Conversations with Families

TO PREPARE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMMING

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH HANDBOOK

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PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH HANDBOOK

a companion volume to
BRINGING UP CHILDREN IN A CHANGING WORLD:
WHO'S RIGHT? WHOSE RIGHTS?

This handbook is a result of the contributions of many different individuals
and organizations

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unicef

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Introduction

This handbook builds on the experience of a research project in Nepal - a qualitative investigation into child rearing practices and beliefs in four rural communities which took place in 1999 and which has been documented in a report entitled Bringing up Children in a Changing World.[1]

This study was undertaken as part of an effort to build effective and relevant early childhood programming in Nepal.[2] Those involved in the project were convinced, like many others around the world, that successful ECD programming cannot be based simply on "universal" principles of child development; rather, it should build on local strengths and on an understanding of people's hopes and expectations for their children, as well as their frustrations and concerns.

Through extended observation, interviews and group discussion, the researchers looked at how families deal with their children on a daily basis - how they work to ensure that children grow up healthy and protected from harm, how they support their developing identities and their opportunities for learning; how they encourage them to get along with other people and to contribute to their families and communities. They discussed people's beliefs and values, their long term goals, their different expectations for sons and daughters, and the effects for socialization and development. Because families and children do not exist in a vacuum, the study also looked at the larger contexts of their lives - at social and economic realities, gender and caste issues, local culture and the process of change.

The point of the research, however, was not only to collect information on child rearing in these four villages. Perhaps more important, we hoped to develop an effective participatory process that could be more widely used for initiating discussion with parents and community members. This effort owed a lot to a family of participatory research approaches, including PRA (participatory rural or rapid appraisal), PAR (participatory action research), PLA (participatory learning and action). These approaches to research vary in their history and emphasis, but share a basic philosophy. All support the involvement of beneficiaries, particularly the poor, in the collection and analysis of information about their own lives, and in the planning and evaluation of interventions that affect them. This family of approaches has been responsible for the development of a number of visual tools that can

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1 C. Arnold et al, 2000. *Bringing up Children in a Changing World: Who's Right? Whose Rights: Conversations with Families in Nepal.* UNICEF, Save the Children (Norway, US, UK): Kathmandu, Nepal.

2 The study was supported by UNICEF and by Save the Children (US, UK and Norway). Also involved were Seto Gurans National Child Development Services, the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), BASE, NNSWA, Bal Bikas Samaj Sudar Kendra and SAC in Nepal, and the Children's Environments Research Group (CERG) at the Graduate Center, City University of New York.

facilitate discussion, information collection and analysis with groups of people who find it helpful to deal with concepts in a concrete visual way. Our efforts drew on both the philosophy and the tools, adapting them to the investigation of child rearing beliefs and practices.

Although PRA and its relatives have challenged research orthodoxy and have stressed flexible and creative ways of accessing insider knowledge and preferences, there is a tendency for the approach to become at times identified with the tools, and for the tools, in the hands of less experienced practitioners, to become ends in themselves rather than the very adaptable aids to discussion that they were intended to be. Because of this tendency, we have avoided calling our modified methods PRA tools, and refer to them instead simply as visual tools. This is not an attempt to downplay our debt to PRA - but rather, to avoid the risk of emphasizing the tools at the expense of the intent.

The Nepal project was a chance to experiment and to learn - not only about research methods and tools, but also about project management, researcher training, practical difficulties and the many complexities of conducting a genuine dialogue with communities. This handbook is a product of that learning. It draws on our successes and also on our mistakes, pointing out where potential challenges lie, and how best to respond to them. Different settings clearly present different opportunities and challenges. There is no way we can have anticipated everything here. Every attempt to conduct a similar investigation will be an occasion for learning in its own right. We encourage you to share your experience with us, to describe unforeseen problems and new solutions, and to make it possible to continue refining these tools and guidelines.

Who is this for?

This handbook is designed for organizations or agencies wanting to establish early childhood programming that is responsive to the realities of specific communities. It does not cover the development of these programmes, but is a guide to a preliminary phase - gathering information that makes it possible to identify strengths and concerns and to design appropriate responses. It describes the process through which data collection and analysis are planned and implemented, involving community members as far as possible, in order to find the best way to adapt the mission and capacity of the organization to local needs and preferences.

