



**Brainstorming** puts a full range of ideas on the table before decisions are made. It is used to generate a free flow of ideas that are not bound by the usual barriers. It allows people to explore new ideas and challenge traditional thinking, by letting them put ideas on the table without fear of being corrected or challenged. At the end of a brainstorming session, there is a long list of creative ideas from which to work towards a solution.

**Step 1** Announce that you will be using brainstorming and review the rules:

- Let ideas flow freely
- No evaluating of ideas until later
- Build on the ideas until later
- Build on the ideas of others
- Be humorous and creative
- There are no bad ideas
- No debating
- Everyone participates
- Think in new ways
- Keep discussion moving

**Step 2** Clarify the topic being brainstormed, then allow a few minutes of quiet while people think about solutions

**Step 3** Encourage the group to let their ideas flow. The actual brainstorming can be structured (go systematically around the group), or be spontaneous (members offer ideas as they come to mind)

**Step 4** Record ideas as they're generated. Do not discuss or elaborate on them.

**Step 5** When people have run out of ideas, allow for a few minutes of thinking time and reflection. Sometimes the best ideas emerge in the second round.

**Step 6** When there really are no further suggestions, discuss each brainstormed idea in detail so that it's fully developed and clearly understood. Combine similar ideas that are worded differently.

**Step 7** Use a decision or voting process to sort the good ideas from the poor ones.

**Step 8** Agree on the final list of best ideas.

## Why does it work?

- By freeing people from practical considerations, it encourages them to think creatively.
- It's also an energizing process that helps move people to take action.
- Because it's highly participative it makes everyone feel that they are an important part of the solution.

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Major Source: Bens, Ingrid (2000). Facilitating with Ease! A Step-by-Step Guidebook. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

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# Conducting Focus Group Interviews



Focus groups are used to gather information from a targeted population about their experience and opinions on a particular topic. Its purpose is to promote self-disclosure among its participants and provide useful analysis of a program or problem. When deciding to use a focus group, it is important to determine, the purpose of the group, the specific kind of information needed from the group and how the information is to be used.

The group is carried through a facilitated discussion on a clearly defined topic. The goal is to solicit the opinions of the focus group members. Focus groups can be used for a wide variety of purposes such as:

- Determining program needs
- Program design
- Pilot testing
- Program improvement
- Policy making and testing
- Outcome evaluation

**Choosing Participants:** Members of a focus group should have some characteristic they share in common. Participants should be chosen intentionally and invited personally.

**Conducting the Interview:** Focus group interviews should last for no more than 90 minutes. A moderator would welcome the group, and ask between six and ten open ended questions, with an assistant who is recording or taking notes.

**Types of Questions:** The questions should be short, open-ended and address only one topic at a time.

**Moderating the Group:** An effective moderator allows each participant to give their view; looks at them while they speak; refrains from expressing personal views and has a working knowledge of the topic.

**The success of the focus group method depends on the skillful moderation of group discussions.**

**The moderator should be friendly, engaging and able to win the group's trust.**

## Analyzing Focus Group Data

Data from the interview is gathered from the moderator's memory, the assistant's notes and the recording. Analysis consists of:

- *Indexing:* Assigning 'labels' to participant responses
- *Management:* Grouping together responses within the same label.
- *Interpretation:* Develop a summary statement which is true of each group of responses.

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Major Source Rennekamp, R. and Nall, M., *Using Focus Groups in Program Development and Evaluation*, University of Kentucky College of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.

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The term rapid appraisal does not refer to a single technique but to a range of evaluation procedures. Their chief characteristics are that they take only a short time to complete, tend to be relatively cheap to carry out and make use of more 'informal' data collection procedures. The techniques rely primarily on observation coupled with semi-structured interviewing of farmers, local leaders and officials. In this way, it is thought that the varying perspectives of RRA research team members will provide a more balanced picture.

## Team Composition

One of the main characteristics of RRA is to work with a team of people from different disciplines. The main question then is, "which disciplines have to participate?" The recommendation is to recruit both men and women to be included on the research team. Teams should also have a mix of insiders and outsiders. Insiders or people very familiar with the area will provide a high-knowledge perspective to the problem. The outsider's participation may help identify possible options and in noting constraints that might otherwise be overlooked.

