity toward the position of the respondent is important when deciding upon the survey questions. Asking questions which are inappropriate and/or insensitive can embarrass and threaten the respondents, and can also endanger the team's reputation in the community and hamper the progress of the study.

Somewhat unconventional but useful would be to administer what might be called a 'participatory survey' mid-stage in a fieldstudy. The survey could be based upon questions generated during the course of the field study, and could be composed, administered and analyzed by members of the community.

7. Life histories

IN-DEPTH DESCRIPTIONS of project-related practices in the community can be collected in narrative form from key informants. The 'author' of the narrative should be encouraged to comment on how the present situation came to be. He or she should also add some comments on what might be used as 'indicators', that is, statements by which one can judge whether a proposed project or series of activities have accomplished what they were meant to accomplish.

8. Ranking Techniques

RANKING EXERCISES have been developed to elicit information about preferences and choices. They also provide information about the criteria that people use to select and differentiate among certain items or activities. Ranking permits the results and reasons for the choices to be recorded and compared.

Ranking the same items can be conducted with different groups and the results compared. This pin-points the differences in perception among various groups – those with land and landless, men and women, young and old, insiders and outsiders.

When doing an exercise involving items, it is advisable not to rank more

than six items at any one time. Picture cards can be prepared showing, say, six local crops. The cards are given to respondents to rank. Respondents are then asked why they made the choice they did.

When doing paired comparisons – choosing between two items – begin with the two most similar items. Questions to ask: "If you could plant only one of these crops, which would you choose?" and then "Could you tell me why you have made that choice?"

Useful because:

- Ranking techniques are straightforward and do not require a great deal of previous experience.
- Ranking provides information on both the choices people make and the reason for their choices.
- Ranking provides a structure for articulating well-known but less consciously held beliefs.
- Ranking can be used in a variety of situations.

Watch out for:

- Ranking exercises are quite time-consuming.
- Ranking may not elicit the same depth of information as other field methods.
- It is difficult to know how representative an individual's response is with regard to others in the person's social group.
- When listing priorities, it is hard to know how much is imposed on the respondent.

The following methods are especially useful for land- or natural resource-based support:

9. Diagrammatic Methods

THESE METHODS INVOLVE schemes which present information in a readily understandable form. They include maps, transects and seasonal calendars and are specially suitable for projects involving agriculture, soil conservation, forestry, land management and so forth.

In using each of these methods, the information in the diagram rather than the informants themselves functions as the focus of attention. Instead of interviewing people, the team **and** the villagers interview the diagrammatic materials. Change-oriented questions about 'how things used to be', 'how did they get to be the way they are?', 'how should/could things be' can/should always be asked when using these methods.

MAPS

There are a number of different ways mapping can be organized. Local groups – women, men, old, young, combinations of these – can be asked to draw sketch maps either of their own homesteads or neighbourhoods, or from a high point with a full view of the village. The villagers can indicate where people live, where communal grazing land is, where trees and forest are, which crops grow where and where water sources are. Indicate as well who owns which parcels of land, who controls them? who can use them? who works on them? who brings the products of the land to the household? It is useful to bring a time dimension in the discussion: how did this area look many years ago? How would you like it to look in the future?

Local people's maps of the community can be compared and synthesized into one large map. This may be especially

useful to determine the perceptions of different interest groups in the community toward, say, land use.

Pre-drawn maps of the village or the area can also be filled in or added to by villagers.

Useful because:

- The 'doing' and constructing of these materials is in itself consciousness raising.
- The process also encourages communication, discussion and exchange of information between the team and members of the community as well as among members of the community.
- The community can point out the linkages, patterns and interrelationships of land use.
- The visual 'product' can be a good point of departure for discussion. It also provides the community with a concrete vision of itself.

Watch out for:

- Comparing individual maps may be sensitive and bring out conflicts and differences of opinion and conflicts about land ownership, land tenure, etc. People might also be unwilling to acknowledge specific ownership or particular use of land.
- One person may dominate or direct drawing if mapping is done by the group.

