

Equal Access Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation toolkit

Community Researcher Manual



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Overview

This manual was developed for community researchers who undertake research for Equal Access. It aims to give you a good understanding of the research process, the different tools you can use to do participatory research with the community, and how to manage research data and prepare good quality reports. This manual was prepared as part of the *Assessing Communication for Social Change* (AC4SC) project which was undertaken by two Australian universities in collaboration with Equal Access Nepal and Equal Access International from 2007 - 2011. It is a slightly modified version of a manual that was developed for community researchers in Nepal who took part in that project.

The manual is divided into five main sections:

1. **Introductory section:** This provides information about Equal Access, and three main concepts you need to understand to undertake research that will help you to assess the impacts of Equal Access programs. These concepts are: 'communication for social change', 'social change', and 'impact assessment'.
2. **The research cycle and your role:** This short section tells you about the whole program production, research and improvement cycle that is used by Equal Access, and your role in this process.
3. **Getting started:** This section gives you information about the things you need to do and think about before you begin your research. They include: listening to the radio programs, planning your research, and thinking about how to involve people, how to deal with power, gender and other difficult issues, and research ethics.
4. **Tools for community researchers:** This section contains detailed information about all the tools you can use to do your research. It also provides tips and information about getting more in-depth data and improving your research.
5. **Managing and reporting data and getting support:** This section tells you about how to organise the data you collect, how to prepare your reports and feed your results back to the community, and tips on how to get support from others.

The Assessing Communication for Social Change project

Assessing Communication for Social Change (AC4SC) is a four year research project that began in April 2007. A key aim of the project was to develop a methodology for assessing the impacts of Equal Access Nepal's radio programs, such as *Saathi Sanga Manka Khura* (Chatting with my best friend) and *Naya Nepal* (New Nepal). We were interested in what significant impacts these programs were having on social change, either directly or indirectly, in the mid to long term. This type of research helps us to learn more about what works and what does not work in our programs, and how they can better meet community needs and goals. It also helps us to identify people who are excluded from community discussion and decision making, and the

barriers to social change that need to be addressed. The project also assessed the value of ongoing community research in the evaluation and improvement of communication for social change programs. Important outcomes of the AC4SC project include:

- a network of eight trained community researchers in five case study areas
- a community researcher manual and training materials
- regular reports on community research into social change impacts
- ideas for improving the radio programs and listener club activities
- a system for feeding back data from community research to program makers to improve the radio programs and other activities such as listener clubs.

Using this manual

After you have completed your training, it will be useful to carefully read the sections of this manual with any information that is new to you. You may want to highlight the most important words or sentences as you read them. Before you begin your research ask yourself the key questions in the 'Research planning' section then prepare your research plan. Use the tips and examples to work out a good plan and develop suitable research questions, based on the key themes and questions that Equal Access is interested in. Good planning is essential to good quality research work.

Think about how you can include everyone in the research and which tools and methods would work best. Refer to the tools section for more ideas and information or talk with your Equal Access mentor. Use the contents page at the start of this manual to help you find tips and examples to help you more.

Once you become much clearer about your research work and more confident with using all the tools, you may just need to dip into this manual now and again. This will help to remind you about the purpose of your research and how your work can help to improve the programs made by Equal Access and to better meet its aim of creating positive social change.

Remember, if you are unsure about anything in this manual, please ask your mentor at Equal Access to explain it to you more.

Your feedback on this manual is very welcome!

Section 1: Introduction

Introduction to Equal Access

Equal Access makes radio programs which aim to create positive social change. It does this by providing information and education, working in partnership with local organisations and the community.

Equal Access aims to develop radio programs that meet community needs, and include feedback from audiences. It produces several radio programs that seek to empower listeners with information they need about important topics such as:

- early childhood development
- youth issues
- sustainable livelihoods
- women's empowerment
- education
- HIV/AIDS prevention
- reproductive health
- safe migration, and
- peace building.

To increase its impact, Equal Access also trains local leaders to run listener groups in their communities. Equal Access staff support these leaders to encourage positive change based on the strong role models and new information provided by the radio programs. Trained community reporters collect local voices to include in radio programs and to create discussion among people. They also collect some feedback about the radio programs from community members.

Introduction to key concepts and methods

What is Communication for Social Change?

Communication for Social Change (CFSC) programs aim to produce or influence different kinds of social change through communication. In particular, increased community discussion related to sensitive problems and issues such as political change, poverty, health and conflict reduction. The aim is for such discussion to be participatory and:

- to include all the different groups in a community (for example, younger and older people, women and men, and different ethnic groups);
- to be empowering; and
- to lead to positive and effective decision making and action.

Things that can trigger social change include the issues, people, technologies, and communication that help to stimulate dialogue. For example, a local community-based organisation may decide to raise awareness of a problem, such as increasing levels of HIV/AIDS, by holding a community workshop to discuss the problem. Alternatively, a radio program could raise awareness of an issue that leads to community discussion, such as how a change in the political system will work.

Ongoing research and evaluation plays a very important role in CFSC programs. Through doing participatory research and encouraging community members to regularly provide feedback on our programs we can assess:

- how well our programs are working
- how well they are achieving their objectives
- how they can be improved to better meet the diverse needs of community members and create positive social change
- what impacts our programs are having.

This information is given to our donors to show that the funding they have provided has led to a useful outcome. If our programs are working well we should receive further funding and resources. Taking part in research activities can help to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of people in speaking about and making decisions related to important issues affecting communities. They can then plan appropriate action to address the issues. They can also use these skills to plan and evaluate other community activities and projects they are involved in.

Box 1: Principles of Communication for Social Change

- Meaningful involvement of people who are directly affected by an issue in all stages of the process (from discussion to impact assessment)
- The belief that every voice should be listened to and heard
- Participation in and local ownership of the communication process and the content of the communication
- Collective decision-making and collective action
- Equality and respect for local cultures, cultural identity, beliefs and knowledge
- The belief that what is happening in the community has an impact on the communication process and that effective communication must have an impact on communities as well as on individuals
- Both private and public discussion and negotiation is essential to communication and for lasting social change

What is social change?

In the AC4SC project, we defined social change as:

Specific changes in such things as community discussion, knowledge, attitude and behaviour that are identified by community members. These changes are social and are directly or indirectly related to their involvement in the SSMK and Naya Nepal radio programs and related activities. Social change refers to changes to a social system. It is not simply about changes in individual people, even if that change is reflected in a number of individuals.

Social change happens in many different ways and has many different aspects. CFSC programs can produce both *intended* and *unintended* change. Change can be *expected* and *unexpected*. Our programs may have both *positive* and *negative* impacts. Change is not a linear cause and effect process but one in which small changes in a social system can potentially produce big ripple effects (see the example in Box 2).

Change comes about through a mixture of specific events, people and conditions that are present in a particular community or situation, as well as through our programs. They may all contribute something to that change. The nature of change is different in different contexts. Some change is gradual, while other change is sudden and unpredictable. Some sudden changes are local while some international changes can affect the context of our programs. Lasting social change can often take many years to come about.

Box 2: An example of social change

After hearing a Naya Nepal program about violence against women which was broadcast in their local language, a community in the Sunsari district of Nepal formed a listeners group which met regularly.

Before the listeners group was formed, men used to restrict women's activities in the community. Women had to cover their faces while they talked to men and it was not appropriate for men and women to sit together in public meetings. Also, men did not allow women to speak to people from outside the community.

After the group was formed, women were able to sit with men to listen to the program without having to cover their faces, and could speak to anyone they wanted to.

Listening to the program changed the attitudes of the men in this community towards women, who became more empowered to speak about the issues that affected them. In turn, this could lead to longer-term changes in the status of women. Eventually this could also lead to a reduction in traditional cultural practices that restrict women's ability to participate in decision making that affects their lives and wellbeing.

As this example suggests, when we use participatory research to assess social change we need to look beyond individual people to recognise that individuals live in complex social situations. These situations often prevent people from making choices that lead to positive social change.

This is because communities are governed by things such as gender and caste relationships, traditional cultural practices, and sexual customs that can affect the amount of change that occurs.

As part of your research, it is useful to identify community members' assumptions and ideas about:

- how change might have, or could come about in the future as a result of listening to the Equal Access radio programs or taking part in listener club and related community activities;
- the things that can trigger social change; and
- the barriers to social change in their community.

What is an impact assessment?

An impact assessment is a particular form of evaluation. At Equal Access, impact assessment involves looking for significant changes in the lives of people and communities, and in community organisations and groups (such as listener clubs) in the mid to long-term. So our focus is not on the immediate and direct outcomes of these programs, but on how social change is brought about in more long-term and/or in wider ranging ways. As we have already noted, this change might be unexpected or unintended and could take several years to happen.

Using ongoing community-based research to gather evidence of impacts in terms of long-lasting changes can help us to identify the things that lead to change. However, we also need to be aware that other activities might be partly responsible for the changes we identify. Using the right tools, we can explore and describe the role we think that Equal Access radio program activities have played in these changes.

So a key question for our impact assessment is:

In what ways do Equal Access radio programs and outreach activities lead to social change beyond the short-term delivery of the programs and people listening to the programs?

The answers might include impact in terms of improved knowledge and understanding among key target groups. It might include changes in social attitudes and behaviour around issues that the programs deal with, such as women's rights and sexual reproductive health.

An impact assessment also takes external factors that influence the effect of our CFSC programs into account. These factors could include things like:

- the amount of free time that people have to listen to the radio and take part in activities related to the radio programs or listener groups
- the level of education and employment in a community
- the number of young people in a community who have moved abroad for work or study
- how strongly held traditional beliefs are among community members

- how open community members are to changing traditional practices that discriminate against certain groups of people.

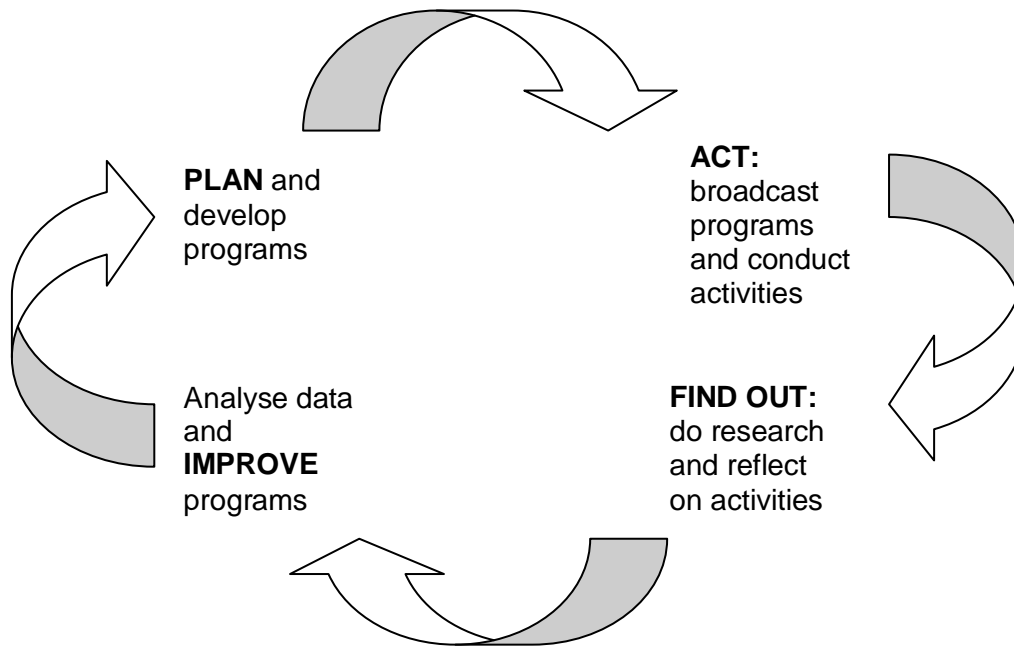
Some of the **benefits and uses of evaluations and impact assessments** include:

- provides a means of being answerable to our funding bodies, community partners and listeners
- to identify the important processes that led to the changes in order to demonstrate what works in different situations and why
- to improve the quality of our programs and activities so that they better meet community needs and goals.

Section 2: The research cycle and your role

The research cycle

The diagram below shows the basic cycle of program making, participatory research and ongoing improvement, and how your work as a community researcher fits into this cycle.



Each of the following steps in the cycle involves ongoing participation, communication and learning:

1. **Plan** and develop the radio programs and related activities and information. Equal Access radio programs are based on research with the community and up to date information on the topics covered in the programs. Our partner organisations and Content Advisory groups give us advice on the content of our programs. Other information and activities are also developed at this step. They may include magazines and reading materials for listeners, a program website, and training workshops for listener club facilitators, community researchers and community reporters.
2. **Act:** This step involves broadcasting the programs and conducting activities such as training and gathering letters and voices from the community for the programs. Equal Access also works closely with radio stations who create local versions of some programs. Listener clubs also take actions such as holding discussions, running awareness raising campaigns, and doing street theatre.
3. **Find out:** This step involves doing research that will help us to understand what impact our activities are having on social change, what people think about our programs, and how they could be improved. This information helps us to find out what's working, what's not

and why. It also helps us to better understand the local situation, how people are communicating and getting access to information, and the barriers to social change.

4. Analyse data and **improve** programs: This step involves making sense of all the data that has been collected and preparing reports on the results of the research. These results are later discussed with the program makers and others. Improvements are then made to the programs so that they better meet their objectives and community needs. We can also tell our donors what effects our programs appear to have had (whether directly or indirectly) and how well they are meeting their objectives. When we bring all the different data on our programs together we can learn more about how our programs bring about social change so that we can make better programs and local activities can be more effective. The outcomes of this research can also be shared with the community so that they can understand the value of listening to the programs and getting involved in activities such as listener clubs and community actions related to social and behavioural change.