**Rapid Rural A is a bridge between formal surveys and unstructured research methods such as in depth interviews, focus groups and observation studies.**

## Field operation principles

Armed with tentative questions and information objectives, field research can begin. At first everything may seem confusing in the field. However, before long the region will become understandable if researchers follow three simple principles of fieldwork:

**Observe:** Researchers should keenly watch for patterns of crop production, land use, and farm/farmer behavior.

**Converse:** Researchers should stop and talk to farmers and listen to their concerns and views.

**Record:** Researchers should write everything down. Complete field-notes are crucial. This is especially essential in the early stages of the appraisal to help organize thinking.

If a large region is to be studied in the rural appraisal and a large research team is to be employed, it is advisable to carefully divide the region into smaller areas and appoint small teams (of 2 or 3 researchers) to cover each area. Specific delineation of the boundaries of each area must be made to ensure that no overlap occurs between teams.

A secondary data review should be conducted before conducting the research in the field. This would involve searching for and studying existing reports and records, and not only published data. Relevant information can be found in government agencies, universities, research centers, marketing bodies and other institutions. Relevant information can be project documents, research papers, annual reports, previous survey results, maps, as well as journals and books and even newspapers.

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Major Source: **Crawford, I.**, (1997) *Marketing Research and Information System*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, Rome.

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**A Resource Map** focuses on the natural resources in a community, like land, hills, rivers, fields, vegetation, etc. and may also cover habitation. Similar to a social or village map, it is not drawn to scale and is done by the local people because they have an in-depth knowledge of the surroundings where they have lived for generations. A resource map reflects people's perceptions of the reality of their natural resources rather than precise measurements.

**Steps:** The mapping process main steps include:

1. Consultation with the local community to identify an appropriate time and place for the exercise. Ensure that the time and location is suitable (good size, convenient, comfortable for all members of society) for as many people as possible.
2. Explain the purpose of the exercise to the participants. Ask them to start showing the major resources. Let them use whatever materials they choose (local or other materials) as creatively as possible. This may mean using twigs and rocks or yarn on canvas on the ground, or it may mean markers, depending on the community.
3. Watch the process carefully and take detailed notes. Don't rush things!
4. It is important not to disrupt this process – wait for a good time in the process if you must add or clarify anything and have patience if participants are not representing points in which you are interested
  - Ask them: "What about ...", "What does this symbol represent?" "Can you show me...in the map?" etc.
5. Ask them to depict and discuss the problems and opportunities in keeping with the objectives of the resource map.
6. Interview the map: ask specific questions so you can clarify your doubts and know about aspects you are interested in.
  - Ask them: "Can you tell me more about...? "This looks very interesting. Can you explain it to me in more detail?" etc.
7. Copy the map onto a large sheet of paper with all details, including legends. Also make a small sized copy for attaching to the report and for making copies.
8. Triangulate what is on in the map. One way is to go for a **transect**. The other way is to talk about the map with certain key people in the community and get their feedback.
9. Thank the participants for their active participation.

## Resource mapping helps gather village information on:

- Transport facilities
- Communication facilities
- Health and welfare societies
- Supply and service agencies
- Agricultural implements found in the community
- Animals used for agriculture
- Natural service vs. AI for various animals
- Marketing facilities
- Processing industries
- Financial facilities
- Advisory resources
- Community pastures or grazing land
- Labor availability for various purposes
- Storage or disposal facilities