Transects

A transect shows the topography of the area according to altitude. It indicates the available resources and their use in each area. The team and a small group of villagers first draw the physical contours of the community – old highlands, newer lowlands, watersheds, etc. Many facts can then be entered – crops, precipitation, temperature, labour input, etc. As the transect is being drawn, the team probes opportunities, problems and perhaps changes in the different sectors.

Useful because:

- A good way to identify major problems and opportunities in the agro-ecosystem.
- The transect provides a full view of the community's resource system, and helps overcome the "roadside bias" that is common in field visits.

Watch out for:

- Visualizing the community in this way might be foreign and/or threatening to members of the community.

Seasonal Calendars

Seasonal calendar are extended versions of crop calendars. All the major phases and changes of the rural year can be represented: climate, crops, livestock and labour input (genderized) and demand. There should also be room on the calendar to show when problems and constraints (agricultural and other) appear, and when new opportunities arise, for example when new crops could be grown.

24-month calendars are useful to more fully reveal seasonal patterns. Sometimes it is more useful to start the calendar with the beginning of a season, rather than the beginning of the calendar year.

Useful because:

- Seasonal calendars are a good point of departure for discussions with villagers.
- They can be discussed and compared with different groups of villagers.
- They tend to elicit much detailed information.
- The information can be and should be compared with that received in informal interviews.

Watch out for:

- Some of the quantitative data might be questionable.
- The calendars can be difficult to read.

10. Visuals

STILL PHOTOGRAPHS can be used efficiently by baseline teams as a point of departure for discussions of 'how the situation came to be as it is'. They can also be used as concrete evidence of benchmarks in later assessments and evaluations of project impact. Photographs can also be used in ranking exercises.

Videotaping, while not always technically nor financially possible, is also an effective means to identify problems and problem sites. One virtue of videotapes is that they can be shown to (or shot by) the members of the community, and 'edited' or analyzed by them immediately following the viewing. Producing such data with and about the community heightens self-consciousness, encourages collective deliberation and can lead to intense, community-wide discussions of causes and possible solutions.

Appendix 1:

Model Table of Contents for the Baseline Study Report

IT IS USEFUL TO WRITE two versions of the baseline report. The first is a preliminary report which is to be left in the field site, the second is the final report to be used for evaluation, monitoring and, where relevant, planning. The following is a suggested table of contents for the final report:

Table of contents

Helpful References

BIRGEGÅRD, L-E.

1980 Manual for the Analysis of Rural Underdevelopment. Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, International Rural Development Centre, Rural Development Studies no. 7, Uppsala, Sweden.

The manual is a result of Birgegård's dissatisfaction with the way in which a number of rural surveys were designed and carried out. A basic argument in this manual is that rural society has to be viewed in its totality because the problems are interlinked and have several dimensions. The proposed analysis is diagnostic in its nature, and it focuses on the rural household. The manual is divided into two parts: in part 1 the analytical approach is presented and an introduction is given how to apply it. Part 2 contains the format for information generation. A very extensive piece of work.

BRISCOE, J. AND DE FERRANTI, D.

1988 Water for Rural Communities: Helping People Help Themselves. The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

The central message of this report is that it is the local people themselves, not those trying to help them, who have the most important role to play in improving their water supplies. The community itself must be the primary decision-maker, the primary investor, the primary organizer and the primary overseer. The authors examine the implications of this 'primary' principle for the main policy issue – the level of service to be provided in different settings, the level of mechanisms for cost recovery, the roles for the private and public sectors, and the role of women.

BRUCE, J.W.

1989 Rapid Appraisal of Tree and Land Tenure. Community Forestry Note no. 5, FAO, Rome.

In this report Bruce examines from a household point of view, the opportunities for tree planting and tree use within three established tenure types. He sees that the critical task is not the adjustment of tenure arrangements, but the utilization of the information gathered to design a forestry technology appropriate to the community and its tenure pattern. Bruce also comments on the use of RRA for tree and land tenure in community forestry and recommends that various techniques be used. He argues that the approach should be one of caution and humility and argues that the success of RRA and tenure ultimately depends on the previous experience of the team in the locale and the availability of information. In his conclusion Bruce emphasizes that RRA is not normally an appropriate vehicle for development of strategies beyond the hypothesis stage.

