

Session Outline

Following is a suggested outline of sessions to be conducted during the course in addition to the field practise. Two weeks is the recommended length for the course, to allow sufficient time for field practise. The actual length can be adjusted according to the participants' needs and the schedule of the sponsoring agency. The amount of time allotted for each session and the days on which the sessions take place have been left unspecified to allow for maximum flexibility.

- SESSION 1: Course Overview and Icebreaker
- SESSION 2: Introduction to Participatory Programme Development
- SESSION 3: The Participatory Programme Development Process
- SESSION 4: Behaviour and Attitudes of the PLA Facilitator
- SESSION 5: Encouraging Communication
- SESSION 6: Team Building
- SESSION 7: PLA Preparation
- SESSION 8: Introduction to PLA Tools and Semi-Structured Interviews
- SESSION 9: Mapping
- SESSION 10: Transect Walks and Observation
- SESSION 11: Time Lines and Sequencing
- SESSION 12: Diagramming
- SESSION 13: Card Sorting
- SESSION 14: Ranking, Scoring, and Matrices
- SESSION 15: Community Action Plan Creation and Follow-Up
- SESSION 16: Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
- SESSION 17: Field Work Preparation
- SESSION 18: Presentations and Closure

Preparing and Conducting the Course

A. Number of Participants

This training is ideally designed for approximately 18-25 participants, who are divided into participatory learning and action (PLA) teams of five to six members each for the field work. It is essential to keep the number of participants in each team small, so that each team member has the opportunity to participate fully.

B. Training Needs Assessment

It is important for the trainers to contact each participant before the course in order to conduct a thorough needs assessment. The initial contact can be made by mailing or faxing a questionnaire, and then following up with a phone call if possible. The needs assessment should cover the following:

- ✓ *Description of current job duties, and whether participant is currently using PLA*
- ✓ *Degree of past experience with PLA, if any*
- ✓ *Any particular concepts or techniques that the participant would like to learn*
- ✓ *Languages spoken (for the field practise)*

C. Training Site

The “classroom” training site should be as close as possible to the community where the field work will be conducted. At the training site, there should be an outdoor area where participants can practise PLA techniques on the ground.

D. Identifying Field Sites

This course is designed so that participants have three to five days to either conduct or observe PLA in the field, depending on the schedules of the sponsoring agency and the community. This will not be enough time for the participants to complete the whole participatory programme development process, which can take many months or even years. The sponsoring agency will be responsible for continuing to work with the community after the training is completed.

To find field sites for the PLA workshop, the trainers should identify existing community development agencies (referred to in this manual as “sponsoring agencies”) that are currently conducting PLA activities or would like to use PLA in the future. Although these agencies would ideally be working in the health field, it is also possible to collaborate with agencies working in other related sectors (e.g., water and sanitation, gender, education). These agencies can provide a venue for the field experience, by letting the participants either conduct or observe PLA exercises. If they agree to host the course participants, the agencies must agree to continue the PLA process after the training is over.

PLA workshops have traditionally been conducted in rural areas, but they can also be conducted in urban and peri-urban areas, especially in neighbourhoods that have some sense of community, such as ethnic enclaves (see discussion of adaptation for urban areas at the end of this section). The facilitators should identify three small villages or neighbourhoods or one large village or neighbourhood where all three participant sub-groups can work simultaneously without overlapping in their efforts.

Once the sponsoring agency has identified a community to host the participants, the trainers need to visit the community with a representative of the sponsoring agency. During this visit, they need to meet with community leaders in order to explain the purpose of the PLA workshop and to ask for their support. The leaders can identify two or three community members to serve as a link between the participants and the rest of the community. These **community link persons** become part of the PLA team and help to facilitate PLA activities. They also work with community leaders to recruit a “core group” of community members who are willing to work with the participants throughout the entire PLA field experience.

It is essential that the trainers clearly explain to the community that the PLA work will be taking place in the context of a training and that the participants will not be able to provide any financial resources or technical assistance. The emphasis will be placed on encouraging the community to help itself. If the community requests further financial or technical assistance after it develops a community action plan, the sponsoring agency will assume responsibility for conducting the follow-up.

During this initial visit to the community, the trainers need to inquire about the work schedules of community members and when would be the most convenient meeting times for different groups (e.g., men, women, youth). It is important that these preferences be respected fully so that the participants impose on the community as little as possible.

E. *Preparing for Field work*

Upon arriving in the community to prepare for the field work, the trainers should ask the community to select one or two local artists to work with the group (young people often serve well in this capacity). During the preparation phase and also during the PLA workshop, the artist can produce various visual materials necessary for the PLA exercises.

If the participants conduct the PLA themselves (as opposed to observing), they divide themselves into teams of five to six people each (this self-selection of teams is done in Session 6). These teams will work in different villages or neighbourhoods, so that their efforts do not overlap. If the participants are simply observing PLA activities, the trainers will have to work with the sponsoring agency to determine how to divide the participants so that they are as unobtrusive to the community as possible.

F. *Daily Debriefings*

At the end of every day, the course trainers, participants, and community link persons spend several hours debriefing on the field experience. Each team discusses the day's activities, summarizes the information generated by community members, decides what information is still lacking, and formulates a strategy for the following day.

The information which has been collected needs to be summarized in an orderly fashion. One way is for each team to fill out an **activity report form** for each activity that they have conducted during the day. The forms, which can be prepared ahead of time by the trainers, summarize key information from each PLA activity and ensure that each team is recording the same types of information. An example of an activity report form, which trainers can adapt to their needs, appears in the Annex.