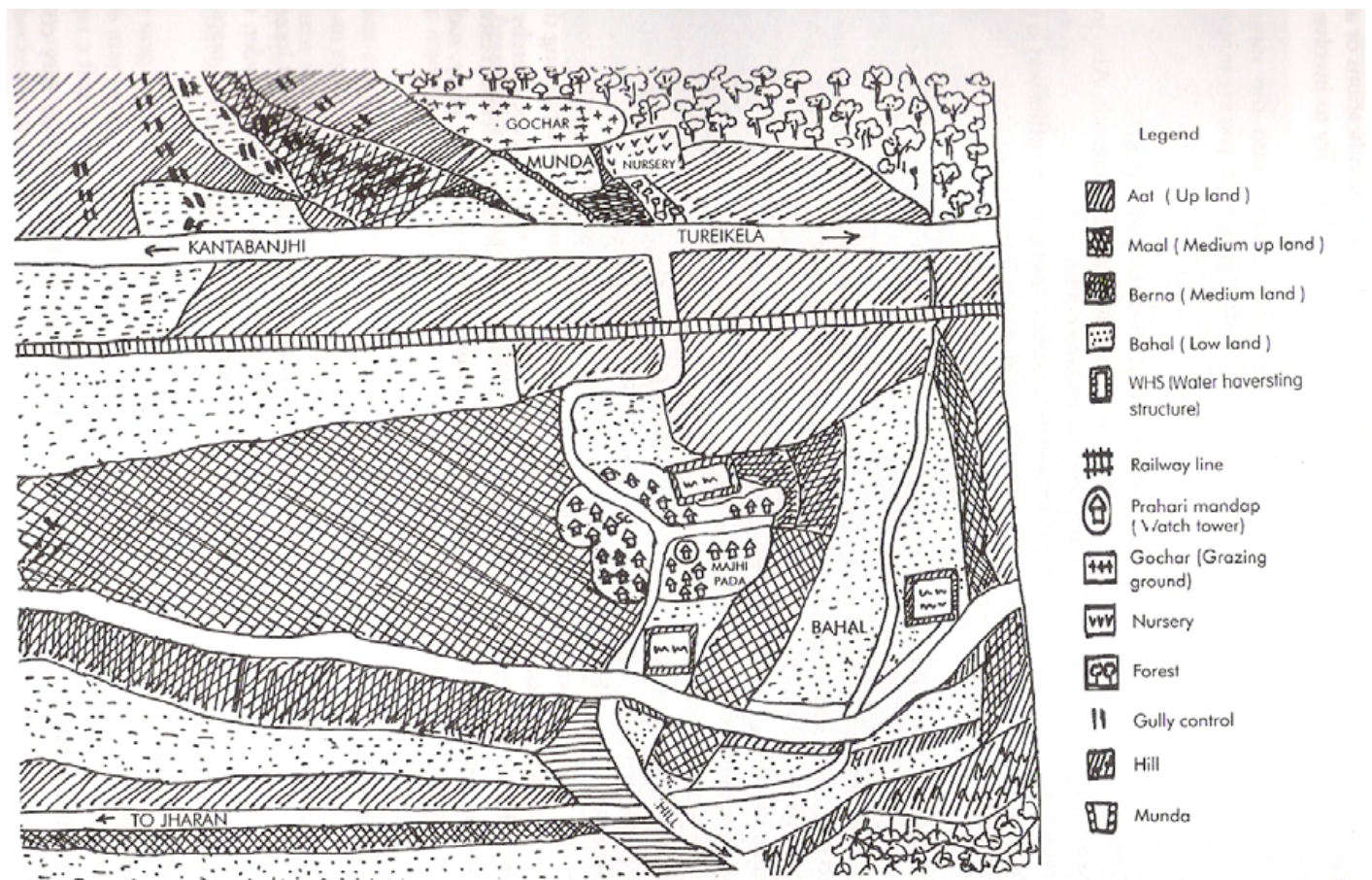
Extension professionals can design and plan interventions in a village to improve extension and advisory services with this information.

**"Resource maps help to create a common understanding amongst the participants as well as a baseline for monitoring and evaluation. The process of creating a resource map is full of joy and it instills self-confidence amongst the participants, which later makes the interaction more meaningful."**

## Example of a resource map

Villagers of Naupada of Bolangir district, Orissa, depicted the different land types, water harvesting structures, grazing land, roads, railway lines, and habitation. Participants then discussed in detail the natural resource situation in the village, talking about the effects of structures on resources. They considered soil erosion and loss of soil as two major problems, which a gully-control treatment was not solving. Overall, the resource map helped them see that mismanagement of natural resources and neglect of helpful structures, like those used for water harvesting, had led to perennial droughts.

Figure 1. Resource map of Naupada



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The most popular method in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) social mapping explores where and how people live and the available social infrastructure: roads, drainage systems, schools, drinking-water facilities, etc. A social map is made by local people and is not drawn to scale, illustrating what the local people believe to be relevant and important for them. This method is an authentic way of determining what the social reality looks like for locals through social stratification, demographics, settlement patterns, social infrastructure, etc.