This highlights the important role of your research in the cycle described above. If you do your work well, it can make a big difference to the quality of the radio programs and related activities and how well they meet their aim of creating positive social change.

Your role as a community researcher

As a community researcher, your main job is to share information with Equal Access about the lives, experiences, opinions and ideas of people in your communities and to facilitate community participation and engagement in the research process. Are they listening to our programs? If they are, what do they think about it, and how does it impact on their lives? If they are not, why not? What sort of actions are listener clubs taking and what impact do they have on your communities? What are the things that prevent social change in your communities, related to program themes? To find out these things, you need to do a range of things, including:

- listen to the radio programs each time they are broadcast
- talk to lots of different people and groups (including listener groups and community organisations) and encourage them to take part in research activities
- help with the listener groups, especially to get more people involved and to regularly listen to Equal Access programs
- find out about how things change in the mid to long-term as a result of listening to our programs and being involved with associated activities
- find out what your communities think about our programs
- find out what people want to hear about in future programs
- keep detailed field notes
- think about what is interesting in the data that you collect and discuss this with your mentor at Equal Access
- use the report template to prepare good quality and accurate reports on your work.

It is important that you regularly listen to the programs you are researching so that you are aware of the topics and issues discussed in the programs and the way that the programs were presented. This will enable you to do your work more effectively. Only if you listen will you be able to discuss the programs and the issues they covered with local people.

Section 3: Getting started

Listening carefully to the radio programs

Your research activities need to be closely linked to the radio programs you are researching and related activities such as listener clubs. It is therefore very important that you listen to the programs each time they are broadcast, or as often as possible.

Listening to the programs will help you to:

- better understand people's feedback about the programs
- have a good understanding about the topics discussed in the programs and the content of the programs
- plan your research more effectively and ask better questions
- learn about issues that may be part of your future research work.

Research planning

Before you start your research, it is important to plan your activities well. Careful planning will help you to produce more useful findings that can help Equal Access make better radio programs. You should plan so that you make sure you are involving a broad range of people in your research. A research plan also helps to guide your research work and get it done within the time required.

The first step in planning is to think about why you are conducting each piece of research.

- Is it to gather evidence of social changes that can be directly or indirectly linked to listening to the radio programs?
- Is it to collect feedback from the community about recent episodes of particular program and how they could better meet community needs?
- Is it to better understand the barriers to social change in your community?

Once you are clear about the purpose and aims of your research you can begin planning your research and working out what you need to carry out your research plan. If you are unclear about the aims of your research you should speak to your mentor at Equal Access as early as possible.

Each time you make a research plan you need to ask:

- Why am I doing this research?
- What information am I looking for?
- What methods are best suited to each research activity?
- Where will I carry out this research?
- Who will I involve in my research?

- What resources will I need?
- What risks could be involved in doing this research?
- How can I make the research results most useful to Equal Access?
- How can I make the research results most useful to my community?

Box 3: Example of a research plan

Research questions:

- Who are the poor in this place?
- What is the criteria for determining the poor?
- What are the needs and aspirations of the poor?
- How can the Akshaya project contribute to the reduction of information poverty in the study area?
- How do we integrate information technologies into communities?
- How do we prioritise local content creation (at the community level)?

Time period: 2 months

Research team: Akshaya project staff, facilitators (entrepreneurs, Ward members, social animators, social workers, self help group members) and members of the community

Research area: Around the W VDC area

Method(s)	Number/type/ participants	Timeframe	Documentation
Meeting with staff and volunteers	Two times	First week & Beginning of 8 th week	Minutes Field notes Research draft
Collection of secondary data and sampling of the study area.	Demography, education, housing, self help groups's and non-government organisations	First week	Collate information and sort out issues. Field notes
Formation of facilitatory group	5 facilitatory groups for 5 clusters	First week	Field notes
Participant observation	ongoing	2 months	Field notes loaded on to the web site
Group Interviews	4		Notes and website
In-depth interviews	20 and 8 with service providers		Collate responses and transcript
Questionnaire survey			Collate responses and transcript
Participatory techniques: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapping • Ranking • Daily activity charts • Seasonal calendars • Other techniques depending on the field reality 	Ongoing 35 – 50	6 weeks	Maps, diagrams, field notes, photos, transcripts
Community group meeting	2	Monthly information – gathering and sharing	Field notes, minutes, research draft
Preparation of final research draft	-----	8 th week	Research document

Asking these questions will help to make sure that your research is useful and based on ethical research principles. Good planning is essential to good quality research. Every research plan will look different because each plan is based on different research aims and objectives. The selection of the best tools and the right participants is another part of the planning stage. Once you have written your research plan, you can conduct your research using and adapting the methods that you have chosen. If you later decide that you want to add other methods that are not in your plan, you can change the plan as required by the research situation. Box 3 provides an example of a research plan.

Resources for your research

Time

No matter what research method you use, you will need to think about how long each method will take to complete. Each method will take a different amount of time. This needs to be considered when you are planning how many interviews or group activities you want to conduct and how much time you and your participants have free. You also need to think about how long it will take to write up your field notes, and to prepare your reports. Writing accurate notes can take some time but is a very important part of the research process.

All the tasks required to do your research and write up your findings will usually take longer than you expect. This means that you need to be very realistic in your planning and allow plenty of time to carry out each research task. If you pay careful attention to detail during the planning stage you will ensure that you don't put yourself under too much pressure!

People

Your research work relies on your close ties to and communication with different people and groups in your community and with your mentor at Equal Access. How many different people do you know who would be happy to take part in your research? If you can encourage an interest in research in your community, others may help you with some research tasks. They may also be willing to keep some notes, based on their observations.

The more local support you have, the easier it will be to conduct your research. Your mentor at Equal Access can give you information about local partner organisations and people who were active in listener clubs in the past. More details about involving people in your research and who could become involved in your research are given a little later in this section of the manual.

Research questions

You will be given some key research questions related to program themes and objectives. These questions might be the focus of your research work for several months. However, you will need to develop some questions for activities such as interviews.

It is important to plan your interviews well beforehand. You will need to think about the best order for your questions and the best ways of asking questions. You need to be flexible about when you ask certain questions during an interview. Examples of interview schedules and plans are provided in the section on interviews.

Box 4: Tips on developing interview questions

Think about the people you will be interviewing before you develop your interview schedule. Your questions should be suitable for the specific people and situations involved in the interview. The way that your questions are worded should be appropriate and easily understood by all of your interviewees. Take particular care when your questions are on sensitive topics.

Ensure that each question has a purpose. It is sometimes tempting to include a long list of questions in our interview schedules. However, if you have too many questions your interview may take too long and may not be completed. So you need to consider the purpose of every question and how it relates to the overall aim of the research. If the question is not relevant it should be removed.

Order your questions in the best way. You should group each set of questions by the topic of the questions. The questions that are most important to your research should be put at the beginning.

Ask general questions first. It is good to begin an interview with general questions about the interviewees' background. This could include their age, the type of work they do, their level of education, how long they have been involved in their listener club or organisation, and other relevant information. Sensitive questions about the interviewees' background should be asked towards the end of the interview.

Avoid asking 'leading questions'. A leading question is one in which the answer is implied in the question and leads the interviewee to answer in a particular way. For example: 'What can our community do to discourage teenagers from drinking alcohol?' assumes that the interviewee is against teenagers drinking alcohol.

Ask one question at a time. It is better to ask two separate questions rather than asking two questions at the same time, which is likely to be confusing to your interviewees.

Involving people in your research

To obtain the best results, your research should involve a wide range of people and groups in the community. They could include:

- People who are listening to the programs you are researching regularly and not very regularly. They could be listening in listener clubs, in family groups, or individually.
- People who have been active members of listener clubs in the past but are no longer involved (they can tell you about what important changes happened as a result of being involved in the listener club).
- People who are currently involved in listener clubs.
- People who are not listening to the programs but can provide valuable information about changes that may be connected to the programs. They could include parents or teachers of listener club members.

- People working in local organisations who are doing activities related to the programs. They include community development workers, health workers, teachers and women's empowerment groups. Your mentor at Equal Access can give you information about Equal Access's partner organisations in your community.
- Staff of local FM radio stations who are involved in capacity development activities and collecting information from audiences.
- Local community leaders and others who have a good knowledge of the community and its current problems and activities, especially those related to social change.

The selection of people and groups to invite to take part in your research will depend on the focus of your research and the questions you want to answer. For example, if you want to obtain feedback about recent program episodes, your research participants will obviously need to have listened to those programs already. If you want to find out about the impacts of the program you would invite a much broader range of people to take part in the research. People who have been active members of listener clubs in the past are good people to speak to. This is because they may be able to tell you about important changes that happened as a result of being involved in the listener club.

You should ask people who are actively involved in several community organisations and who know many people in your community to help you identify suitable informants.

How many to involve in group activities

When you are conducting activities with groups of people, it is better to keep the number of people fairly small. You will be able to gather more detailed information and enable everyone to speak and be heard if you keep the size of groups using the tools to no more than about 12 people. For group interviews, you will get good results if you have six to ten people in the group who have a similar background. However, it can sometimes be useful to involve a mixed group of people.

Engaging the community

Doing participatory research means doing research *with* the community rather than *on* the community. To do your research successfully, it is essential to actively involve and engage community members in both planning and conducting various research activities. This whole process should draw on the skills, experiences and knowledge of a range of people and groups in your community. They should eventually gain useful information about doing their own research and evaluations.

If it's done well, community members should begin to see the value of taking part in the research activities since they are a learning process that can help to bring about increased community dialogue, empowerment and change. If your research is done very well, it can contribute to social change in your community.

Participatory research takes time to do well and people may not have much time to take part in activities such as meetings and workshops. You will need to be flexible about when you conduct your research so that different people and groups can take part. Getting the best results also requires you to build good relationships and trust between everyone involved. This can also take some time. Box 5 provides some tips on how to engage the community and build rapport with participants.

Box 5: Tips on engaging the community and building rapport

Use a range of communication methods to tell different groups about your research activities. They could include wall newspapers, short talks at community meetings, and an item on a local radio program. Use clear language and tell them about the benefits of the research to your community.

Involve people who are passionate about change and community development. Such people should be able to help you identify research participants and to interest them in taking part the research. They will also help to generate enthusiasm about your research.

Ask participants to introduce themselves. If participants do not know each other, ask them to say something about themselves and what they hope to gain from the activity. You could also ask a question such as: 'If you were not at this meeting, what would you probably be doing instead?'

Aim to create a sense of community: Ask people to share responsibility for running the activity. Use people's names when you speak to them. Once you have created a sense of community and formed good relationships, everything should flow well.

Begin group sessions with a story. Your story should have some relevance to the topic of your activity. Never tell participants the purpose of the story as your story could serve many different purposes.

Check on missing voices. Ask participants to identify any people who are not present but could be affected by the issues discussed and any actions that you agree to take.

Listen deeply and show respect and empathy. Encourage everyone to show respect for all opinions and ideas and to listen to each other carefully. Demonstrate a sense of caring and empathy for the problems and issues raised by participants and make eye contact with others. If you listen to others deeply it encourages trust and empathy and people are more likely to share their experiences freely and willingly.

Include some active and fun activities: Try to include at least some activities that people really enjoy and enable them to actively participate and have some fun. For example, people often actively participate when they create community maps. The Division of Labour activity was also seen by some participants in the AC4SC research as 'entertaining'.

Including those who don't speak

Some people will hesitate to take part in certain activities and to voice their opinion. This may be because they are shy, they do not know very much about the topic, or they do not feel empowered to speak. There are several ways in which you can encourage such participants to feel more included in the research and to voice their ideas and opinions. Some suggestions are:

- Ask general, non-sensitive questions directly to shy or quiet group participants to encourage them to speak.
- Say that you really value their opinion and would like to hear their ideas and thoughts as they may be different to those of others.
- Consider whether they would feel more comfortable speaking in a smaller group or with others who are the same gender, age group or caste.
- Ask them if they would be willing to take part in a follow up individual interview to capture their experiences and ideas.

Dealing with power, gender, literacy and sensitive issues

Power issues

Issues of power arise when we conduct participatory research and evaluation. This is because power relationships are present in all social situations. This happens even when we try to treat everyone equally and design activities that aim to be empowering for everyone. Some people are of a higher status or caste and others will defer to them rather than saying what they think. Some people know more about a topic or are very outspoken and will dominate the discussion. Some women and girls may be afraid to speak out due to their lower status in society and lack of confidence.

We need to be aware of these issues as they can affect who gets to speak and be heard in your PM&E activities and who is silenced and feels disempowered. Dealing with these issues also requires confidence and good skills in facilitation. You will find that this will gradually improve with practice.

Gender issues

Gender and power issues are closely related to one another. It is important to take gender issues into account when you are conducting your research. This is because they are fundamental to social change and development. As you know, women and girls are usually those who are the poorest, who work the longest hours, and who suffer discrimination that affects their health, wellbeing and opportunities.

You also need to consider whether it would be better to conduct some group activities with mixed gender groups or with single gender groups. It may be difficult for women and girls to talk about sensitive topics in the presence of men and boys. Men or boys may also tend to dominate discussion on some topics. It is important to gather data on the experiences and opinions of women and girls, as well as men and boys and to disaggregate this data so that you can identify any gender differences that are important to understanding your results and the process of social change. Each of these groups has different experiences that affect their view of life and how their situations and those of others could be improved.