CASELY, D.J AND KUMAR, K.

1988 The Collection, Analysis and use of Monitoring and Evaluation Data. A World Bank Publication, The John Hopkins Univ. Press, Baltimore, MD.

This volume provides simple, practical methods for collecting and analyzing data for monitoring and evaluating agricultural projects. Each chapter deals with a specific area of data collection, analysis and use. The subjects covered are qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, structured surveys, sampling problems, crop measurement, preliminary and exploratory analysis of data, formal analysis, and data presentation. The authors emphasize qualitative interviewing methods and explain how to design qualitative surveys and how to use methods of participant observation. They also describe various aspects of quantitative methods for gathering and analyzing data such as sample theory and selection, but treat as well the possible pitfalls of quantitative methods and when these techniques may not be appropriate.

CERNEA, M. (ed)
1991 Putting People First, Sociological Variables in Rural Development. (2nd edition), A World Bank publication, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

In this book, fourteen authors analyze World Bank projects, both successes and failures in rural development, partly ex post, partly ex ante. The papers are largely but not exclusively the result of mid-term or final evaluation of projects initiated and financed by the World Bank in the fields of irrigation, agricultural settlements, livestock development, forestry, fishery and road construction. All of them plead for the need to include sociological and anthropological analysis, advice and consultancy in all rural development projects.

CHAMBERS, R.
1983 Rural Development: Putting the Last First, Longman, New York.

The central theme of the book is that rural poverty is often unseen or misperceived by outsiders, particularly those who are not rural and poor themselves. The author contends that researchers, scientists, administrators and fieldworkers rarely appreciate the richness and validity of rural people's knowledge, or the hidden nature of rural poverty. He argues for a new professionalism, with fundamental reversals in outsiders' learning, values and behaviour, and proposes more realistic action for tackling poverty.

FAO
1986 Guidelines for Designing Development Projects to Benefit the Rural Poor. FAO, Rome.

A comprehensive, systematic and practical guide to formulate development projects which emphasize increasing participation of the rural poor. The guidelines present a "process approach" that emphasizes built-in flexibility and variety of project design that allows for greater responsiveness to different local needs and conditions. Especially useful in a baseline context are the parts on project design and the excellent table on data collection methods for project design, where the advantages and disadvantages of different methods are discussed.

FREUDENTHAL, S., NARROWE, J.
1991 Focus on People and Trees: A Guide to Designing and Conducting Community Baseline Studies for Community Forestry. Development Studies Unit, Report no. 20, University of Stockholm, Sweden.

This guide provides a general framework for designing and conducting a community forestry baseline study. It begins with an exploration of what a baseline study is, when to do a baseline and how to do it. It includes steps needed to design and conduct a baseline study, data collection methods to be used and which information is needed. A section on who should conduct the study and who needs the information, as well as how to write a baseline study is also included.

FUJISAKA, SAM
1989 Participation by Farmers, Researchers and Extension workers in Soil Conservation, Gatekeeper Series No. SA16, IIED, London.

This paper describes examples from several projects how to develop methods for use in national programme by which farmer adoption of soil conservation technologies can be made widespread and sustainable. The critical component is participation: farmer participation in this research and extension is a necessary condition for adoption to occur and this participation should be built into the whole process from problem identification to technology development and transfer.

HABITAT
1985 Community Participation in Squatter-settlement Upgrading Training Module, United Nations Centre for Human Settlement, Habitat, Nairobi.

This course module has been prepared for a training course in community participation in the execution of squatter-settlement upgra-

ding projects. The volume aims at making community participation effective in various stages of planning and implementing sites and services projects, with the purpose of carrying out projects that match the needs and resources of the squatters.

KHON KAEN UNIVERSITY
1987 Proceedings of the 1985 International Conference on Rapid Rural Appraisal. Rural Systems Research and Farming systems Research Projects, Khon Kaen, Thailand.