**Steps:** The process for social mapping should include the following steps:

1. Consultation with the local community to identify an appropriate time and place for the exercise. Ensure that the time and location is suitable (good size, convenient, comfortable for all members of society) for as many people as possible.
2. Explain the purpose of the exercise to the participants. Ask them to begin by drawing the main physical features of their locality. Let them use whatever materials they choose (local or other materials) as creatively as possible. This may mean using twigs and rocks or yarn on canvas on the ground, or it may mean markers, depending on the community.
3. Watch the process carefully and take detailed notes. Don't rush things!
4. Keep track of who is actively involved – to which section of society do they belong? Who is being left out? Take steps to involve them.
5. You are just a facilitator — intervene only when necessary, like when participants are going through a rough patch.
6. It is important not to disrupt this process – wait for a good time in the process if you must add or clarify anything. Ask them: “What about ...”, “What does this symbol represent?” etc.
7. When they have finished mapping, ask some people to identify their houses in the map.
8. Identify and number the household details you need according to the goal of the exercise, like caste composition, school age children, etc.
9. Take a look at the map and clarify: ask specific questions on parts that are unclear to you. Copy the map made by participants onto a large sheet of paper immediately, with all details.
10. Triangulate the information generated with others in the locality.

## Social mapping helps gather village information on:

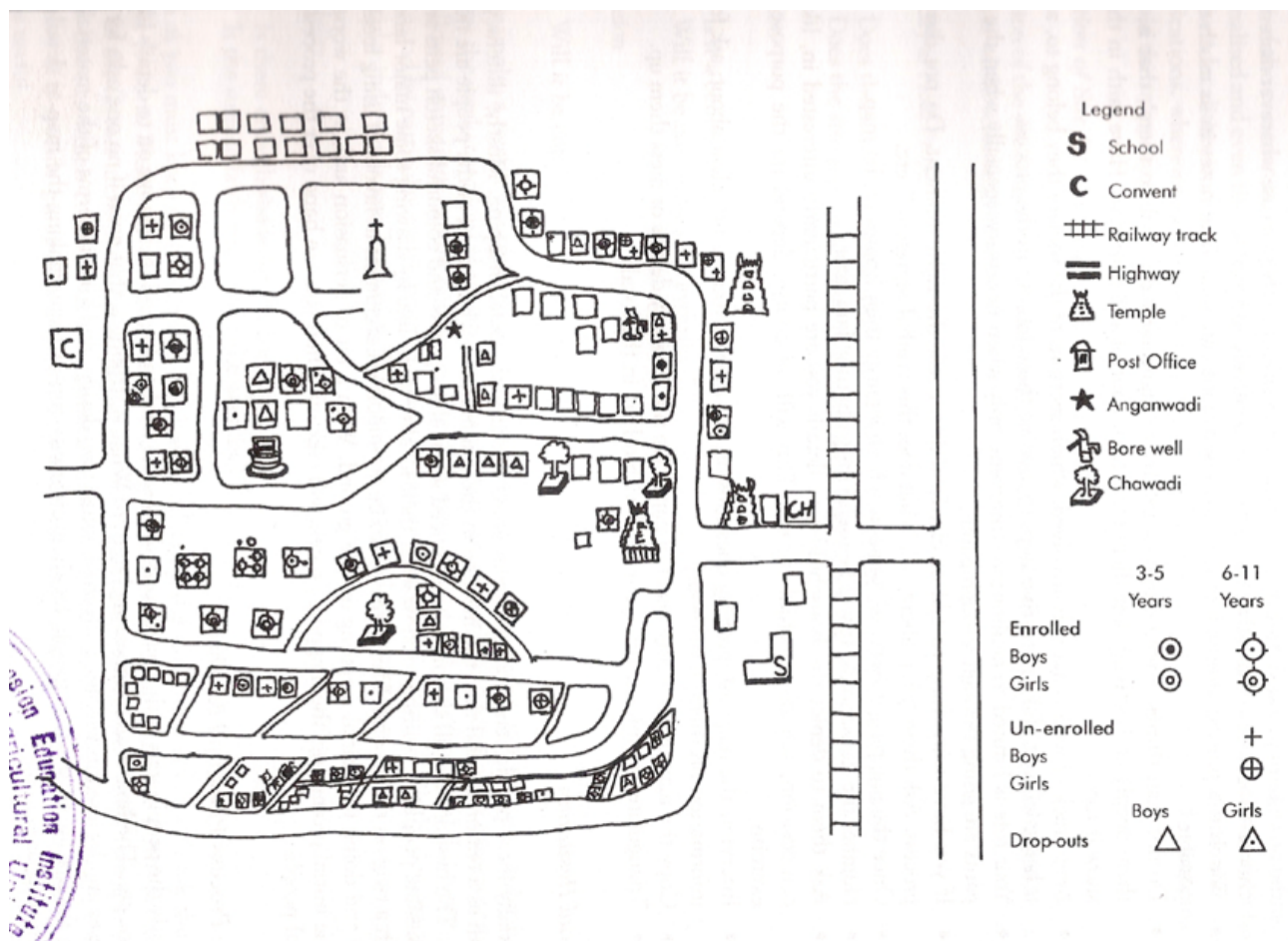
- Caste distribution and their spatial distribution within the village
- Ethnic distribution
- Social institutions and economy
- Family structure, patterns, and relationships
- Government institutions available
- Education background of villagers
- Social groups
- Assimilation patterns
- Accommodation practices
- Leadership patterns
- Value systems of the village
- Social interactions
- Cooperation and conflict practices
- Media/communication practices
- Social norms, folkways, history
- Social evils like alcoholism, child labor, prostitution
- Religion, leadership pattern and customs