Literacy issues

Some of the people who take part in your research may have a limited ability to read and write. Some participants will be able to read and write in the dominant language of your country while others may only know their own local language. You should consider this when you are selecting research tools and methods. Visual methods such as community mapping and the use of drawings or symbols to represent things may help people with poor literacy skills to take part more easily. Oral methods such as group discussions and interviews should also be used.

You should try to find out about the literacy level of participants before you plan your research activities and work out which methods will be most suitable. You will need to be creative and adapt some methods so that people who are illiterate can join in. For example, you could pair people who are illiterate with those who are literate so that the literate person can read instructions or other information to the illiterate person or write down their ideas and opinions.

Sensitive issues

Some of your research may involve looking at very sensitive issues such as domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, and homosexuality. Such issues may be difficult for some participants to talk about. For example, some women may have experienced domestic violence or rape and may feel embarrassed or uncomfortable talking about their experiences.

You will need to take a lot of care when planning and conducting research on sensitive or taboo topics. You should be sensitive to the needs and lives of vulnerable groups. Before beginning your research it may be useful to seek the advice of more experienced researchers or health workers who are involved in these areas. They can give you helpful tips on how to hold a discussion on these issues in a sensitive way that does not cause any harm to participants or make them feel more excluded.

Box 6: Example of an effective method for discussing sensitive topics

Ritu wanted to learn more about women's experiences of menstruation. She had found that it was difficult to get women to speak openly and easily about this topic.

To try to generate a sense of safety and trust, during a focus group discussion on this topic, Ritu closed all the windows and curtains in the room and asked the women who were participating to sit in a circle. The note taker sat to one side out of view. Ritu began by softly telling a story about her own experiences with menstruation. She then encouraged all of the women in the group to speak. Each of the women gradually spoke about their experiences. The discussion ended up going on for several hours.

Try not to make moral judgements about sensitive issues. It is important to use empathy and respect when doing research on topics such as HIV/AIDS. You also need to know the facts about such things as how HIV/AIDS is spread and how it can be prevented so that you can

provide accurate information on this topic if required. Reading materials provided by Equal Access and other reputable organisations can help you to obtain such factual information.

Creating a safe environment and choosing a safe location for the discussion is very important. For interviews, this may be a person's home or another place which is very private. The example in the box above gives you an example of a good way to create a safe environment. It will work best if you use a conversational style of interview. Building trust and rapport is also important. You should try to make sure that taking part in the research makes a positive difference to the lives of vulnerable people. This may include providing information or helping them to have a voice and be heard by others who have discriminated against them.

Research ethics

Doing participatory research can be difficult and challenging. For this reason you must be aware of the following important issues:

Explain yourself: Before doing any research activity you should tell people briefly but clearly:

- Why you are doing the research
- What you are trying to find out
- How you will use the information they give you.

Respect confidences: You must never tell people who are not involved in the research project what people from your community tell you.

Treating people sensitively: Some research activities may create strong emotions in the people who are involved. You and other people in the group may already have or may form close relationships. They must be treated sensitively.

Exploring sensitive issues: You must be prepared to explore sensitive issues in your research. You must respect other people's opinions and even if you disagree with them. You must understand other people's point of view and beliefs.

Never put people at risk: Reporting what people say and do can have real and serious consequences. You should think carefully about what could happen if others learn about what people said during your research activities. Our research is NOT more important than people's lives or livelihoods.

Never put yourself at risk: You must be aware of dangerous situations and you should not put yourself in danger.

Seek approval: If you attend a community meeting or event and want to use some of the outcomes from that meeting or event in your research reports, make sure that you have permission to do so.

Respecting anonymity: You must always ask participants if they are willing to have their name used in research reports or other documents.

Section 4: Tools and tips for community researchers

Introduction

This section introduces you to the important tools and techniques that you can use to conduct your research. As a community researcher you will learn to select the most suitable tools to answer your research questions. You need to use a wide range of tools to carry out your research plans. Table 1 below gives you information about what to use each tool for, when to use it, and how often you might want to use them.

Different research methods help us understand important problems and issues. Some research methods can be used ‘quickly’ and are fun to do with your community, but others need a more patient approach. These ‘slower’ research methods often use your own observations and conversations with community members. Both types of research methods help you gather information about your community and how Equal Access programs and related activities help to produce positive social change.

An important aim of your research should be to collect in-depth data and stories about significant changes as a result of the radio programs and related activities. This will require more use of ‘slower’ methods, particularly participant observation, in-depth interviews and group interviews. Your mentor at Equal Access will give you a good idea of how much data you should aim to collect in a particular period of time.

Table 1: Overview of community researcher tools

Type of tool	What to use this for	How many times and when to use this tool
Participant observation and field notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To understand what is happening in your community and how this affects your research findings• To understand the everyday lives of people• To record everything that is thought, said, heard, seen and felt while doing your research work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All the time• Write down your observations every day if possible• Also write down your reflections after each research session
In-depth interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To gather deeper information or stories about changes that may have happened as a result of listening to the radio programs or taking part in related activities• To find out more about the community and the barriers to information access and social change• To find out more about listener club members and activities• To gather ideas for improving the radio programs and listener club activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over a period of three months you might aim to conduct about 20 in-depth interviews.• Each interview will last between one and two hours.

Group interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To generate discussion on a key topic related to the focus of your research (for example, the effect of gender discrimination on social change or the effectiveness of the radio programs in addressing key social change issues) • To identify barriers to information access and social change • To discuss ways of improving the radio programs and listener club activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over a period of three months you might aim to conduct about 12 group interviews. • Each group interview should last from one and a half to two hours.
Most Significant Change technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To find out about the most important changes that have happened to people as a result of listening to the radio programs or taking part in related activities • To understand what impact the radio programs have had on your community and how they can be improved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant change stories might be collected from about 20 people over a period of three months. • You would conduct follow up research to collect more stories later on.
Community mapping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help you understand where the important facilities are in a community and if they access them • To learn how people such as men and women or younger and older people see their local area differently 	Use to generate discussion and participation when you conduct group interviews
Impact diagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To show the impacts of the radio programs and related activities • To identify the relationships between the activities and the changes that have happened 	Use when you conduct group interviews that aim to assess the impact of the radio programs and related activities
Time lines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the changes that have happened in a community as a result of listening to the radio programs or taking part in related activities • To help us learn about things such as if people are more included or more excluded in decision making and having access to information 	Use when you conduct group interviews that aim to assess the impact of the radio programs and related activities
Division of labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand how the roles of men, women, boys, and girls differ and how this affects their access to information and their participation in discussions and decision making about important issues 	Use to stimulate awareness and lively participation when you conduct group interviews
Road blocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand why people cannot get access to things like education or information that can help to create social change • To identify problems experienced by listener groups and solutions to those 	Use to generate discussion when you conduct group interviews

	problems	
Diamonds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To investigate how people are different from others who live in the same community • To identify which people are included and excluded in discussions and access to important information • To understand the barriers to social change and how they can be overcome 	Use to generate awareness and discussion when you conduct group interviews
Chapatti or Venn diagrams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To learn who are the important groups in a community and their relationships with each other • To identify participants' most important sources of information • To gather information about things such as which contents of radio program a group liked the best and why 	Use to generate awareness and discussion when you conduct group interviews

Participant observation and field notes

Participant observation is a tool that you can use at all times. It simply means being aware that everything you observe about, and do in your communities can provide useful research data. It can help us to understand the everyday lives of people. It is good if you interact with people in many different situations, not just in formal group meetings or interviews. This participation and observation must be written about in what we call field notes. These field notes will tell us what you did, who was there, what happened, what was discussed, and what you think about it.

You must learn to listen to what people say, but also observe what they do (which may be different) in order to get a complete picture of how things work in your communities. We often say one thing, but do another – this is human nature – we all do it! Your job is to capture not only what people say, but also what they do.

Everything you observe can be interesting and can help us understand your communities. So, you should record as much as you can in your field notes.

- Learn to observe everything around you as if you have never experienced it before.
- Put as much detail as you can in your field notes.

Here is an example of a field note:

Field note example 1

Field notes are places where all the details about your work are written down. Field notes are one research tool that allows you to capture everything that is thought, said, heard, seen and felt while doing your work. In the following example the researcher writes about her visit to a

local community in Nepal. Within this field note she not only describes her meetings with people but also includes how she feels about the meetings, and paints a scene of what she sees both in the tea shop and outside on the road.

Excerpt from field notes

Researcher: Rupa Pandey

Date: 27.12.06

We reached Padariya Village which is only about 1 and $\frac{3}{4}$ km away from the sacred Garden, where the lord Gautam Buddha was born. Every time I visit the community they ask me "Why do only men sit inside the tea shops, why don't women enter such shops? Every time, every day the shops are full of the men of the community, very rarely we see women inside the shops".

There I met a Social Motivator; he suggested we have a cup of tea. I didn't refuse because it provided a chance to interact with him and talk about the community. He was the Social Motivator of the Village Development Program, which is run by the District Development Committee, through the support of the UNDP. He is a very interesting person. I found him very interesting to talk with because he is from the Islamic Community. I got a chance to understand about the community and their culture, and their rituals and customs.

I was noticing from my previous visits that no females were inside the tea shops or on the road also. What may be the reason for this? I had been asking myself this question for such a long time. I asked him "Why don't females come to these kinds of shops?" Then suddenly he replied "Rupa ji you know the problem, you know why they are not coming! Then why are you asking? Actually, most of the people of the community are from the Islamic community and in the community the women are not allowed to come outside easily". He continued on "I know why you are asking but women's rights are different from place to place. You are trying to link this with the mobility of women but I tell you that the mobility should not be expanding in our community, because we have to change the mentality of the men not the women. To change a man is the first part rather, than to change a woman".

After a short but interesting discussion we went to another community, which was totally new for me. The Social Motivator of the Community Learning Centre as well as a member of the CMC management committee helped me to visit the community. She was also going to observe the child literacy class in another Muslim community, run by the Community Learning Centre. We managed to reach there using local transportation. On the road we felt some problems, because the roads were not good and in some places we passed through the field as well. When we reached there I met another person from the Muslim community, I asked him about that literacy class. He introduced himself. After the introduction he called to bring water, one boy came and gave water to us. At this time I became surprised, in our community it is rare for men to give water to the guests. Though it was not a big matter I thought, where are the women? I had not seen any women outside the home, so I looked for them. As I was looking for them I saw that some of the women of the houses were looking at us from behind the curtain of the door. I asked the person, "Are the girls also taking class?" He replied "no because we don't have any female teachers, they are not having a literacy class, but I have taught my daughter in Islamic School Madarsa". He was defending himself. Before I had finished asking the question he replied to me. I realized his feelings, because he was a teacher at the government school, that's why he felt uneasy and defensive.

Participant observation will include both formal and informal events. Formal events might include:

- a listener group meeting
- a wedding
- a community committee meeting

And informal events might be something like:

- casual conversations
- gossip
- socialising

By doing participant observation, you learn about what is going on and, at the same time, you build strong and informative relationships with people. You are being a participant in your communities, but you are also observing and thinking about what is happening and what it means.

Participant observation relies heavily on your own personal understandings of people, their actions and events. Because of this you must try to be aware of your own ideas about these things that have been formed beforehand. You must try to carefully observe as if it is the first time you have heard or seen such a thing. You must:

- Participate in and observe what is happening and what is being said
- Build a research relationship with people
- Be a part of the situation that you are observing
- Recognise that your presence will have some impact upon what is happening.

You are a part of the research situation and you must reflect upon and consider your role in events. You must write about all of this in field notes.

The difference between a participant observer and a 'normal' participant is simply reflection and awareness:

- A 'normal' participant will take a lot for granted – this is just how things are done; it's obvious!
- The participant observer tries not to take anything for granted. You need to keep the attitude of someone entering a new and strange situation, someone who is trying to understand *how things work*. Nothing is obvious!

Try to understand social situations, actions, events and relationships from the points of view of the people you are researching. You will most likely have to learn to challenge your own assumptions to be a good participant observer.

Field notes

From the very first day of research, you should always carry a notebook in which to write notes while things are happening, or very soon afterwards. You should also get into the habit – from

the start – of sitting down at the end of each day with your notebook to write down your observations more fully.

When we refer to ‘field notes’ we mean detailed notes which describe:

- what has happened
- who you talked to
- what you observed
- what you think about all of these things
- perhaps some thoughts on what you need to concentrate on in the coming days of research.

Field notes have to be written *regularly*, preferably *every day*. They are your most important record of all that you have observed and what you think about the subject of your research and your community. Field notes are not reports or summaries, or they are the *raw material* of your research – **write it all down!**

Things that you might have at first thought were not interesting or important may later become of interest to you or to Equal Access. By keeping detailed field notes you will always have access to your earlier research ideas and observations and you can use them at any time, now or in the future.

You should:

- Keep your notebook with you all of the time.
- During or after each activity, jot down a few notes, key words or phrases to jog your memory later.
- Sit down at the end of the day and write detailed field notes.

Field notes should have several elements:

- They should provide *a log of the main activities and events* of the day – those you observed, and those you participated in. For example, observing a listener group meeting, having a casual conversation in a tea shop with a local person, etc.
- They will include *details of each activity or event* - where you were, who was there, when this happened, what people said, what they did, and so on.
- In addition field notes will also include *interpretations*. What did you think was going on? You might have several different interpretations, and are not sure which is right – **write them all down!** You can include your ideas, opinions and theories. Also, you will write about your role in activities.

Full, detailed field notes will include everything you have observed.
Here is another example:

Field note example 2

Writing detailed field notes provides the chance to record your daily research activities. They are essentially a 'research memory'. In the following example the researcher captures a complex group discussion at his local community learning centre. His field notes capture not only his own field visit goal, but details of the discussions that take place, as well as some of his observations about who his participants are and their place within the wider community.