This is the best single reference to RRA techniques and the range of applications. The articles resulted from a 1985 workshop and cover general methods, interview techniques and survey pointers and case applications. There is also a companion case study volume to this one.

KUMAR, K.
1987 Rapid, Low-Cost Data Collection Methods for A.I.D. A.I.D Program Design and Evaluation Report no. 10, Washington, D.C.

This excellent guide is written for A.I.D. managers who commission studies to gather information in order to design, implement, monitor and evaluate development projects and programs. It focuses on five major types of rapid, low-cost methods: key informant interviews, focus group interviews, community interviews, direct observation and informal surveys. It also discusses their uses, advantages and limitations as well as the skills and time required to conduct studies utilizing on them.

LEWIN, ELISABETH
1992 Evaluation Handbook for SIDA SIDA, Stockholm

The main purpose of the handbook is to explain the role of evaluations to programme officers and to help programme officers commission evaluations. A second purpose is to explain SIDAs view on evaluations to the consultants performing them. The handbook also outlines step by step guiding principles for how to evaluate projects and programmes and must thus be seen as a companion to FOCUS ON THE FIELD.

MCCRACKEN, J., PRETTY, J., CONWAY, G.
1988 An Introduction to Rapid Rural Appraisal for Agriculture Development, International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED), London.

This is a supplement to RRA as developed by IIED, London, which uses agroecosystems analysis as a core approach for organizing the RRA tool kit. This manual describes training programs and includes an annotated bibliography and list of network experts.

PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL HANDBOOK.
1991 World Resource Institute and Egerton University, Kenya.

This is a guide for village leaders and field extension officers working in local resource management. Although it is based on PRA in Kenya, it is broadly applicable to other contexts. PRA is a simple methodology that brings a village focus to rural development and enables rural communities to participate in preparing and implementing Village Resource Management Plans. These plans support village-based projects which lead to sustainable natural resource management.

POLLNAC, RICHARD
1988 Evaluating the potential of Fishermen's Organizations in Developing Countries. ICMRD, The University of Rhode Island, Kingston.

The purpose of this guide is to provide users with information which will be of use in understanding social and cultural factors influencing the development of fishermen's organizations. It contains instructions for obtaining social and cultural information which can be used for evaluating a fishery, and for determining the usefulness and viability of fisherman's organizations. It provides guidelines for using the information in decision making during the implementation of fishermen's organizations.

RUDQVIST, A.
1990 Fieldwork Methods for Consultations and popular Participation, Working Paper No 9, Popular Participation Programme, Development Studies Unit, University of Stockholm, Sweden.

This report consists of a presentation of selected fieldwork methods to be employed in consultations with the beneficiaries of development projects at the grassroots level in order to encourage popular participation. The methods presented are: Key informant interviews, focus group interviews, community interviews, direct observation, ranking techniques, participant observation.

SALMEN, L.F.
1987 Listen to the People: Participant-observer Evaluation of Development Projects. A World Bank Publication, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford.

The book demonstrates how anthropological techniques of participant observation can be applied in the context of economic development to enable project managers to solve some of the problems they encounter and to adapt projects to the values and needs of the poor. It also reports on the participant-observer evaluation method, its advantages and pitfalls, and how it can be used in the design and management of development projects.

SCRIMSHAW, S.C.M, AND HURTADO, E.
1987 Rapid Assessment Procedures for Nutrition and Primary Health Care. Anthropological Approaches to Improving Programme Effectiveness. The United Nations University/ UNICEF/UCLA, Los Angeles, CA.

Rapid Assessment Procedures contains specific instructions for the use of anthropological methods to conduct rapid assessments of health and health-seeking behaviours at the household level and interactions with traditional and modern health care providers. Sample data collection instruments, examples of field techniques and discussion of data management and analysis are included. The guide is designed to be used by social scientists, health workers and researchers.

SIDA
1991 Riktlinjer for miljökonsekvensbedömningar i biståndet (Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessments within Development Cooperation), SIDA, Stockholm.

The guidelines give concise step by step guiding principles for administrators/programme officers in evaluating the environmental consequences of projects. The appendices contain brief general method of approach, followed by analysis according to sector.