

The Tools and How to Use Them

The Tools

The tools of PAME are the instruments that are used to gather, synthesise, and analyse information in a way that is appropriate and participatory.

The tools should be approached with an open mind; they may have to be adapted and re-thought for each situation. Think of them as "ideas" that may be developed to respond to the field reality. Experiment with them to determine what will work, what will be more participatory. Combine the tools in different ways, for example, use some of the Ranking, Rating, and Sorting "games" to make Surveys more interesting. Combine a Case Study with Popular Theatre or a Puppet Show.

Many of the tools work individually to gather and analyse information, while helping develop communication skills. Drawing and Discussion is one example of such a tool. Other tools are more specific, such as Survival Surveys.

All of the tools, because they are developed with and for the community, serve also as extension and learning tools. Be flexible! If one tool is not working well, re-think it or suggest another one.

Choosing the best tool for a situation is a unique and creative process. To assist in narrowing the choices of appropriate tools from the wide range of possibilities offered, some tips on determining which tool the community might find most useful are discussed in this chapter, along with a list of the main characteristics of tools and some sampling methods.

This chapter presents the tools in a way which seeks to encourage creativity and flexibility. The following descriptions are brief, as most are adaptations of tools with which most field staff are familiar. There are methodological texts for many of these tools and the following is not a substitute for more detailed instruction on sample selection, sample size, or research design. This description is focused on how the tools may be or may have been adapted to strengthen local participation.

Enjoy the tools! PAME should be an exciting, dynamic learning experience for everybody.

The Tools and How to Use Them

Some Guidelines for Choosing the Most Appropriate Tool for a Community

- Watch and listen* Become aware of how community members think and communicate information. This will give you clues as to what tools might work best. For example, you might ask a number of people directions to the next village, and observe the ways they relay this information. People from one culture may draw a map on the ground. This could mean that visual tools would work best for them. People from a second culture may give instructions such as "go 17 kilometres down the road then turn south". These people may be comfortable with the written tools. A third culture might respond: "Go to the village market, and when you reach the petrol kiosk, go down the road beside it until you come to a leaning tree with a large branch hanging down. There are two roads there. Take the one which has two tracks." People from this community might find the story-telling and drama tools the most appropriate.
- Observe* Do they have books and magazines in their homes? Do they have pictures decorating their homes? Do they use symbols to decorate their implements? These kinds of observations will give clues as to which communication type (written, oral or visual) is basic to the community.
- Ask* Ask how information is relayed around the community. Is it exclusively by word-of-mouth? Are there newspapers? Posters?
- Discover* Investigate what local problem solving and information gathering techniques are already being used in the community. Are these effective?
- Reflect* Think about which extension efforts have worked well (or not so well) in the community in the past.
- Choose* Knowing which methods of communication are most commonly used in a community will help the field worker to make a "short list" of tools that are likely to work in a particular setting. The community can choose the tools they would like to try from the "short list". New tools should only be introduced if local systems are not working and the tools familiar to the community are not working. The tools in this chapter can supplement, as necessary, those already being used.

An Overview of the Tools

The following list shows the main characteristics of tools (visual, oral or written). Each (●) is the value of the tool within each characteristic, with (●●●●●●) being the highest value. For example, meetings have value to all characteristics, but mainly in the oral category.

TOOL	VISUAL	ORAL	WRITTEN
Group Meetings	●	●●●●	●
Drawing/Discussion	●●●	●●	●
Murals/Posters	●●●●●	●	
Flannel Boards	●●●●	●	●
Open-ended Stories		●●●●●	●
Unserialised Posters	●●●●	●●	
Community Case Studies		●●●●	●●
Historical Mapping	●●●	●●	●
Semi-structured Interviews		●●●●	●●
Ranking, Rating, Sorting	●●●●	●●	●
Community Environmental Assessment	●●	●●	●
Survival Surveys	●●●		●●●
Participatory Action Research	●●	●●	●●
Maps and Mapping	●●●●	●	●
Fisherfolk's Own Records	●●●		●●●
Fish Landing Record Books	●●●		●●●
Community Financial Accounts	●●●		●●●
S.W.O.L. Analysis	●	●●●●	●
Popular Theatre	●●●	●●●	
Puppet Theatre	●●●	●●●	
Community Directed Visual Images	●●●●	●●	
Community Directed Tape Recordings		●●●●●●	
Community Directed Video	●●●	●●●	