Excerpt from field notes

12. 12. 06

Deepak Koirala

Field visit to Madhawaliya CLC, Nepal

I went to Madhawaliya Community Learning Centre (CLC), one of my research sites, to visit the women's group who are taking part in informal education in the CLC. I went there at half past one on my motorbike from Radio Lumbini Community Multimedia Centre (CMC). From 12 to 2 pm there is a regular (literacy) class there so it was the right time to visit there. The women groups of CLC were learning their lesson so I waited for them for half an hour.

There were 12 women in the class, 10 of their faces seems to suggest they are from the Tharu community, who are scheduled as lower caste people in Nepal. Only two of the other faces seemed different from them and were from Brahmin caste, scheduled as upper caste people in Nepal. There was a mixture of higher and lower caste people in the education class. I suddenly had the idea to take this opportunity to have a group discussion among them and get their ideas about poverty in their community.

The class was over and I asked permission to introduce myself and my objective. I introduced myself as a researcher and told the women that I am involved in the research to find about poverty in their community. I asked their permission to have a group discussion on poverty in their community. They were very interested to talk with me and share their ideas. I put the same questions to all of them and we had a discussion. The questions were "What do you know about poverty?" and "Who are the poor?" They explained to me their own experience about their life and told that they were the poor in the community. They said that having no land is one definition of poverty because if they own land then they can work hard on it and grow food for them and their children. They work very hard on others' fields and get very little money for themselves and their children. If they own land and work hard it would provide crops for them to eat.

No education is poverty because it is related to the opportunity for work, equal wages, and social stigma in the society. Not having any source of income is also a form of poverty. The issue of citizenship is also the cause of poverty. They are living in the community from 70 years but they are not getting the citizenship, when the election comes they are tempted to give vote and the political parties manages to have a vote for them but later when the election ends they are left in the same position. When they want to send their children to government school, the school needs a birth certificate for the children and for that the family member must have Nepali citizenship and due to these problems they do not send their children to school.

The people who do not have the purchasing power are also poor. Work on any kind of low wage is poverty. When they do not work, they do not generate income and they cannot purchase anything from the market to feed themselves. No trust in the society is also poverty, when they wanted some loan

from the member of the community, they do not get any from anyone in the community. Having no trust in the society is also poverty: The community members are not to be trusted in the society. They get cheated on the paper documents when they get loans because they cannot read whatever is written on the paper.

The women brought up the issues of poverty that they have faced during their life, they all were from the same community and were speaking their own experience of their life about poverty. They themselves said that they were the poor in the community. All the women focused on education to be the cause of poverty. Their message was that they did not get a chance to go to school so they were not aware any of their rights which were provided to them, so they are facing problems in their life now. So, they are utilizing the facility of CLC near to their homes and are involved in informal education and can access it easily as it coincides with their leisure time. Now they eat less food, cut their food budgets and manage to send their children to the government school, where they get free education. They know that if their children help them in their work then they could generate extra income that will help to get more food, but instead they are sending their children to school.

Field notes should include conversations and main points from interviews. While interview transcripts are written separately you should still write about the interview in your field notes, especially about things like:

- A physical description of the person and location.
- Your overall impressions of the person, the place, and the interview.
- Your interpretations of what the person said.

In practice, field notes can be taken at the time of a research encounter, or written up immediately, or as soon as possible afterwards. It may not always be appropriate to take out your notebook and write things down – it may stop the flow of the conversation, or it may make people uncomfortable.

Remember that field notes are a factual account of the encounter that will also include your interpretations. It is important to accept that no one is ever totally objective. Researchers instead should try to acknowledge the difference between factual report and interpretation.

- What happened, who you talked to and what they said is factual ***description***.
- What you think about what happened and what you think about what was said is your ***interpretation***.

Include both in your field notes, as both are equally important, but be aware of the difference between these types of data. You will notice that as you become more immersed in the research and the community your interpretations will change as you become more familiar with the research site, and learn to ask more relevant questions.

You are not a judge of what is 'true' or 'false', or 'right' or 'wrong' – you are an interpreter of the situation, and there are many truths to be uncovered, many different experiences, perspectives, and points of view to understand.

- Remember to write down even the most obvious things.
- You can write notes even if at the time you are not sure if or why they might be interesting.
- Write things that you normally take for granted.
- Include as much detail as possible (who is present, what kind of space, appearances, interactions, etc).

Make it clear which of your notes are description and which are interpretation.

You are aiming for rich descriptions that will put the event, action or phrase into a wider context of understanding. You won't always understand it immediately, but by keeping field notes and by carefully thinking about these events, actions and words, your understanding will increase over time.

Interviews: in-depth and group

There are different kinds of research interviews. They range from informal chats to formal conversations.

- Some are *structured* – where you have a fixed list of questions that you ask everyone you interview.
- Some are *unstructured* – where you might have a range of topics in mind, but you want to see where the conversation takes you.
- Some are *semi-structured* – where you have a topic to explore and a list of some questions that you want to try to cover with all the people you interview. Your aim is to guide the conversation while encouraging the interviewee to tell their own story in their own words. You will be open to exploring unexpected topics if they emerge.

You will generally use ***semi-structured*** interviews and focus on the current research theme. Interviews can often last between one and two hours, so that you can get into some depth. Although you will have topics and questions that you want to cover, many of your questions will be responses to what the interviewee has actually said. If this proves to be a useful avenue of inquiry for your research theme, you might adapt your interview schedule as you go along and as you learn more from your interviewee.

In-depth interviews

There are many types of in-depth interviews that you might do as a community researcher:

- ***Household interviews*** – literally, interviewing people in their homes, where they are comfortable, and where you can see and talk with them in their own space. You might be interviewing just one person, or several members of the household. These can be quite intimate and personal, discussions about interviewees' feelings, their family relationships, their financial situation, aims, and so on.

- **Interviews with ‘key informants’** or community figures – for example, you might want to interview people from the local radio station, teachers, business people, religious figures, health workers or political figures. These interviews might take place in their offices, and will probably be less personal. One of your aims is to find out how they understand the community and its problems from their professional perspective and experience.
- **Interviews with listener group members, past and present** – the aim is to find out how they relate to and use the group and the radio programs, what sort of activities they have undertaken and how effective they have been, and how this fits into and affects their lives and their community.

Rather than using a questionnaire, in-depth interviews use an **interview schedule** - a list of questions around your research theme.

If you feel you need more structure or clarity when going into an interview (especially for the first couple of interviews) it can be useful to write a longer list of questions as a guide or prompt.

The aim is to cover your research theme in each interview in a flexible way, adapting the order of the questions to fit the flow of the conversation.

In-depth interviews will focus as much on things like feelings, meanings, opinions, experiences and understandings as they do on getting more routine information.

Interviews don’t just focus on media and technology use in isolation: for example, we would not *just* ask about radio listening, but try to find out how radio fits into the interviewee’s everyday life. This might mean asking quite wide-ranging questions.

Example of an in-depth interview

In a household interview that seeks information on radio listening we might ask about the interviewee’s life as well as asking specific questions about radio listening. We are trying to understand their radio listening in the context of the rest of their lives. So we’ll include questions about:

- family and social relationships
- life histories
- employment and educational experiences
- religion and ethnicity
- leisure interests
- other technologies that play a role in their lives (both media and non-media)

An in-depth interview provides a unique opportunity to gather information about a certain issue/topic but at the same time allows us to understand how that issues fits within the wider context.

In the following excerpt we see that the researcher asks her interviewee questions about the community wall newspaper. The researcher not only asks what the wall newspaper is but

further explores by asking her interviewee how this local news responds to local needs and expectations. The interview is short but moves away from description to important discussions about local media and its social context.

Interview about wall newspaper

Author: Sita Adhikari

Date: 21.12.06

This interview was held in Jhuwani community library with Purna Rimal who is the volunteer coordinator of this library. He is actively involved in publishing wall newspaper. This is a feedback interview about the wall newspaper between Purna (P) and me (R).

R: Please tell me about the wall newspaper which you are publishing?

P: We publish the wall newspaper monthly. First of all we collect content from different people (farmers, women, children, service provider) and ourselves (volunteers). Later we chose the appropriate content for this issue. Here we give priority to local issues and agriculture and herbal medicine or other health related topics and general knowledge. After that we make the border of the paper, write the title by hand and divide the paper for the different topics. The contents of the different subjects are written by computer and print out. These pieces of paper are glued to the wall newspaper. We reproduce this same newspaper about three times in order to post it in several places, e.g. in the library and at different gathering places in our village.

R: Do you think the wall newspaper is really fruitful for the community?

P: Yes, of course it is! This is very fruitful for this kind of community.

R: Please kindly give me a brief description about the people living in your community.

P: Most of the people living here are illiterate and new literate. These people like short and informative education. This community consists mostly of farmer, who are very busy. They hardly have the time to spend time in the library or to go to the market place in order to read newspaper. In some cases the reading skills or interest are not sufficient to get information out of a general newspaper (small letters, complex and long article, common not local issues). The Tharu population is high in this community.

R: Then what types of information do the people like most?

P: The agricultural related news is the kind of information the people like best here. In the latest issue of the wall newspaper we wrote information about tomato planting provided by one farmer of this community. That became most popular and many people read this news.

R: In your opinion, what are the things you have to do to make this paper more applicable to this community?

P: In my opinion we have to make this paper colourful, use big letters, short informative and simple language.

R: What are the weaknesses of this paper?

P: I think the weaknesses are long information in one topic, computer print outs with small letters, sometimes irregular publishing and limited place for posting.

R: Do you have any suggestions for the management committee of the wall newspaper?

P: It would be necessary to built boards for posting the wall newspaper in at least four to five areas in the village. It is important to use simple Nepali language and also use Tharu language for special information, since the majority of this community are Tharu. We should give the local people more chance to participate in the creation of the newspaper.

R: Please, do you have some idea about how to involve the people who cannot read or write in the creation of the wall newspaper.

P: We can write their voice in their words, sometimes they can draw their feelings, they can stick a picture of their choice in the column of “Tapai ko awaja” (your voice).

A key skill in this kind of interviewing is to be open and responsive. You need to listen carefully and actively.

Planning and conducting an interview

One important ingredient for conducting a good semi-structured interview is the planning. It is important to give enough time and thought to what it is you want to ask and to think through your questions carefully. This might include writing down some key questions before you begin the interview, considering the best way of asking a question in order to get at an issue, and being flexible about when you ask certain questions during the interview. Tips for developing interview questions are provided in Box 4 in the ‘Getting started’ section.

In the example below we can see how the researcher thinks about the main questions she wants to cover, draws up an interview schedule (a guide) in advance, asks clear and concise questions and uses the responses she gets from her interviewee to inform her next question.

Interview plan by Rupa Pandey, Nepal, 2007

Before I conduct any interview I make sure I do background research on the interviewee. I learn about their work and activities in the community. In Nepal at the time everyone was focusing their attention towards the constituent assembly but the Madhesi people did not understand the political, social and the economic changes.

At that time some of the NGOs were launching a programme to raise awareness about the different social and political changes. The Madhesi community is considered the most conservative group in society and very few women have the opportunity to participate openly in society. Despite their limited mobility some of the women are getting the chance to make their involvement in the programmes of NGOs. These women are known as aware and active women and I wanted to interview one of these inspiring women. I planned to use her story as a ‘success story’ and her knowledge to inspire others in her community.

Before I begin an interview I draft an interview schedule which indicates the kinds of questions that I plan to ask during my interview. Of course you can never predict what a respondent will say so I use these questions only as a guide. In an interview you have to listen to what the respondent tells you and hear the story of your interviewee. Sometimes that is far more interesting than asking the pre-written questions.

This is Rupa’s interview schedule. It has a few main questions, with some ideas for follow up questions. While Rupa will try to cover all of these questions, she will be open to following another line of questioning, depending on what seems interesting at the time of the interview.

Rupa's interview schedule

1. What is your background?

- education
- employment
- social
- family

2. How did you first become involved in activities outside the home?

- What was it like for you?
- How did things change for you after that?

3. Can you tell me about your most memorable experience working in the community?

4. What pressures do women in this community face when they leave the home for the first time?

5. How is your life different to before you worked outside of the home?

- How have you changed as a result of these experiences?

Transcript of Rupa's interview

24.03.07

My interviewee was one of the active social workers from the tribal Tharu community of Tarai region. I took this interview with her because I was trying to find out about her struggles while working in the social sector, and also I wanted to try to find out the level of understanding among rural women about the constituent assembly and new political changes.

[R is researcher (Rupa) P is participant/interviewee]

R Could you introduce yourself?

P Yes, my name is Sunita Kumari Chaudhary. I live in Mahilwar Village of Madhubani VDC.

R What do you do these days?

P I am a helper in one of the NGOs (Cross Flow Nepal Trust)

R What do you do there?

P I teach illiterate people in my village, with the support of Cross Flow Nepal Trust.

R How did you get this chance?

P I was invited to one training session at the office. I was trained to give adult literacy classes.

R Was this the first time you came outside of the home for training?

P Yes

R How did you feel at that time?

P Actually, I felt it was very difficult to come out from my home. On the first day, when I reached the training hall, I was asked to give an introduction. I couldn't say anything. I felt hesitant and did not say anything.

R What things inspired you?

P My husband encouraged me very much. The women in my village were in a pitiable condition, they have not got the chance to read and write and to come out from the home. I was one of the educated women of the village, that's why my husband encouraged me. He told me you are educated you should do something for community women. When he encouraged me, I felt encouraged to come out from my home.

R What works are you involved in these days?