It is not unusual for organizations to develop a model for early childhood programming and then to apply it in a range of situations. This can be an efficient approach - it builds on an organization's experience, and it gets things moving. But assuming that a particular blueprint will work well in all situations can also create problems. It ignores the fact that values, expectations, practical needs and realities can vary considerably from one setting to another, and it can result in poorly targeted projects that fail to take hold. Understanding the child rearing beliefs, practices and concerns of a particular group of people is a minimum requirement for truly effective programming. Just as important, the process of gaining this knowledge can be a step in establishing a relationship based on mutual understanding, and in promoting the involvement of community members in the planning and management of any programme.

Successful community participation calls for learning, experience and commitment. The process described here does not dictate a particular level of participation. It can involve communities to a greater or lesser extent, and it permits the necessary learning to happen at a pace that feels workable. At the very least, it allows community members to represent their own values and beliefs with regard to their children. Ideally, it involves a joint identification of strengths and concerns. In some cases it may lead to including local people as partners in the design and planning of early childhood programming. Even where organizations continue to make the decisions, the process described here will result in programming that gives more informed attention to the particular needs of particular groups of people. If these people are not in the driver's seat, they are at least helping to point out the right road.

It is important to acknowledge here what an elusive and misleading term "community" can be. It suggests a group of like-minded people who operate in solidarity with one another, and whose shared concerns can be easily defined and articulated. In fact, communities are complex entities that generally include people with a range of different, and sometimes conflicting, values and interests. When the interests of "the community" are said to be represented, this can often mean the interests of a majority or a local power structure, and may bear little relation to the concerns of those who are marginalized or excluded within a given setting, whether because of ethnicity, religion, gender, education or earning power. In many cases, an attempt to work with and involve a "community" may be a truly daunting task. We try to address the complexity of the process, but recognize that in some situations our guidelines may appear simplistic.

Our first premise, then, is that the organizations using this handbook will be committed to some level of inclusive local involvement in conducting their research. The other basic premise is a commitment to children's rights. We start from a conviction that the function of early childhood programming is to ensure that the rights of young children are addressed as fully as possible. This does not entail an unusual set of objectives for a programme. It means trying to ensure that children grow up healthy, well nourished and protected from harm, with a sense of identity and self worth, able to think for themselves, to express their views, and to interact positively with others. It also means supporting parents and caregivers in their own capacity to address these rights. Even groups that have not made an explicit commitment to children's rights are likely to find that these are goals they share. Perhaps what is most different about a rights perspective is the notion that these are entitlements for children, not privileges. This implies adult obligations - right through from families to policy makers. This perspective is fundamental to the process described here. The recognition that parents and society as a whole should play an active role, the kind of information that is sought, and the framework that is recommended for analysis all reflect a commitment to the basic principles underlying children's rights.The approach taken in this handbook also recognizes the fact that universal rights can be quite abstract. In order to have practical relevance, they must be interpreted in the context of local realities.

How to use this book

This manual is not a "cook book". Because circumstances vary so widely, it cannot prescribe exactly how the research should be designed or conducted. But by drawing on experience, pointing out potential opportunities and problems and making suggestions, it equips groups or organizations ideally to come up with their own design - one that responds to the situation and to the skills of available researchers. There are three phases to the process described here:

1) Planning and Preparation,

2) Information Collection

3) Analysis and Dialogue

Not all of these sections will be equally necessary to all organizations. Those that are already experienced in research or evaluation, and that only want new ideas on data collection, for instance, might only use the middle section.

1) Planning and Preparation

This section stresses the importance of careful groundwork on the part of the organization. It describes concerns that should be taken into account as goals are clarified and the research is designed; it suggests guidelines for selecting and training researchers; and it considers initial contacts with communities and the process of building rapport.

These phases are not necessarily consecutive. An initial research design, for instance, may be modified to reflect the strengths and shortcomings of the researchers that are hired; the project manager or research team may also help with the design. Initial contacts with the community may have taken place before the project is fully conceived, and a community may need to be revisited several times before the research is properly underway. These are not "steps" in other words, but interrelated components of the preparation process that should take place in the order that makes most sense in a given situation.