Extension professionals can design and plan interventions in a village to improve extension and advisory services with this information.

**“What amazes new PRA practitioners is the way in which even those who generally remain on the fringes of the community process viz., old people, women and children get involved in mapping. The marginalized and even the illiterate follow the process and most of them are able to locate their houses and their localities in the social map.”**

**Example of a Social Map:** Villagers mapped out Chetlamallapuram in Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh, shown in figure 1. They depicted the lanes, sub-lanes, school, railway track, temple, post-office, well, community hall, and convent in the village. The map helped determine the educational situation by gender and age, revealing that more boys go to school than girls, more girls and un-enrolled than boys, and more girls drop out than boys in the 6-11 year age group. From this information, extension workers can better determine next steps for the community.

Figure 1: Social Map of Chetlamallapuram



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# Venn Diagram

Also known as the Chapati Diagram



A Venn Diagram (or Chapati Diagram) is useful if you want a simple participatory visual method and have a number of items to be studied (institutions, individuals, diseases, social groups, natural resources, etc. and any combinations) in relation to a few variables, preferably two, which could include importance, prevalence and perceived proximity.

**Process – This is important to do step-by-step to provide maximum clarity for you and participants**

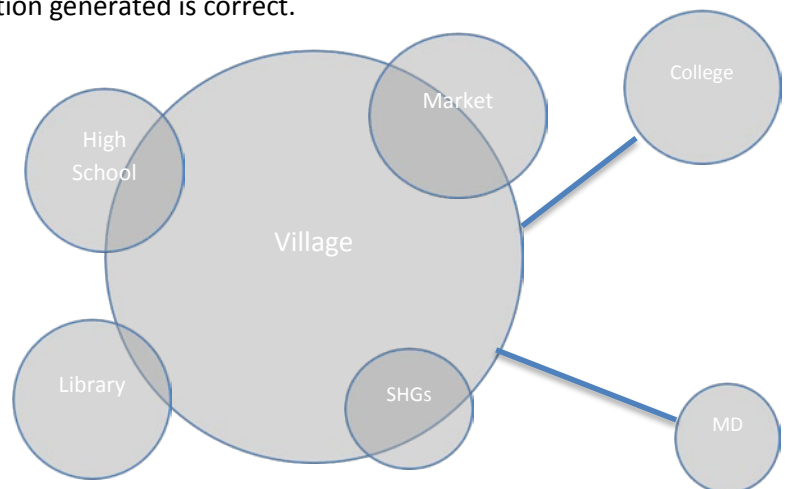
## Objectives

- Understand local people's perceptions about local institutions, individuals, programs, the power structure, and decision-making processes.
- Analyze various institutions, individuals, and groups in and outside the locality and their influence on the local people.

A Venn Diagram shows the relative importance of various institutions in the village, relationships and linkages among them, weaknesses with respect to decision making processes, development of the village by institutions, duplication of efforts and gap identification between institutions, objectives, and felt needs of farmers, and concentration of power within the village.