P At first I was just teaching women in the literacy class, then after we also got a chance to work in a programme of safe motherhood at the VDC level.

R How was your first day experience?

P The first time I went to my neighbours houses, to convince them to send their women to the literacy class, they didn't agree with me. Slowly I convinced their mother in laws and husbands and at last most of them became convinced.

R Which was the most difficult day for you? Can you remember?

P The first training day was the most difficult day for me. Then when I returned home I thought, why could I not speak in front of them? Why did others find it easy and I found it difficult? I asked myself this many times and I gathered courage to speak and work outside of the home.

R What did the community people used to say?

P They used to say "she has gone outside the home in outdoor activities, her behaviour is not good, she is out of the control of her family" they used to gossip on such topics.

R How did you control this situation?

P My husband was always with me. He motivated me, he told me not to listen to anyone and just to do the work. Then I didn't heed them and these days they don't say anything to me.

R Actually what do you get from the social work? Why you are interested in this?

P The training has inspired me to continue working in this. I also think that other women may have the same kind of problem expressing their words among other people? That's why I decided to do work for the community. I have not only tried to change the community I have also changed my family and I will teach my daughter. I will not allow them to be illiterate like other women in society.

R Actually what are the problems of rural people?

P Low literacy and unequal wages are some problems. Women don't get equal wages for the same work. Men are highly paid but women are not for the same work.

R Is it only literacy that is a factor in making rural women weak?

P There are some problems that, in some of the families, people do not treat sons and daughters equally. Boys go to school but girls cannot. Girls have to engage in house hold work for a lot of the time,

at the same time boys are always free from work and family control. The people think that a girl's education is useless.

R Are the rural women aware of the current political changes in the country?

P Not all women are aware but I am a little bit aware.

R Do you know something about constituent assembly?

P My understanding is that it is a process to choose a person for us, who will make laws for the country. We have to choose our representatives.

R What about the other women of the community?

P I think they are not familiar with the term constituent assembly and inclusion. Till now many of the women have no citizenship. In these days, citizenship is being distributed but some of the rural women have not got it because their family members do not put them forward as a member of the family.

R What have you got personally so far from your work?

P I have got satisfaction and reputation in the community. Also I am now able to go to places on my own. Before working in the social field, I was not able to go to some places, but in these days, I can go wherever I like.

R Ok thanks for your time.

As a result of this interview we made a radio programme collecting the opinions of the rural women. During this process we understood that most of the rural women knew nothing about the constituent assembly and about other political changes on the country, because they cannot understand the analysis on the radio or get time to take participate in the programme directly.

The kinds of information you need to uncover through in-depth interviews are interviewees':

- Understandings
- Meanings
- Stories and experiences
- Feelings
- Motivations and aspirations
- Opinions (especially about the radio programs and how they could be improved)

Tape record interviews if possible and transcribe them as soon as you are able, or, take detailed notes. You will collect many recordings and notes, so label them all as soon as you have finished - include the date, who was interviewed, and where.

You will need to make a note of any impressions or feelings you had during the interview when you write up your field notes for that day. It is useful to take notes during the interviews, regardless of whether you are tape recording or not.

- These notes can be useful at the time - note down points that you want to expand upon later, so as not to stop the flow of conversation at that point.

- They can also be a useful guide later when you come to transcribe the interview.
- You can use these notes to add observations and thoughts about this interview in your field notes.

The notes from interviews will form a major part of your data and if they are not properly documented this data will be lost. Documenting interviews as fully as possible is important and time must be allowed for this to happen. Do not underestimate the time this will take.

Group interviews

Group interviews are sometimes called 'focus group discussions'. They are different to in-depth interviews - they always involve more than one interviewee and are designed to generate discussion among the interviewees around a certain topic. It may be useful to have 6-10 people in each group who are of similar social status, gender, marital status and education to get the best discussion. Occasionally, it can be interesting to mix the groups to see what differences emerge.

When choosing different people to take part in the group interview you need to consider issues such as gender, class, caste or religion. In some mixed groups, some people might feel more confident to talk than others. This will change the dynamics of the group and therefore influence the type of data that you gain through conducting the group interview. The idea of a group interview is to encourage discussions; therefore it is good to have groups made up of people who are likely to talk easily amongst one another.

The aim is to facilitate a meeting in such a way that the group develops its own conversation, raising issues through group interactions that might not emerge in a discussion with individuals. The interviewer's role in a group interview is a facilitator.

You will come to a group with a carefully defined topic to explore, and with 'stimuli' to get the discussion going such as a participatory technique. During the group interview, the researcher's role is to stimulate and guide discussion. The skill is in keeping the discussion on course without stifling unexpected and interesting developments. You need to listen carefully.

Example of a group interview

Group interviews are an interesting way to gather data from a group of people on a particular topic. They are a good way to get a collection of views from different people at one time. The following example relates to a group discussion around 'poverty'. The researcher describes the group meeting and summarises the main issues that came up as a result of the meeting.

By Sita Adhikari

Field notes – Focus group discussion about the Agyauli community library

29.11.06

This focus discussion was with the women's section management committee members of Agyauli community library. The subject was Poverty. 14 women took part in the discussion. All were actively

participating. It was a mixed group of young and old women. Mainly they discussed the issues “Who are the poor? What is the cause of poverty? What is the effect of poverty on people? How is gender related with poverty?”

In the beginning of the discussion I told them about the purpose of the discussion and told them “please talk about poverty in whatever ways you know. It is not necessary to think about national data on poverty. We just want to know what poverty means in your community. So please feel free to talk to each other.” Then they started to speak. Sometimes I only facilitated to continue the discussion. The discussion lasted about 2 hours. Here is a summary of the main points from that discussion:

Who are the poor?

- Disabled
- Sick people
- No wealth/If there is wealth but no access to use it.
- No land
- No good house
- Not enough clothes according to the season
- Can't send their children even to government school
- Lack of skills
- Unemployed
- Hand to mouth problem

The cause of poverty

- Natural disaster: land slide, earthquake and flood
- Family background: patriarchal wealth (land, money, etc)
- Disability
- Education
- Unemployment
- Lack of skill
- Centralize the resource: only husband (male) in control of resources, if he makes wrong decision, then the whole family has to suffer
- Many children
- Bad habit: e.g. alcohol

Results of poverty

- Disease: lack of food, lack of clothes according to season, lack of proper shelter, no care in hospital
- Less mobility: transportation cost, entrance fee
- Uneducated: cost of education
- Unskilled: less money, less time for training
- Less knowledge, less information: no opportunity for participation
- Less support of society: hard to get loan, suggestions, respect etc.

There are several ways to stimulate discussion around the topics you wish to explore:

- A brief presentation of some issues
- Photographs or radio clips
- Participatory techniques like the Time line, Road Blocks or Diamond
- Wall charts and posters
- A list of topics and questions for discussion can be written on a large piece of paper.

Once the interview has got going:

- Note down key points on a white board or large sheet of paper and ask the group if they agree with these points
- Ask participants to draw diagrams to illustrate their points
- Include every participant in the discussion, asking each participant to comment on the topic, and on each others' comments
- Deal sensitively with participants
- Prevent the more confident participants from taking over the discussion
- Encourage less confident participants to take part with questions like 'What do you think?', 'Do you agree or disagree with what has been said?' 'Do you have something similar to share with us'
- Make sure participants understand that their point of view is of equal value to all others.

Information on dealing with power, gender, literacy and sensitive issues can be found in the 'Getting started section'. As with in-depth interviews, it is useful to make a tape recording of group interviews and later to transcribe them. Because there are several participants it is useful to take notes that indicate who is saying what as this may be difficult to work out from the recording later.

Where it is not possible to tape record group interviews, it is important to take extensive notes at the time. This will allow you to remember who said what, as issues could arise which you would like to return to or explore further at a later date. It will usually work better if you can conduct group interviews with another community researcher or a volunteer with the right skills. One of you facilitates the discussion while the other takes notes.

It is important to recognise that each method has its particular strengths and weaknesses. Some people may feel hesitant to speak about some things in a group. Alternatively, if a discussion or debate gets going it may provoke some people to talk about things that might otherwise have not been seen by them as relevant. Using a range of methods to investigate an issue is the only way to ensure that you are really coming to understand the issue and its relevance to the people you are working with.

Facilitation

Using participatory research methods means that the researcher must try to involve all people in the community. Everyone must know about the aims of the research project and why we are doing this research. They must agree to help with our research project *but* only after they understand what the researcher is doing.

Facilitation is the name we give to this important part of our research. Facilitation is about helping people to understand and take part in a research project. Facilitators help other

people discuss something or use a research method. Facilitation is an important skill for successful research with groups of people from your community.

Box 7: Tips for effective facilitation

Prepare before the research activity begins

- Think about people's literacy, education and understanding and use an activity that suits them
- Think about the local culture and environment, because this affects people's attitudes and could lead to conflict or misunderstanding
- Work out the best way to organise the research activity and how long each part will last
- Find a comfortable place to do the activity

At the start of the research activity

- Introduce yourself and explain your role as facilitator
- If the group does not know each other well, give people a few minutes to talk to each other before the activity
- Ensure that everyone in the group understands the purpose of the activity and how they will work together as a group
- Agree on the way everyone will work together. For example:
 - All contributions are valued
 - We all share responsibility for facilitation
 - One person speaks at a time
- Identify any missing people or groups
- *Start with a story*: it is good to begin a research activity by telling a brief story that is relevant to the focus of the activity

During the research activity

- Manage the research activity so that everyone can participate and contribute
- Use appropriate language and give respect to all people
- Make no judgements about what people say and encourage people to see each other's point of view
- Use 'powerful listening': listening very attentively to people helps them to speak more clearly and powerfully, especially quieter or less confident people
- Write a summary of any information or decisions on large sheets of paper or blackboard so that everyone can see
- Collect all of the information from the group, *then* make decisions about it
- Give careful attention to the aim of the research activity and intervene if people do not keep to these aims or if parts of the activity take too long

At the end of the activity

- Encourage appreciation for everyone's participation and ideas
- Ensure that everyone knows if they must do anything after the research activity
- *Review the activity*: Ask what worked and what did not work? Ask how people would improve future research activities?
- State and report people's comments and issues accurately

A facilitator is like the chairperson of a meeting, but a facilitator does not direct a group without the approval of all group members. All people in a small group can share the facilitator's job, but one main facilitator is best for a larger group of more than four people. The facilitator explains the purpose of the group's meeting and guides the group members' discussions. A facilitator helps the group achieve the meeting's goals, but does not influence or change the group's decisions and answers.

The facilitator writes a report about the meeting and the group's decisions. The facilitator shares the report with other members of the research project and with all the community members who took part in a discussion or research method.

You can learn to be a good facilitator by carefully watching more experienced facilitators and by practicing facilitation. Think about what works and what does not work very well when you are a facilitator. Use this experience to improve your facilitation. Ask people in the group about your facilitation. Their advice will help you become a better facilitator.

A good facilitator will:

- Clearly explain the meeting's purpose to all group members
- Help the group complete any activities and discussions at the meeting
- Help the group work together successfully
- Ensure everyone contributes to the meeting and feels part of the group by helping everyone talk and listen to what other group members say
- Help group members learn from each other
- Encourage the group members to talk about the meeting and say how they think it could be improved.

Facilitators plan a group meeting before they start. They will think carefully about how they use the different research methods or how they will do a group discussion. Box 7 below provides tips and information about doing effective facilitation.

Most Significant Change technique

Overview

Use this research activity to find out what people think are the most important changes to have happened in people's lives in your community as a result of listening to Equal Access radio programs and talking part in activities related to the programs. This technique will help you better understand what sort of impact the programs have had on your community and how they can be improved.

This tool involves collecting stories about significant change from community members using a semi-structured interview guide.

Important note

It is important to understand that the changes people tell you about may be positive or negative, expected or unexpected. The term 'most significant' does not mean that we are only interested in the 'best' stories in terms of how well they met the objectives of the radio programs.

It may be best to initially use this technique with people who have been listening to the radio program for at least a year or have been involved in a listener club for a number of years, now or in the past. Even if they are no longer involved in the listener club they may be able to tell you some good significant change stories. Other radio programs and community projects may have also contributed to this change and this will be considered by those who review the stories.

When the full Most Significant Change (MSC) process is used people in the community and at different levels within Equal Access will later discuss the stories, select the most significant stories, and write down the reasons for their choice. These groups could include listener club members, and people working in local Equal Access partner organisations. They will be given information about how to select the stories. The selection of stories does not usually involve the person who collected the stories.

The MSC question

The MSC process begins by searching for the answer to a simple question, like this one:

Looking back over the last two years, what do you think was the most significant change in people's lives in this community as a result of listening to the SSMK radio program?

This question has six parts:

1. *'Looking back over the last two years'* – this refers to a specific period of time. This can be changed as necessary since some interviewees will have had a shorter or longer involvement with the programs than others.
2. *'...what do you think was...'* – this asks the storyteller to make their own judgement.
3. *'...the most significant...'* - this asks the storyteller to focus on **one** particular thing, rather than to comment on many different things.
4. *'...change...'* - this asks the storyteller to be more selective and to talk about a change rather than something that was already happening.
5. *'...in people's lives in this community...'* - this asks the storyteller to talk about what they think are the wider impacts of the programs in their community, not just the impact on them as individuals.
6. *'...as a result of listening to the SSMK radio program?...'* – this also provides some boundaries. You should adjust this part as necessary, depending on what aspects of the programs the storyteller has been involved in.

The answer to this question will provide a story about changes. The best way to collect stories is to conduct an individual interview. A sample interview guide is provided below. You should adapt this guide as necessary for the interviews you conduct.