Sampling Methods

When collecting some kinds of information it is important to choose a sample of the people from whom you are going to obtain information that will provide the most accurate information. If statistically valid information is required, rather than "a pretty good idea", it is best to get assistance with sampling methods. Sample size is explained in the next section.

Systematic sampling Every person, household or fishing boat for example is given a number. Then every fifth, tenth, etc. person, household or fishing boat is chosen for the sample, until the required sample size is obtained

Simple random sampling Where records or lists, for example of people or catch exist, a certain number of them can be chosen using a random sampling method. Assign each a number and write it on individual pieces of paper. Put all the pieces of paper in a basket and pick (without looking!) one by one, from the basket until the desired sample size is obtained. Random sampling methods are used to reduce bias.

Stratified random sampling Some groups or strata, for example, the population of people, the households or fish catch, are separated (for example people owning their own boats or working for someone else, large households and small households, fish species for home consumption and fish species for export). Each group/strata can then be treated as a separate case, and a sample established for each group/strata.

Cluster sampling People, households or fish catch, can be chosen in group or clusters and not on an individual basis. For example, villages around two particular landing sites might provide two different "clusters". Within each cluster, a random sampling method is used

Multi-stage random sampling Samples can be selected using random sampling, but at different times or stages. For example, one stage may be 100 fishing boats. A random sample would be chosen from these 100 (it could be 15). The next stage would be fish caught. On these 15 boats 15,000 may be caught. A sample of fish could be 750 (5%), or 50 fish from each of the 15 boats, or another method could be every 10th fish caught (10%) for each boat surveyed, so that there will be as little bias as possible in choosing which fish to survey.

Quota sampling A certain number of samples of, for example, people, households or fish catch or a quota of information may be required. The person taking the information goes out looking for information, and stops when the quota is reached. For example, going to the market and questioning people who are willing to talk until the necessary quota has been completed. This method relies on personal judgement, such as who is willing to talk and who is at the market. The information from this sampling method will therefore be biased.

Sample size

Generally, the larger the group to be sampled (for instance: people, households, boats or fish catch) the smaller the percentage to be used may be. The following table can help determine the sample size needed.

Size of Group	Suggested Sample	Percentage
100	15	15%
200	20	10%
500	50	10%
1000	50	5%

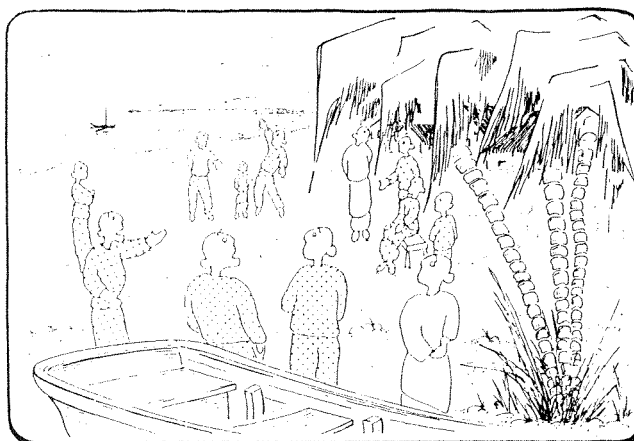
Group Meetings

Description

A meeting is a coming together of people for a specific purpose. The meeting can involve a large number of people, or a smaller number of people (under 10), who focus on a specific problem or purpose. Meetings generally have a facilitator who encourages two-way communication. Smaller focus group meetings can be made up of people with common concerns, such as women, fishermen, boat builders or people who are poor, who can speak comfortably together, share common problems and a common purpose. The outputs from focus group meetings can be presented to larger group meetings, giving a "voice" to those in the community who are unable or unwilling to speak up in a larger meeting.