1. After explaining the purpose of the exercise to participants (objectives), ask participants to list the various institutions, individuals, and groups they want to analyze – encourage them to then write and/or depict them on small cards. Have them place the cards on one of the aspects being studied (such as perceived importance of the institutions, in descending order).
2. Ask them to write the institutions and individuals on paper circles of different sizes (you should already have these ready), either in words or symbols. The bigger the circle, the higher that institutions or individual ranks on that aspect (note down or depict the institutions or individuals on the circles).
3. Represent the community by drawing a large circle on the ground. Ask participants to place the circle so those high on the second aspect are kept close together, while those low on the aspect are kept away from the circle representing the community: degree of overlap = degree of interaction.
4. Ask them to discuss and explain why they placed the cards in such a manner. Note down the points of discussion and explanation. Encourage them to make any changes to the diagram throughout the process.
5. Copy the output onto a sheet of paper. Record the name of the village, participants, date, legends, what the size of the circle represents and what the distance represents.
6. Triangulate the findings with other key information to ensure that the information generated is correct.

Figure 1.  
One type  
of Venn  
Diagram





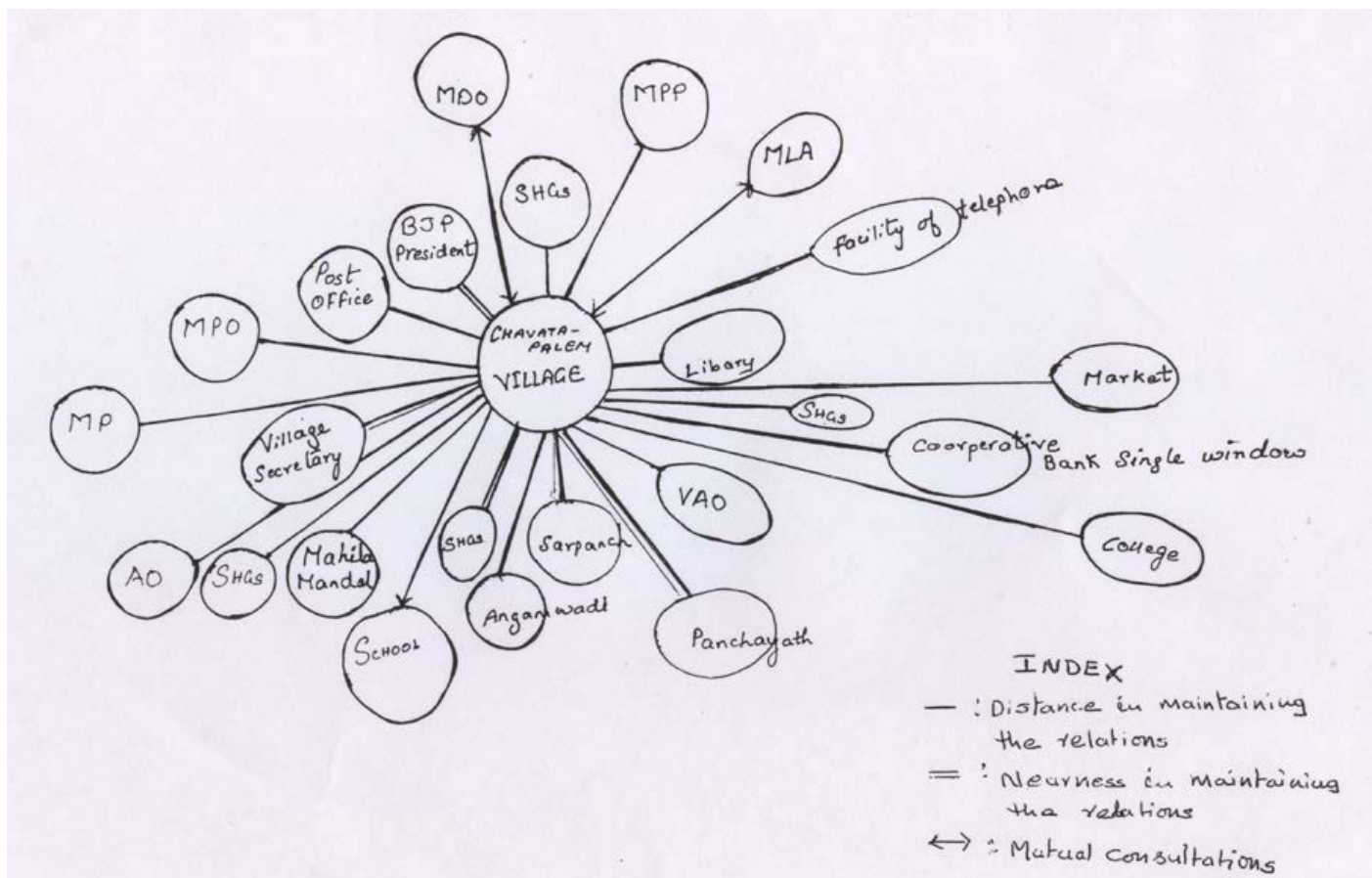
# Venn Diagram

Also known as the Chapati Diagram

## Example of Chapati Diagram

Participants identified institutions and individuals that were assigned circles of different sizes based on their perceived importance, as larger circles mean more important the institution/individual. Participants drew double lines to indicate the nearness of their relations and accessibility, with the longer lines indicating lower accessibility. The two-sided arrows show mutual relationships.

Figure 2. Chapati diagram of Chavatapalem village



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Wellbeing ranking is based on local people's perception of wealth, ranking, and wellbeing with regard to income and assets and their views on socio-economic disparities between households (HH). Wellbeing ranking can be done in different ways, including the Card Sorting Method combined with the Social Map method (see *Participatory Methods and Tools for Extension: Social Map*). The ranking helps understand local people's evaluation of what it means to have a high quality of life, as it is largely culture-specific. It is not a measured assessment of wealth and wellbeing as much as a tool for exploring how local people perceive wealth in relation to wellbeing.

### Objectives

- Identify and classify HHs/groups based on relative wellbeing in the areas of income, wealth, assets, status
- Check whether programs are reaching the target groups.
- Explore issues related to livelihood, vulnerability, constraints to development as people see them; design intervention strategies in line with people's aspirations.