Some tips for collecting MSC stories:

- Write the story down ***exactly as the person says it***. This is very important.

- Read your notes about the story back to the storyteller to check that you understood it.
- People will tell their stories well if they are happy to talk with you, so only use this method if they have time and want to talk.
- You must usually ask more questions to get the whole story. However, it is best if you do not speak too much and interrupt the story.
- Do not give people clues about what you may want to hear. The story should be about *their* ideas about change not *your* ideas.

Record this information when someone tells you a story about significant change:

- Who told the story?
- When and where did the events in the story happen?
- Who was involved in the story?
- What happened? The story should be a simple description of the events as they happened.
- What does the storyteller think is significant about what happened in the story. You should always ask ‘what were your reasons for telling that story?’ and ‘why was it important to you?’
- Remember to capture enough detail. The more detail you include the more believable the story will be. The final story should be about one page long.

The story should contain three parts as shown below:

A beginning	A middle	An end	+	Why is this significant?
What was the situation <i>before</i> the change happened? (ie. what were things like in your community before people began listening to the radio program?)	What happened? (the nature of the information provided by the program)	The situation <i>after</i> . What difference did it make?		(this tells us about the storytellers view of the world and why they value the change)

MSC story example: ‘Encouraged to study harder’

I have a father, mother and two brothers living at home. We always have lots of visitors at home due to my father’s work as a contractor. The radio would be on from 6 in the morning to almost 9 or 10 in the evening. One thing that I found strange was that in our neighbour’s house the band is tuned to whichever radio station is playing music, but in my house it was always tuned to news and information programs. We had visitors who were drivers, labourers and contractors and I used to listen them talk. Mostly they talked about politics. I used to find it difficult to understand their discussion, but I didn’t have any friends of my own age then so I didn’t have any choice but to be with my father most of the time.

Two years ago, when I was in class 8, two of my male friends used to discuss the situation of the country with our teachers. I also used to participate in these discussions but was not able to critically discuss the issues. My teacher used to praise me for my knowledge of current political issues, which encouraged me to learn and understand more about these issues. When I was in class 9, I started regularly listening to the Naya Nepal program at night. I liked the lively and interesting way that Laure spoke about things and I started listening to the program more to listen to him talk. I also started asking my Dad lots of questions

about things I didn't understand. I realised that even to ask questions you need to have a little knowledge about big issues like the Constituent Assembly. In this way I started listening to the program regularly. But because I'm preparing for my class 10 board exam just now, I have not been regularly listening to it.

After listening to the Naya Nepal program I was able to make my friends understand about the CA. One interesting thing is that my father and mother voted for the different parties in an election after reading their manifesto. But I think it's important to know that person as well. After they came back to the house we discussed about why we gave importance to only the manifesto of the party and not to the person. This discussion made an impact on me. I told my parents "You're able to understand these things because of listening to Laure Dai's Tea Shop", the drama segment of NN.

Listening to the NN radio program brought various changes in me:

- I was able to better understand politics and current social and political issues in Nepal.
- People like my teacher and parents started praising me for my knowledge about current issues which encouraged me to do better in my studies.
- I started having more interest in extra curriculum activities and issues.
- I became much better at debating and discussing current issues with my teachers, my friends and my family.

Important rules for collecting stories

Before you collect stories you must explain that the story will be used for our research.

- Always ask if the storyteller is happy for their story to be used in this way.
- Ask if they would like their name included in your information about the story.
- Ask any other people mentioned in the story if they are happy for their name to be mentioned in the story.

You can find out more about MSC in the **MSC manual for M&E staff and others at Equal Access**. This includes a sample story collection guide and other story examples.

Participatory techniques

The participatory techniques included in this section can help to get you started in collecting data and quickly gaining an understanding of the local area, local people and local issues. They are a useful way of getting people more actively involved in discussions. They can be drawn upon at any time to explore issues in different ways, and to test findings or ideas generated using other tools.

Most importantly, these techniques are good at getting local people to participate in identifying their own issues and solutions. The methods are very effective at helping participants to realise their own problems and constraints and are useful in generating consensus opinions quickly where agreed or group action is required.

The simple diagrams and charts produced with participants through these techniques are also a clear and simple way for you and Equal Access to communicate complex issues to others such as community members and donors.

When you are undertaking your work think of ways to combine more than one technique, and to combine these techniques with other tools to build up a more complex picture of what is happening on the ground. Participatory techniques will help you gather information quickly, and they can be used as a guide for developing interview schedules. Equally, they can be used to explore issues emerging from interviews with small groups of people.

Some of these techniques take just a few minutes. Typically, they work well with small groups of up to eight people, though they can involve just you and one other person.

You could hold a group meeting or meet with people in their homes to do these techniques. Going to places where people generally gather may be a good idea. These techniques can also be taught quickly and participants can then do them at home on their own or with their families and friends and come back to you with a diagram or chart as a way of discussing their experiences with you.

Adapt the techniques to the situation you are in and prepare some examples to share. Try using some techniques as 'icebreakers' to enable people get to know you and each other. Use these techniques in a flexible way, according to your research needs. Let the participants lead the way, rather than the other way around.

Many of the techniques are visual, using pictures as a way of generating understandings of complex local issues. They are simple techniques that can make use of objects and symbols so that illiterate people can participate too.

Maps and diagrams

As a community researcher you will most likely use a range of mapping techniques, including community or village maps and spider diagrams. Maps and diagrams are useful for illustrating relationships, for showing how things are connected and for showing the impacts and effects of our activities. These relationships and connections can be social, spatial, and emotional. Maps and diagrams are useful tools for generating discussions with people. They can help you to understand the experiences and perceptions of different participants in the research activity.

Community mapping

Community mapping is an important research activity that helps you understand where all the facilities are in the village or local area where you live and work. Community maps can include important places, such as churches and temples, markets, schools, hospitals, entertainment areas and meeting places. You can also include transport links and paths on the map.

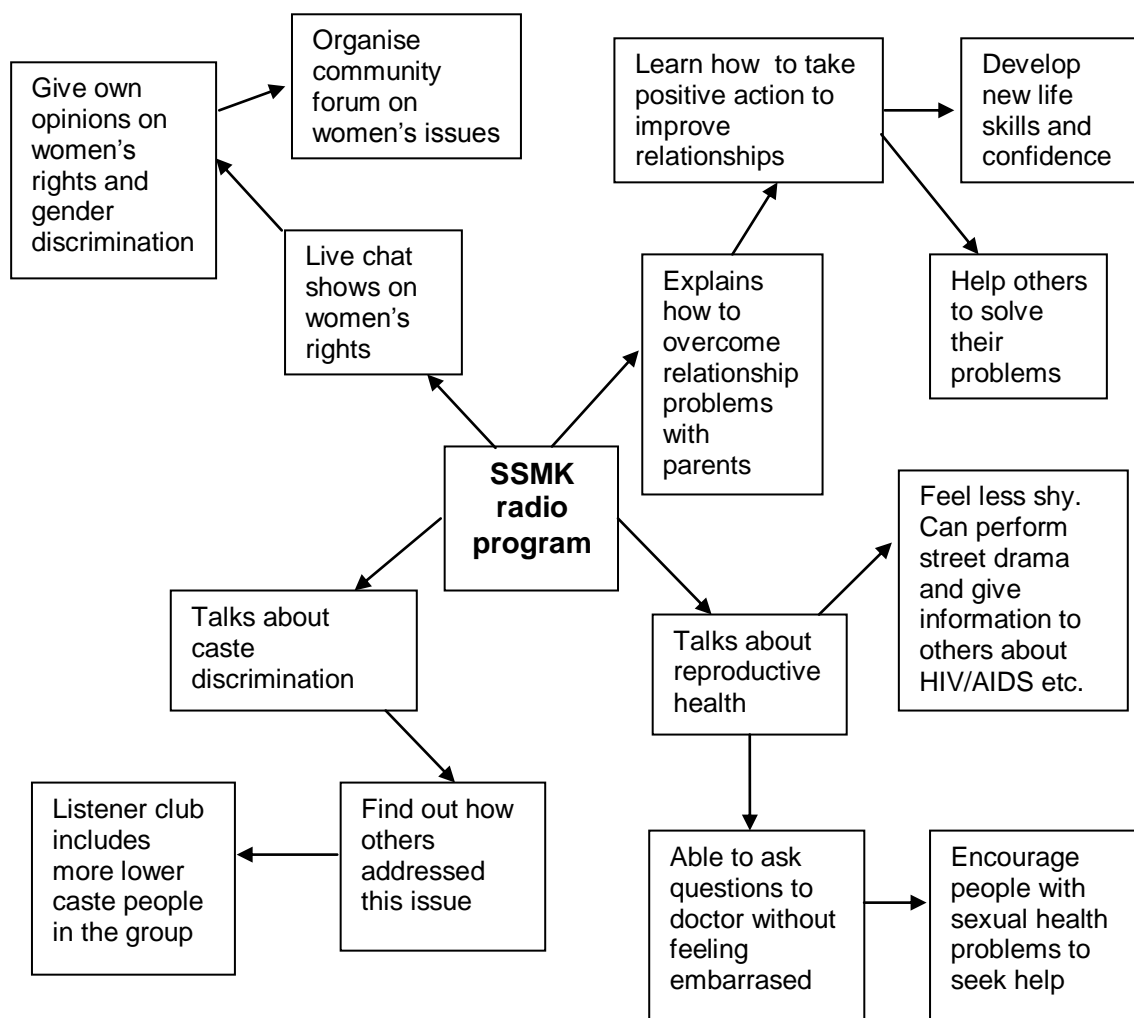
Mapping is also a good way to learn how people can view their local area differently. For example, maps made by women are likely to be quite different from maps made by men. If a woman is not allowed access to an area due to her gender, caste or ethnic group, then that area may not appear on her map; a man may omit a communal water tap as he never uses it because his wife collects all the water for household needs. You should make several maps of the same area with different groups in the community: women, men, children, professionals, leaders, different ethnic groups. Compare the maps and make a note of any differences, because identifying these differences is an important part of this research activity.

How to use this research activity

Use groups of about four people who share a similarity. For example, include people of similar age, gender, caste or religion. You can also make a community map with just one person and then compared their map to one made by different people. You can start by asking questions such as:

- Where is the temple?
- Where are the shops?
- Where do you catch the bus?
- Where do people gather?
- Where is the best land?
- Where are the poorest houses?

There will be many other questions that you can ask when the map is finished. Features of the map can form a starting point for discussions about important characteristics of the village or community.

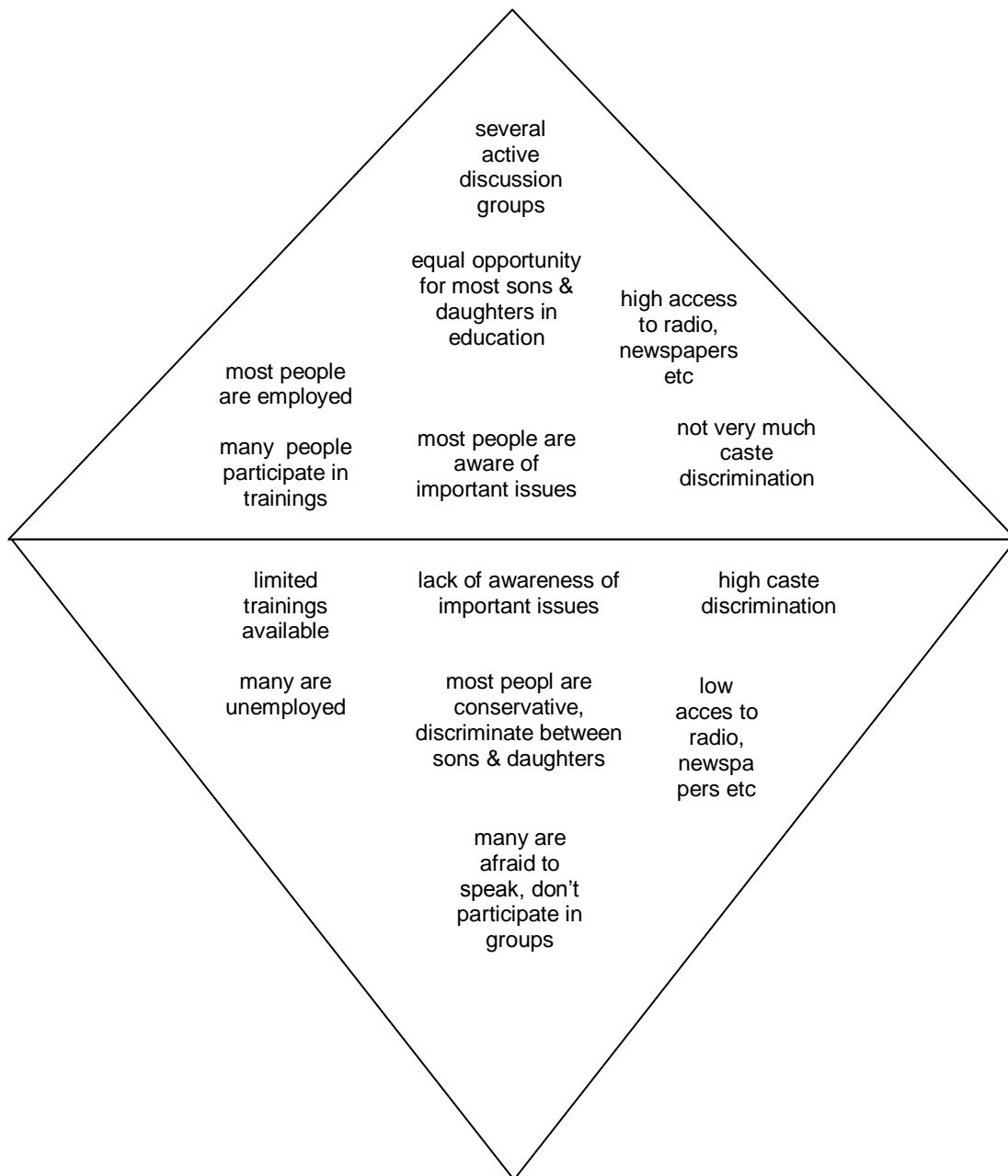


Example of an impact diagram

Your Equal Access mentor will give you specific themes to investigate. After you choose the activity you want to focus on write it down in the middle of a large piece of paper. Facilitate a discussion about the activity or program. Draw or write down the various impacts that the group can identify in circles or oval shapes. Use arrows to show how one thing is related to another (see example below). Ask people questions about what causes the impact. For example, 'how did that happen?' or 'why is that important?' Continue the activity until you have discussed all the possible impacts that people suggested.