2) Information Collection

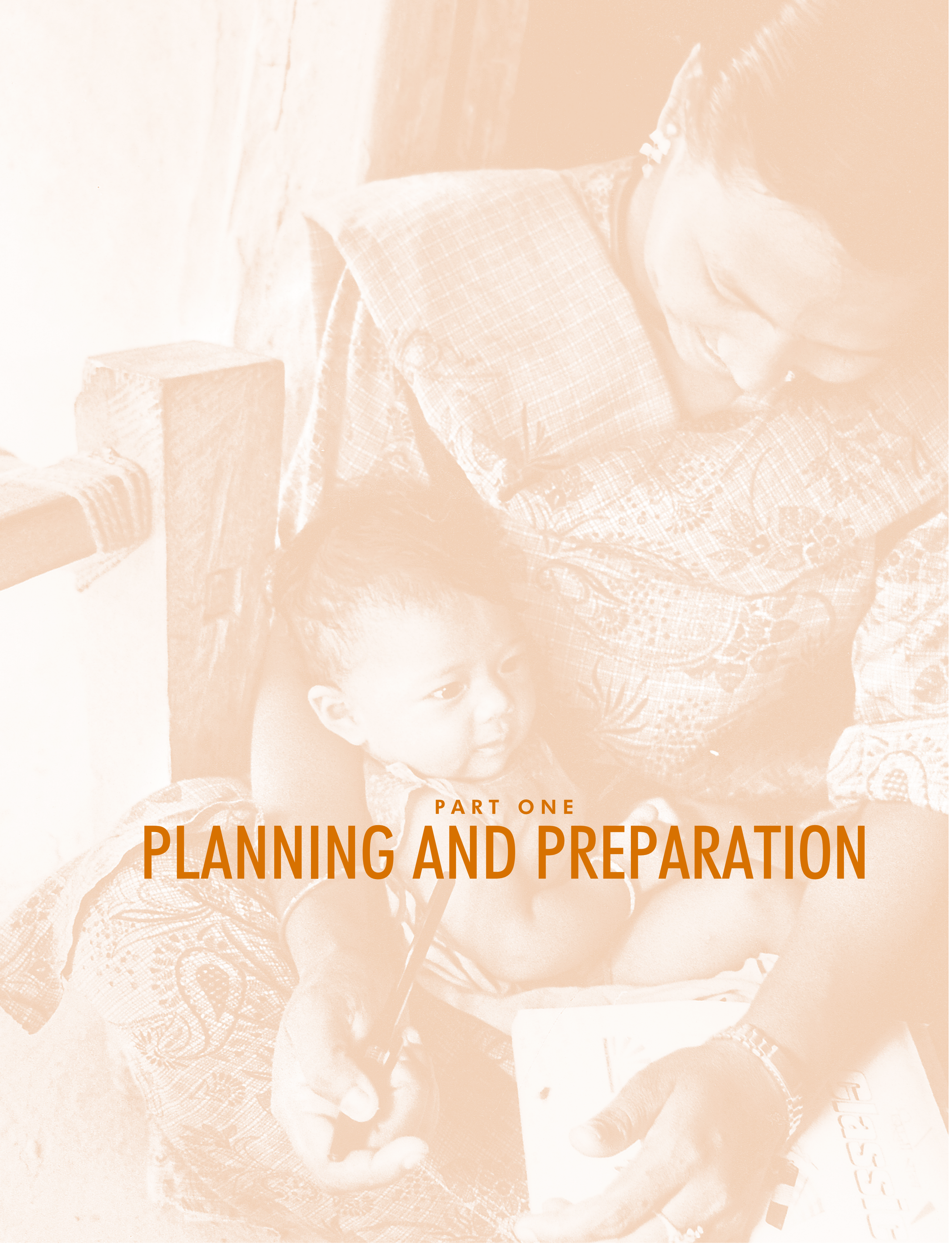
This section is addressed to researchers, and consists of two parts. The first section (pages 19-34) provides general guidelines on methods and procedures - on interviewing, observation, group discussion and the use of visual tools, as well as the selection of target households, the process of searching out formal records, and tips on recording and managing information. These guidelines can be used as a resource during training (although far more comprehensive resources are available for training), and can also be used by researchers in the field.

The second part (pages 35-89) consists of a set of topics or areas that are likely to be investigated, along with checklists of questions for each, and some specific pointers on methods that have been found useful. The intention is not that researchers use all the exercises and methods suggested. They are a set of tools to select from based on time available, the needs of the research and the strengths of the researchers. Guidelines on selecting topics and methods are found on page 5. Nor should an assessment be limited by the issues and methods presented here. Your range of concerns may exceed those presented, and you may well develop tools that are better suited to your situation.

3) Analysis and Dialogue

Analysis is described here as a process that occurs as a part of the researchers' daily activities. There should be regular opportunities to consider the implications of the day's work - for children's well being, for caregivers' capacity to provide, and for the practical concerns of programming. We suggest a framework of six questions that can become both a stimulus for team discussion and a filter for organizing information (see page 94). Not all teams will be equally skilled at carrying out this level of analysis; we also discuss how senior staff or outside advisors can assist this process after the information collection phase, working with the research team to consider the data and its implications.