In addition to filling out summary forms for each activity, it is helpful for the participants to fill in a **daily summary matrix** of all the activities conducted during the day. This matrix can be drawn on flip chart paper, so that it is big enough to be read when posted on the wall. By the end of the field experience, the accumulated matrices provide participants with a clear, visual picture of all that they have accomplished. An example of a daily summary matrix appears in the Annex.

G. Training Evaluation

Three components are built into the training evaluation:

- 1) **Introductory case study:** During Session 1, participants are asked to read a brief case study and to answer questions in order to assess their knowledge of participatory programme development. They are given the case study back at the end of the course to make any changes based on what they have learned.
- 2) **Daily evaluation:** Time should be scheduled at the end of every day for the evaluation of the day's activities. ***This evaluation time can be part of the daily debriefings, when participants gather to summarize the information that was collected and strategize for the following day.*** Allotting this time enables everyone in the group to comment on the training and allows the trainers to modify the sessions according to the participants' needs and learning speeds. Trainers should let participants know that **it is very possible, and even desirable, that the agenda of the workshop will change over time.** What has been anticipated at the outset is not always what occurs, so it is necessary to be flexible throughout the workshop.

The daily evaluation can be done orally or by using a written questionnaire, which can be filled out anonymously. If done orally, the trainers must be careful not to become defensive if the participants make criticisms, although they can ask questions if comments are unclear. Typical questions for an evaluation include:

- What did you learn today that is most relevant to your work?
- What did you like most, and why?
- What should we do differently next time (or tomorrow)?
- What do you think the group did not like?
- What other comments do you have?

If the daily evaluation is in a written form, the trainers can ask for two volunteer participants to help them read through the evaluations every day. These volunteers can present a summary of the results the following morning.

- 3) Finally, participants are asked to complete a **final evaluation**, in which they are asked their opinion of the course content and whether the course has accomplished its stated objectives. A sample final_evaluation form appears in the Annex.

H. Final Presentations

At the end of the course, each of the three PLA teams is asked to give a presentation of its field experience. The presentations can be brief and informal, and the exact format can be decided by the trainers. The presentations should, at a minimum, include the following elements:

- Summary of activities conducted by the team
- Summary of findings
- Reflections on what they found most challenging about the field work
- Reflections on what they enjoyed most about the field work
- What they would do differently during their next field experience

I. Suggested Materials and Equipment

The following materials and equipment are required for the activities suggested in the training sessions:

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| ✓ Participant handbooks (see below) | ✓ Index cards or VIPP cards |
| ✓ Flip charts | ✓ VCR and monitor |
| ✓ Markers | ✓ Small rocks, seeds or beans |
| ✓ Tape | ✓ Training videos (see next page) |
| ✓ Paper and pens or pencils | ✓ Chalk (different colours, if possible) |

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOKS: The participant handbooks contain key points for each of the sessions so that participants do not have to take notes. They also contain case studies, a list of PLA resources and a section for taking notes during their field experience.

VIDEOS: Following is a list of suggested videos for use in this course. The trainers can substitute other videos as they feel appropriate.

- *Questions of Difference: PRA, Gender and Environment* (International Institute for Environment and Development -- IIED)
- *Putting the Last First* (Institute for Development Studies -- IDS)
- *Who Holds the Stick? PRA Attitudes and Behaviour* (IDS)
- *Groundwork: Participatory Research in Girls' Education* (The World Bank, Economic Development Institute – EDI)
- *SAGA: Participation in Practise* (Kenya Rural Domestic Water Supply and Sanitation Programme -- RDWSSP)

J. *How to use this manual*

This session is designed to expose participants to the different elements of Participatory Programme Development (PPD) in the same order in which the elements would be carried out in a real community. The manual moves from theory into the practice of specific PLA techniques in the training centre, and then into a discussion of how projects would be implemented. The field practice provides them with a chance to use their new skills in the context of a real community development project.

Each session is broken down into four components:

- Objectives
- Materials needed
- Activities
- Trainer's notes

At the beginning of the Trainer's Notes, the CONTEXT of each session is presented. It is very important to give this context to the participants so that they understand how the sessions and skills that they are learning fit together.

Urban Adaptations of PLA

Although participatory learning and action has traditionally taken place in rural areas, it can also be adapted to urban and peri-urban areas. The PLA process can be very fruitful in these areas, especially when the issues being addressed by the programme are urban-based (e.g., AIDS and commercial sex workers, urban sanitation). Urban and peri-urban areas may pose special challenges, however, as discussed below:

Different Definition of “Community”

While rural residents tend to share the same background and have a strong sense of community, urban residents come from a wide variety of backgrounds and geographic regions. Urban residents may have little in common with their neighbours, but they may be linked to other residents through work, studies or a common interest. Therefore, a different type of community may exist, which is defined not by geographic boundaries, but by other criteria.

Members of such communities may be less familiar with the geographic characteristics of their neighbourhood than they are with other characteristics, such as available resources. Therefore, some activities such as mapping will need to be adjusted accordingly.

Scheduling

Urban and rural residents have different labour patterns. Urban residents may work long hours in the formal sector or informal sector, and may spend a lot of time commuting between their work and their home. In addition, some urban residents, such as commercial sex workers, may work at night. Due to these varying work schedules, the trainers need to be flexible and creative when scheduling PLA activities. It is essential that trainers thoroughly inquire about community members' work patterns to determine whether or not the field practise will fit in with the community members' schedules.

“Ground Work”

It may be hard to conduct some of the participatory activities on the ground in urban areas, because of unsanitary conditions or lack of large, open spaces. Therefore, it may be helpful to bring a large, collapsible table which can be used for visual activities such as mapping and diagramming. Instead of drawing on the ground, moveable objects can be placed on the table.