Diamonds

Use this research activity to investigate how people are different from others who live in the same community and which people are included and excluded in discussions and access to important information. It can also be used to think about the barriers to social change and what could be done to help bring about that change.



Example of a Diamond showing the differences between communities close to and distant from the bazaar

How to use this research activity

You can use this research activity with small groups of people. Draw a diamond shape on a large piece of paper at the start. Next, draw a line across the middle of the diamond. Discuss with the group members what this line represents. For example the line could represent:

- Level of access to information
- Level of inclusion of women in community discussions about important issues, such as political change or conflict.

- Level of inclusion of lower case people in decision making
- Differences between communities that are close to and distant from the bazaar (see example above)

Discuss who is at the top of the diamond above the line and who is at the bottom below the line. Identify the characteristics of these people, where they live, the conditions they live in and any other details that you can get.

Finally, talk about how people move from below the line to above the line. A question such as 'How does someone get to the other side of the line?' may start a good discussion about issues important to social change in your community.

Chapatti or Venn diagrams

Use this research activity to learn who are the important groups in a community and their relationships with each other or participants' most important sources of information. You could also use this tool to gather information such as which aspects of a radio program a group liked the best and why.

How to use this research activity

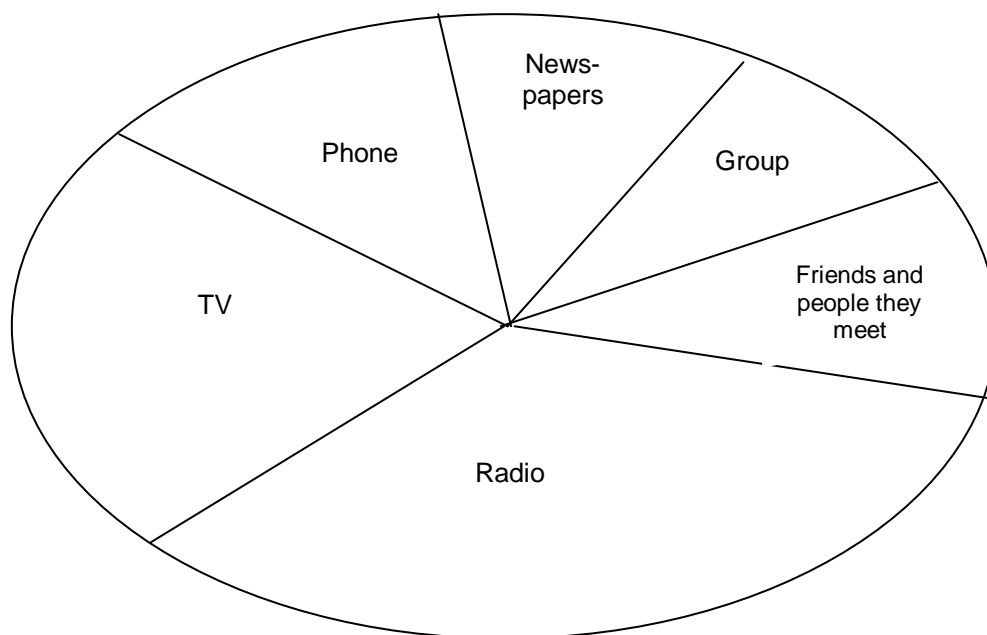
Use this research activity with individuals or with small groups. There are many things you can talk about when you use this research activity:

- Where do you get information?
- Which sources of information are the most important?
- Who has access to these sources of information?

Draw a circle and ask people to divide it into different sections. The size of each section depends on how important the different things are compared to each other with the biggest being the most important. There can be as many sections as people need. You can use pictures or symbols in place of words on the diagram. Once people have divided up the circle or 'chapatti' you can discuss the chart and why it has been divided in this way.

You can use this research activity as part of a longer interview because it can help people to show clearly the situation they are talking about.

The example of a Chapatti diagram below is from a group interview that aimed to identify the participants' most important sources of information.



Example of a Chapatti diagram

Other techniques

Division of labour

This research activity is similar to the daily activity chart activity but it highlights issues concerning gender. You must ask questions about who does various things during the day. This research activity helps us understand how the roles of men, women and children differ during the day and how this affects their access to information and participation in discussions and decision making in their community.

How to use this research activity

This research activity is best used with a group of people who have similar characteristics, such as gender, age or ethnic group. You will need a simple chart that has different times of the day on it. For example:

- morning though to night
- hourly divisions.

You may want to use symbols such as the sun and moon to highlight the beginning and end of the day.

Ask people in the group to describe a typical day in the community. They should indicate what activities they do and when do these activities. Ask them to write or draw them next to the

time of day they do these things on the chart. You could write these things on the chart for the people in the group. Other questions you could ask people in the group could be:

- What activities take up most time?
- What activities do they like least or most?
- What would happen if roles and responsibilities changed?
- What activities are connected to certain issues, such as HIV, health, domestic violence or child nutrition?

Example of a Gender Division of Labour chart of Silangi village, Nepal

Participants: Five female and three males (two females are elderly women and the rest were youths)
 Name of club: Hajarimala SSMK Listeners Club and Navayuva Pragatisil SSMK Listeners Club, Silangi village, Samajee-4, Dadeldhura district.
 Date: March 18, 2008

Time	Women (mothers)	Men (fathers)	Sons	Daughters
4 am	wake up and fetch water	still sleeping	sleeping	sleeping
5 am	clean the house	some still sleep and some listen to radio	some still sleep and some study	some still sleep and some study
6 am	eat breakfast	eat breakfast	eat breakfast	eat breakfast
7 am	take cattle out in courtyard	go to farm	play in home	play in home
8 am	cook food	busy in farm work	still playing	still playing
9 am	eat food	eat food	eat food	eat food
10 am	go to forest to collect forage for cattle and fire wood or works on the farm	employees go to job, some go to local bazaar, some gossip in local meeting places, some go to their farm, some take cattle to graze	go to school	go to school
5 pm	come home	come home or some are already at home	come home from school	come home from school
6 pm	fetch water	some gossip in local meeting places, some provide forage to cattle	play	play or some help their mother to fetch water
7 pm	cook food	listen to radio	study	study
8 pm	eat food, clean plates and utensils and goes to bed	eat food and goes to bed	eat food and goes to bed	eat food and goes to bed

The chart in the example shows that only men in the village listen to the radio while the wives are confined mostly to household and farm chores. This is a common practice in most rural communities in Nepal. A male household head usually possesses power of authority to make most of the household decisions. He imposes most of the exhausting and tedious routines on to their wives in a tradition that is deeply interwoven into the crux of the rural society. Married women can only listen to radio programs or watch TV shows that their husbands wish to tune into. Hence they often do not have their own favourite shows. To break out of this restriction, they are increasingly organising into groups to listen to their particular radio programs of

interest or to undertake collective action. Youth in this community have also formed listener clubs where they can listen to programs without the presence of adults.

Road blocks

Use this activity to understand why people cannot get access to things like education or information that can help to create social change. The barriers or road blocks that stop people getting access may include:

- Where they live and work
- What social or cultural group they belong to
- Their health
- Poverty
- Political problems
- Lack of education

You may find there are many barriers and that some barriers are only found in some places and with some people. You could also use this tool to work out the things that block a listener group from being more active.

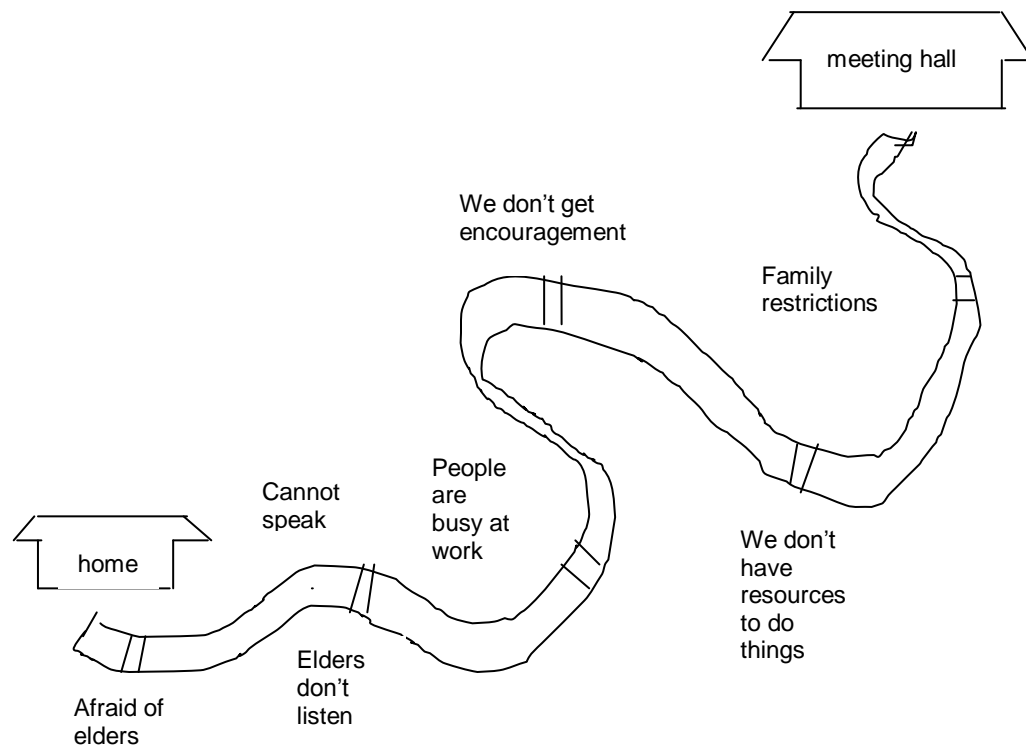
How to use this technique

First draw a house and a winding road that leads to another place, such as a school or a community meeting place. The place the road goes to will depend on what problem you want to understand or what people want to change. Then ask people to draw barriers on the road that stop them reaching the place at the end of the road. Ask people to tell you about these barriers. Ask people to explain which barriers are:

- Easy to overcome or hard to overcome
- Local problems or distant problems
- Recent problems or problems that started a long time ago

Show differences between barriers by drawing them in different positions on the road. Ask people what things must happen for each barrier to be removed and what sort of solutions could help bring about social change.

This example shows the blocks that restrict a listener group from doing things.



Example of Road Block

These are the solutions that the group came up with:

- They will call community people in their meeting and programs
- They will organise an interaction program and street dramas in the community
- Ask elders for suggestions
- They will coordinate with different organisations to get funding for different activities
- They will listen to the radio program regularly and manage time also
- They will make their families understand about the change they have been trying to achieve in the community.

Time lines

Use this research activity to understand about the changes that have happened in a community or to a listener or group of listeners as a result of listening to a radio program or taking part in related outreach activities. This tool can help us to learn about things such as whether people are more included or more excluded in decision making and having more or less access to information in their community than they had before.

How to use this research activity

Draw a line on a piece of paper with a start and end point. This will be an appropriate period of years as in the example below. Write down significant events in the community or in the interviewee's life along the line from the earliest to the most recent.

Example of a Time Line

Date: 12th June, 2008

Researcher: Lila Devkota

Place: Narayanpur-1, Patharkatiya, Dang, Nepal

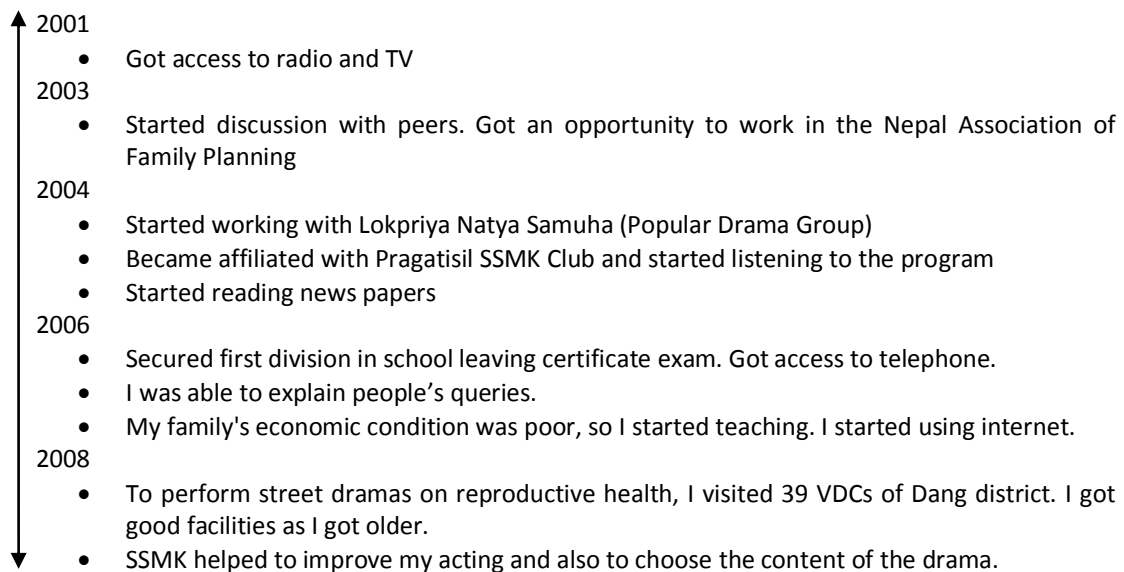
No. of participants: 1

Gender: Female

Age: 18 years

Purpose of activity: To find out what changes in access to information and the interviewee's life have happened over the past eight years.