- Study inter-HH and inter-group socio-economic disparities; understand how local people view them.
- Understand people's criteria and indicators for wealth, the good life, wellbeing, development successes, etc.

Study the impact of interventions or wellbeing programs on different group/HHs and to develop a baseline for monitoring and evaluation.

### Card Sorting Method

1. Gather a list of HHs in the selected locality and write names of the head of HHs on small cards – one HH per card.
2. Explain the purpose of the exercise to the participants. Ask them to rank the HHs based on each HHs' wellbeing.
3. While dealing with small villages with HHs ranging from 30-40, encourage participants to arrange the HHs in descending order (higher-lower) of wellbeing.
4. For larger communities, have participants sort HHs into representative categories of wellbeing.
5. During the sorting, ask them: "Why have you placed the cards in that particular order?" This helps you determine the criteria participants are using to rank wellbeing.
6. Explore characteristic of each category. Encourage them to name the categories and depict them with visuals or symbols.
7. Note the numbers and names of the head of the HHs falling under each category. Add necessary basic details on each HH card. Prepare a category-wise list of the HHs with details of the assets, income, occupation, etc.
8. Have participants rank HH wellbeing on a social map: If participants name five categories, they use five different colors or symbols to classify them directly on the map.



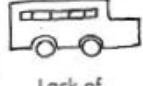

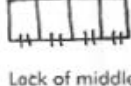














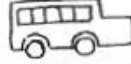




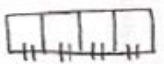


### Using the Social Map Method

Houses in the social map are ranked on factors of wellbeing using symbols or color codes. For example, if participants name five categories of wellbeing, they can directly classify houses on the map using the different colors.

### Example of Wellbeing Ranking Analysis: Card sorting method of wealth ranking

As shown in figure 1, the card sorting method requires participants to make a list of households. The names of the heads of the households are written on separate cards. A group of key informants with good knowledge of the village are asked to rank the households, ranking each household individually based on his/her own criteria of wealth. The households are thus ranked based on wealth. Later, composite index is determined using statistical wellbeing methods that rely more on the local people themselves finalizing the wellbeing ranking.

Figure 1. Pair wise ranking with visuals: Problem prioritization.

Problem	 Drinking water	 Medical facility	 Lack of transport facility	 Lack of veterinary facility	 Lack of middle school	 Lack of fodder	Priority frequency
 Drinking water	x						5
 Medical facility		x					4
 Lack of transport facility			x				1
 Lack of veterinary facility				x			3
 Lack of middle school					x		0
 Lack of fodder						x	2

Participants: Mirga, Udi, Sharbati, Begaram Jat, Sumanagar and Premagar

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