Purpose

- Give and receive information
- Discuss issues of relevance to the community
- Receive community agreement on an issue
- Help identify problems and solutions
- Plan activities and negotiate conflicts
- Validate evaluation results and formulate recommendations



Benefits

- A large number of people can be reached in a relatively short period of time.
- Meetings are usually the first and most consistent exposure of the programme staff to the community as a whole. It may very well be here that the cohesion and trust of the community is gained.
- Community meetings with open invitations can mean that all those who wish to participate may do so.
- Focus groups meetings can bring together those who have a particular problem; those who cannot speak up at large meetings (such as women or minority groups) or those who are peripherally involved, such as middle market people.

- Regular small group meetings can foster group discipline, encourage a co-operative approach to identifying and solving problems, provide a forum for decision making by consensus, provide a practical means of developing shared leadership, promote activities, and to share experiences.

Using the Group Meeting tool

A lot of careful planning goes into a successful meeting. Two-way communication must be fostered, interest must be maintained and "work" must get done. These steps can help to plan a good meeting.

1. Have a clear purpose. Know what the meeting is to accomplish, from both outsiders' and insiders' perspectives. Obtain the approval and involvement of the local leaders. Be aware of the customs and protocol of the village.
2. Prepare a calendar of dates to help check day-to-day preparations.
3. Arrange a convenient time and place for the meeting. Consider the size and composition of the group. Remember that people have different time constraints, women may not be available to attend at the same time as men.
4. After establishing a time when most can attend, let people know about it well in advance.
5. If outsiders are involved, they may require accommodation and food.
6. Inform the community or the group of the purpose of the meeting using posters, home visits, public announcements, radio, telephone and/or word of mouth.
7. If entertainment is planned, ensure that it does not detract from the main purpose of the meeting, but lends itself to the topic.
8. Plan/prepare handouts/materials to be distributed. Plan a method of distribution.
9. Plan focus groups and feedback mechanisms if necessary.
10. Plan a strategy to encourage discussions, like preparing leading questions; stop the slide show or film in the middle and open discussions; or have insiders create their own "endings". Think always of TWO-WAY communication, and how to adapt extension aids from one-way to two-way communication .

A community person such as a schoolteacher or local leader, with experience in meetings, can help facilitate the meeting. Consider that there may be factions of a community (women for example) who are unable or unwilling to speak up. Separate meetings with these people can be held, and their perspectives as a whole brought back to the larger meetings.

11. Expect that there will be high turnout at the beginning with decreases over time as only those especially interested or involved will attend. A focus group meeting can usually handle activities, with large meetings periodically to inform the whole community. If the turnout at meetings changes abruptly, look for the cause.

When facilitating meetings it is important to:

- prepare and check visual aids, audio aids, and electrical outlets or generator power well before meeting;
- ensure that there is a comfortable, pleasant atmosphere. Arrange snacks/drinks when appropriate;
- make the introduction brief, and tailor it specifically for those attending;
- make the purpose of the meeting clear in the introduction and place that purpose in the context of past, present and future events;
- begin and end at more-or-less the stated time;
- start with items/topics/issues on which it is easy to get agreement or acceptance of differences of opinion;
- allow conflicting opinions to emerge and try either to have these differences resolved or accepted by the group;
- summarise the proceedings, outline the decisions that have been made and identify next steps". Confirm time and place of next meeting;
- try to end on a high "positive" note.

Precautions

Beware of hidden agendas, groups who might use the meeting to bring up their own concerns. The facilitator might side-step this by saying, "That's not the purpose of this meeting, you might want to hold another meeting to discuss that issue".

The facilitator of the meeting must have enough authority to keep the meeting on track, but enough sensitivity to include as many people in the discussions as possible.

The community or group may put the facilitators in a position of "expert" and expect them to carry the whole meeting. Develop methods that foster participation.

Remember - there is no such thing as a perfect meeting. Always try and get feedback from the group about how you 'performed' - it will help you in the future!