Major findings:



Deepening and improving your data

Deepening your data

There are many ways in which you can deepen your research. Here are some suggestions:

Use participant observation to identify topics to follow up on: When you take part in everyday or more formal activities in your community, stay alert for interesting topics of discussion that you could follow up on. You could use methods such as in-depth individual interviews or group interviews to do this follow up. Use your field notes to record what you see and hear on a regular basis. This is the raw material for your research reports. Things that you at first thought were not interesting or important may later become of interest to you.

Involve a wider range of key informants: In order to understand the impacts of the radio programs and related activities, you need to consider all the possible people or groups in your community who can provide useful information. As well as speaking to listener club members, you could gather significant change stories from parents of listener club members, school

teachers, or people working in areas such as HIV/AIDS prevention. You can find more information about this in the section called 'Involving people in your research'.

Hold more in-depth interviews: A good way to get more detailed information is to hold several in-depth interviews with a broad range of community members and leaders. You need to select people who you think can answer your research questions well. For example, if a woman in a group activity talks about an interesting example of change that resulted from listening to a radio program, you could conduct a follow up interview with her to get more detailed information. As with all of your research work, you will need to prepare well for these interviews and to keep asking more probe questions such as those listed in Box 8 below.

Keep probing for more information from participants about the radio programs and their impacts. For example, if someone says 'I'd like new information included in (name of radio program)' ask them 'What type of information would you like included in the program?' If someone says that they think the radio program 'helps them solve problems' ask them 'What kind of problems does it help you to solve?' and 'How does it help you to solve these problems?' Some of the important questions you could ask to get more detailed feedback on the radio programs include:

- How often do you listen to the program?
- Why do you like the program?
- Which part of the programs do you like best?
- How much do you think that listening to the program influences people's lives in this community (or community activities)?
- Do you talk to other people about the program, or topics they cover? Who do you talk to?
- How has the program helped to address the problems in our community? Please give me some concrete examples or tell me a story about this.

In summary, the best methods to get more in-depth data include:

- **Individual interviews** with key informants (ie. people in the community who can provide lots of useful information and comments on an issue, or who have been actively involved in actions to create positive social change). Each interview should take at least 30 minutes. Use the Most Significant Change technique to gather stories about the impacts of programs through individual semi-structured interviews.
- **Group interviews** with up to ten key informants. You will need to ensure that each participant has an opportunity to speak and that all of the important issues raised by participants are written down. It may be easier to conduct group interviews with another community researcher. One of you would facilitate the discussion while the other would write down what people say. Each group interview should last for at least one to one and a half hours.

- **Keeping field notes:** if you write about three pages of observations in your note book every day (if possible), you will eventually have a large amount of detailed information about your community. You can later draw on this information when you write your reports.

Box 8: Tips for getting more detailed information

Take plenty of time. You may need to spend a longer time on each tool to get more detailed data. Taking more time gives everyone the chance to speak, for all their comments to be written down, and to discuss whether what was written is correct or not. Take as much time as you need to on each tool. The outcomes will be always be better if you are relaxed and not rushing the process.

Use less tools if necessary: It is better to capture lots of useful information from one or two tools in a group activity than to use many tools that do not provide very detailed information.

Keep the group fairly small. You will gather more detailed information and everyone will have more chance to speak and be heard if you keep the size of groups to no more than about 12 people. If a large number of people want to take part, it is better to divide the group into two or three smaller groups. Each small group should have a facilitator and a note taker who can perform these tasks well.

Keep asking more questions. To get more detailed information and concrete evidence of social changes in your community (related directly or indirectly to listening to SSMK or NN) you will need to keep on probing participants. To do this, you need to ask questions such as:

- why did that happen?
- why do you say that?
- what effect did this have?
- what particular problems are you talking about?
- to what extent do you think this problem is increasing or decreasing?
- can you give me an example of the change you're talking about?

Describe clear examples of change. After you've gathered some clear evidence of changes that can be connected to listening to the radio programs, write a few sentences that clearly describe specific examples of change or impacts that have happened. Say how these changes came about and why. The Most Significant Change technique is a good way to capture people's stories about change.

Be more precise in your reports. Avoid writing vague statements in your reports such as 'lots of people are uneducated' or 'participants like (name of program)'. State which particular groups in the community you are talking about and give more details about which parts of the program they like the best and why.

Thinking about and trying to improve your research work

Regularly think about how well you are doing with your research activities. This will help you to improve your work so that it is better at telling us about the lives, experiences, opinions and ideas of people in your communities. This information helps Equal Access to improve its radio programs. It will also help you to work out which research tools you are using well, and which you need more help and training with.

Ask yourself the following questions as soon as possible after each session:

- what things worked well in this session?

- what did not work so well?
- how could this session have been improved?
- did everyone participate in the activity? if not, why do you think that was?
- did everyone have a say? if not, why do you think that was?

Write brief answers to these questions in your research diary and then include a summary of the main issues in your report. Your research supervisor at Equal Access will discuss these issues with you and help you to improve what you do.

Gathering feedback on your research

It is also a good practice to gather feedback on your research from the people you are working with. At the end of each session with community groups, spend a few minutes asking participants the following questions:

- what things worked well in this session?
- what did not work so well?
- how could this session have been improved?

Encourage everyone to give you open and honest feedback. Tell them not to be afraid to tell you if they think it was not very effective or interesting. Tell them you want to learn from their feedback. You may have to ask more questions to better understand their feedback. Note down what they say and then add the main points to your report. This will help you to constantly improve your research work.

Section 5: Managing and reporting data and getting support

Managing and reporting on your data

There are three main steps involved in managing and preparing reports on the research data you collect:

1. Good record keeping
2. Organising your data
3. Preparing your reports

Step 1: Good record keeping

During the research activities:

- Gather all the information you need to provide accurate details about the participants' gender, age, caste etc. The report template tells you what information is needed (see sample template in Appendix 1.
- Prepare rough notes on the research activity in easy to understand handwriting.
- Ensure that all diagrams, maps and other materials developed during research activities are easy to understand and include all the information you need to write your report.
- Label all the materials created during your research activities with the information set out in Step 2 and keep them in a safe place.

Immediately after the research:

- Write up your notes and research diary as soon as you can. Include as much detail as possible. The tips in this manual and the report template give you more information and ideas about this.
- Prepare a short summary of the main outcomes of the activity. Writing this summary as soon as possible after a research activity is a useful way of recording the main things you learned and other information which can later be shared with others.
- Write some critical reflections on your research work in your notebook.

Step 2: Organising your data

- All data must have the following basic information written on it:
 - Who was involved?
 - Where was the activity conducted?
 - When did it take place?
 - How did you do the research? (what tools or methods were used?)
- Make two photocopies of your notes and one copy of other research materials and keep them in a safe place.
- Organise your notes and research materials so that you can easily find things later on.

Step 3: Preparing your research reports

To write a good quality report you will need to carefully follow a data report template like the one provided in Appendix 1 and the tips in Box 9.

Box 9: Tips for writing good quality, in-depth reports

Prepare well before you write your report

- Closely read your notes and other data that you have collected.
- Write an outline of the headings you will use to organise your findings. Use this as a guide when you're writing your report.

Make your objectives clear

- Make the purpose of your research clear (for example, to gather data on social change impacts, to gather feedback on recent radio programs).
- Clearly state the objectives of your research and the research questions you are answering.
- Clearly show how the activities you are reporting on relate to the radio programs and the objectives of your research.

Include the actual questions asked

- In order to understand the feedback or comments from participants, it is useful to include the questions you asked them.

Be precise and give concrete examples

- Avoid vague statements such as 'lots of people are uneducated', or 'participants like (name of program)'. Say which particular groups in the community you are talking about, and give more details about which parts of the program they like the best and why.
- Rather than say 'caste discrimination is decreasing', include some indication of the level of such social changes. For example, you could ask participants if they think it has decreased a little, a moderate amount, or a large amount. Explain why participants think that this has happened through adding concrete examples or significant change stories.

Let the data speak for itself

- It is good to include the actual words of participants if they have said something important or interesting. This brings your report to life and lets the data speak for itself.
- Good quotes can later be used in reports written by Equal Access for donors and in the feedback you give to the community.

Consider your observations

- Refer to your field notes and what you learned through your participant observations. What people say may be different from what they actually do.

Provide some information about the people and the local situation

- Think about how participants' gender, age, caste/ethnic group or literacy level may have affected your findings. Telling us something about these differences can help us to understanding your findings better.
- Your report should also tell us something about the local situation that may have affected your research findings. For example, the fact that a women's organisation has been mentoring a new listener club made up of young women. Or the fact that more people in the community have access to TV or the internet and are spending less time listening to the radio.
- Information about the local situation can also help us understand the barriers to change or action that participants may have experienced.

Feeding your results back to the community

An important part of doing participatory research is to tell the community about the results of your research and encourage discussion about your findings. This includes telling people about how your research findings are being used to improve the radio programs made by Equal Access and to help make other activities such as listener group work better. Feeding back research results in this way can help to:

- encourage debate and discussion about the findings and what resources and actions were needed to address the issues raised
- identify new research ideas
- generate more interest in taking part in future research activities
- raise awareness of the role of communication in producing social change
- increase understanding of the value of doing this research work
- gather more feedback on your research activities and how they could be improved.

After the data you have collected is analysed, your mentor at Equal Access will help to provide the type of information you need to feed back your results.

How to feed back your results

There are many ways in which you can feed your research results back to the community. Here are some suggestions:

- Write a summary of the important findings for inclusion in a wall newspaper
- Arrange to be interviewed at your local radio station
- Give a talk at meetings of community groups
- Hold a community forum

A community forum will take some time and effort to organise but is a very effective method of feeding back your findings, using a participatory approach.

How to organise and hold a community forum

Organising and conducting a community forum could involve the following steps:

Step 1: Work out who you want to invite to the forum and how many you are hoping to take part. Aim to include as wide a range of people as possible but be realistic about the number of people who may attend.

Step 2: Find other people who can help you to run and facilitate the forum and provide some resources and support. They should ideally have been involved in your research in some way and have experience in running meetings and facilitating discussions. You may also want to invite a well known community leader or community development worker to introduce the

forum and encourage everyone to listen and to actively participate. You should try to get some support from Equal Access partner organisations and others who can help with things like making copies of invitations and information and providing refreshments to participants.

Step 3: Prepare a plan for the forum. This will include working out the best methods to share and discuss the information, the schedule for the event, who will do what, and how long each part of the forum will take. You may need to allow at least two hours or more to conduct the forum. Also consider the best time of day and the best day of the week to hold the forum so that the most people can take part. You also need to find a suitable meeting hall or other place to hold the forum and get permission to use it on that day.

Step 4: Prepare invitations and information for the forum. You need to work out the best way to distribute the invitations and publicise it within the community. For example, you could post information on community noticeboards and in other places where people gather such as tea shops.

Step 5: Gather and prepare all the materials you need for the forum. You will need to use large sheets of paper to capture some of the feedback and discussion in the same way as when you use participatory techniques.

Step 6: Hold the forum. Depending on the number of people who take part, you will need divide the group into several smaller groups to discuss the findings. Each group will need a note taker and a facilitator. One person from each group would then share a short summary of their discussion with the whole group. To create a more interesting discussion it may be good to make sure there is a mixture of different people in each small group.

Step 7: Compile the outcomes from the forum and provide this information to participants and other interested community members in various ways. Prepare a short report on the forum and what you learned from it and send it to Equal Access. Your mentor at Equal Access will discuss this with you during his next visit.

Getting support and sharing findings

Doing participatory research takes a lot of work to do well. You may find that it is hard to fit it into your other activities and commitments and to stay motivated and enthusiastic. Getting regular support from other people can help you with this.

Sharing your experiences and concerns with other community researchers and with your mentor at Equal Access can be very helpful. It may be useful to plan a regular meeting with the other community researcher in your area to give each other support. You could also aim to hold some group meetings and interviews together to make them work better. When you are both busy you could phone each other for a chat about your work.

Be open and honest with your mentor at Equal Access if you are having many problems and you are unsure about your research and how to use various tools and write your reports. He

will be able to make things clearer and give you any extra information you need. It may be helpful to make a list of the key issues and questions you want to ask so that you are prepared before he calls you.

You can also get advice and support from more experienced facilitators and community workers in your community. Invite them to co-facilitate some group activities and learn from them as you work together. They may benefit by learning about new techniques and ways of doing research.

Appendix 1: Sample templates for community researcher data

Example of a template for collecting information about participants and the research conducted

Summary Report

Daily Report

Date:

Name of place:

Number of participants:

Male: Female:

Ethnic group: Dalit: Madheshi: Brahmin: Chhetri: Others:

Age range (maximum participants) fromto.....years

Research objective:

Tools used:

Major issues discussed:

Example of template for collecting demographic data about research participants

S.N.	Name	Address	Age	Education	Occupation	Listening pattern	
						NN	SSMK
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							