

WEALTH RANKING

CONDUCTED WITH THE VILLAGE LEADERSHIP

AIM: TO SELECT PARTICIPANTS WHO ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LOCAL POPULATION FOR THE TOOLKIT EXERCISES

In order to understand how poor households use and are dependent on forest resources, it is important that they can be readily identified for interviews. But since the activities of average and wealthy households also have an impact on both the access of the poor to forest resources and on the use of forest resources by the community, it is important to be able to identify not only the poor, but other households as well.

“Wealth ranking”¹ is firstly a tool to discuss the attributes of “rich”, “average”, “poor” and “very poor” people in the selected area, and then to rank all the households in the area against these criteria, into the categories selected. Since wealth ranking takes several hours, and only involves a small subset of villagers (usually village leaders, and sub-village heads who know the households they are responsible for, and their wealth levels, pretty well) this is essentially a pre-tool that needs to be undertaken a day or two before the main exercise. This gives time for leaders to locate the household representatives who will be selected, to make sure they are able to come on the chosen day, or to find a same category substitute.

However, wealth is a contentious issue and—especially as this is the first tool—a lot of care and sensitivity is needed to get it right. Experience during the development of the toolkit included the Cameroon team’s use of the terms “long fingers” and “short fingers” as acceptable local synonyms for “wealthy” and “poor”. The Ghana team avoided the terms “rich” and “poor” by talking

about “house owners”, “coffee farmers”, “seasonal crop farmers” and “landless/ jobless”. The Madagascar team used the terms “rich” and “poor” only with a small group of elders for Tool 1 but in the sessions and plenary report-back labeled the groups A, B, C, D (although people could obviously see the differences among the groups for themselves, these labels avoided embarrassment). The Uganda team succeeded in the wealth ranking by explaining first that the purpose of the ranking was to avoid the usual bias towards wealthy men.

STEP 1

LOCAL DEFINITIONS OF “EXTREME POVERTY”, “POVERTY”, “AVERAGE” AND “WEALTHY”.

The team begins by identifying what criteria are commonly used in the area to classify a household as being in one of these categories. The objective is to identify three or four key indicators or criteria for each on which there is agreement among informants that adequately define the broad economic categories. Key informants include community leaders as well as households.

Materials needed: Flip charts, blank walls or a display area to pin or stick them up where they can be seen, marker pens.

Criteria may include the number of months a year that a household can normally grow its own food, the numbers of animals it owns, the amount of land it holds, the

1 In Indonesian Papua, where mention of the wealth or poverty of individuals was deemed to be unacceptable, discussion with the intermediary NGO led to the choice of ‘old’ and ‘young’ as the proxies for male ‘wealth’ and ‘poverty’. Women constituted a third, undifferentiated group in this location. While reviewers have suggested other location-specific criteria which might be considered as well (ethnicity, caste, etc.), it is our view that the guiding principle should be the capacity to make a contribution to the PRS processes. For that, some attempt to identify the rich, poor and very poor, by whatever appropriate local means, is essential.

materials out of which the house is built, and the valuables it is known to own (such as a plough, a bicycle, a cart, a tractor or other vehicle). Being old and alone and living on the charity of non-relatives may be a sign of extreme poverty.

In Tanzania, animal ownership and numbers owned, together with the amount of land held, were the key criteria. Costly housing materials and consumer durables were not regarded as very important.

STEP 2

WHICH HOUSEHOLDS?

After the criteria are agreed upon, a sample frame is needed to generate a complete list of all households. This information may come from the village register, or it may be accessible by simply obtaining a listing from each sub-village head of the households in his/ her quarter of the village. A technique that enables a quick ranking is to put the names of each household onto a card or piece of paper. The village committee then uses the criteria already generated to sort the cards into tins, boxes or baskets which represent the four categories selected.

Materials needed: Small index cards and marker pens; four big tins, boxes or baskets for sorting into.

The first sorting provides a snapshot of the village when cards are counted and the number of households in each category is identified. The “poor” and “very poor” categories will probably encompass the bulk of the village.

STEP 3

SELECTING HOUSEHOLDS TO INTERVIEW.

The team then selects 40 households to request to provide a male or female adult household member to participate in Tools 3, 4 and 5. Given the short time of the field assessment, only a relatively small number of households can be sampled, and by selecting relatively homogeneous groups to go through the subsequent tools together may be the least time-consuming way to work.

The team needs to select:

- a wealthy/average male group drawing five names from each category - 10 in all
- a wealthy/average female² group drawing five names from each category - 10 in all
- a poor/very poor male group drawing five names from each category - 10 in all
- a poor/very poor female group drawing five names from each category - 10 in all

The aim should be to select the 10 households randomly from each category, to avoid biases that come in if the choice is made deliberately. However, there will be some limitations to random sampling, such as availability of household members for the period of time needed to undertake the tools. The 40 participants will need to be able to spare about three days for Tools 3-5, either in a single block or broken up to fit into their schedules.

2 The females selected for the two female groups do not need necessarily to be from female-headed households (though some will be). This is a rough and ready exercise and there is no one correct way to conduct the toolkit exercises.

EXAMPLE OF WEALTH INDICATORS FROM NYANTONZI PARISH, MASINDI DISTRICT, UGANDA

indicator	Land ownership	Land size	Livestock	Ownership of other assets	Quality of housing	Source of income	Education	Source of livelihood (non- cash)	Social behaviour
Very poor household	Individuals may have no land. They may have land but do not work. (lazy)	0.25 acre.	They have no livestock. Those who may have sell off immediately.	No assets.	Small grass huts with walls made of grass and no doors. No latrines too.	Income is obtained from casual labour and stealing.	Have never been to school.	They work for food, beg or steal.	They have small families, unstable and tend to migrate to avoid being held accountable for bad practices e.g. stealing
Poor household	May have land i.e. inherited.	At least 2 acres.	May have land, and own about 1-5 goats, chicken and a pig.	May have a bicycle, small radio and a disco watch.	The houses are usually of mud and grass thatch, well maintained with a kitchen and latrine.	Income comes from sale of agricultural products, casual labor, renting out land and sale of livestock and crafts.	May have studied up to primary level.	Grow own food crops.	Usually have big families and store cereals.
Average Wealthy household	Own land (inherited), buy land and may grab land.	8-15 acres of land.	May have between 10-15 chickens, 7-10 goats, 3 pigs and 2 ducks with dogs to protect them.	May own a good looking bicycle, family motorcycle, grinding mill, radio cassette and a mobile phone.	Houses usually of mud walls but roofed with iron sheets have a grass-thatched kitchen and latrine.	Income comes from sale of puppies and livestock, sale of agricultural products (from own farm or bought), sugarcane selling (out growers) and milling.	May have gone through secondary level education although could be rich without education.	Have got many opportunities	Boastful, "Ebin-tu biruho"
Wealthy household	Own land by lease, buying or grabbing.	15 acres and more.	May have about 30 local chicken 15-20 goats, 5 pigs, 5 ducks, 2 turkeys, 2 dogs, 8 sheep and between 20-25 cattle.	May own grinding mill, television, radio cassette and a phone.	Brick walled and iron roofed houses, kitchens and latrines.	Rent out their buildings, sell sugarcane (out growers), and sell livestock. They also get income from milling.	May have gone through post secondary education.	Have many opportunities	Boastful, "Ebintu biruho muno, nkutere nkugure"