Once information has been collected, some organizations may choose simply to complete an analysis that will allow for programme planning. We're suggesting an alternative here - that they go over the initial findings with the community. This is an opportunity to cross check the team's findings and interpretation. A further step would be to encourage community members to identify their own strengths and difficulties and determine what they feel could be addressed or improved. Some organizations may also choose at this point to present and discuss their own perspectives on these issues, and how this might relate to programming. In some cases this may lead to joint planning for programming with the community. These guidelines do not get into that process, but they set the stage for it.



PART ONE
PLANNING AND PREPARATION

Part one: Planning and Preparation

In this section we describe the following elements in the process of planning an assessment or research project: clarifying the goals, establishing initial contact with the community, designing the research, planning the schedule, selecting the team, training and team building, and getting set up in the community. As we pointed out above, these phases are not necessarily consecutive. They should take place in the order that makes most sense in a given situation.

Clarifying the goals

The purposes of the research process should be agreed upon by all stakeholders, and articulated clearly enough to be readily understood by funders, managers, researchers and community members. Even when goals appear simple, the process of stating them explicitly may reveal differences in people's assumptions and intentions which, if not addressed at the initial stage, can complicate every phase that follows. The following is a set of questions which should be answered before the process begins:

■ **HOW DOES THE PROPOSED PROGRAMMING RELATE TO THE LARGER CONTEXT?** Is the organization familiar with national and district statistics related to children, policies, trends and resources? Has any relevant past research within the country or district been found and reviewed? Have the necessary contacts and relationships been established (for instance with local universities or research groups)? Is there an advisory board to provide whatever expertise the organization lacks?

■ **WHO ARE THE STAKEHOLDERS?** What partners should be involved to ensure practical success of the project (such as partners who will be implementing the programme, local government, or other groups active in the community), or to enhance the organization's capacity (such as a local university, or a training group)?

■ **WHAT IS THE TARGET POPULATION?** In some situations, establishing this may be a goal of the research rather than a starting point. Has a community already been selected for support, or is the purpose of the assessment to determine where and by whom services are most needed? Related to this is the sometimes complex question of who the "community" includes, and what the patterns of exclusion are within it. If a site has been selected, is the intent to look at relative needs, targeting some particular group for support based on its level of deprivation or marginalization? If this is the case, how will the organization deal with potential conflict and misunderstanding.

■ **WHAT RANGE OF SERVICES CAN BE CONSIDERED?** How constrained or open-ended is an organization in the initiatives it can support?

■ **IS THERE PROVISION FOR FOLLOW-UP?** Communities should have a clear sense of what can be expected in order to prevent disappointment or confusion. If the research will not definitely result in programming, it is important to decide how the process will be presented to community members, and what they can expect to gain for their cooperation. We recommend the greatest degree of transparency possible, so that local people can make informed decisions about their involvement.

■ **WHAT COMMITMENT IS THERE FOR SUPPORTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, OR BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY?** Are both organization and community already experienced in using participatory approaches? Is the organization primarily concerned with collecting information, or is it equally committed to using the information collection process as an occasion for learning, and a first step in promoting the active involvement of local people?

Initial contacts with the community

Early in the process, a representative of the group that will implement programming should explain the research process to key people within the community. They should ensure that people are willing to be involved and to have a team living among them for some weeks. The objectives of the research and the possibility for programme follow-up should be made quite clear, so that people do not have unrealistic expectations. A common question, for instance, may be why children are to be the focus of programming, rather than livelihoods, irrigation, sanitation or some other factor that is seen as a more pressing concern. This contact person should either become a member of the research team, or should continue to function as a liaison.

Ideally, preliminary background information should be collected during this early phase, so that research design can be based on a familiarity with the community, and so that researchers can be informed during the training about the situation they are entering. At a minimum this should include whatever demographic figures are available on the community, as well as a preliminary assessment of local conditions, services, facilities, power structures and active groups. If a more comprehensive effort is possible at this point, the questions and methods described on page 36-54 can serve as a guide. Gathering this information in advance will simplify the preparation process, and will also ensure that researchers are not distracted from the most essential business of learning about child rearing beliefs and practices, and about the daily experiences of children.

Designing the research

Setting some parameters

The design and scope of the research should reflect a number of factors:

The information that the organization/community needs in order to make programming decisions: If a specific project is already decided upon (for instance, an organization may have funds earmarked only to set up ECD centres), then assessment can be quite targeted. If a range of projects are possible, more extensive research will be necessary.

The information already available within the community. There is no point duplicating what already exists. All available information on population, services, infrastructure, political and social structures should be assembled, and its reliability assessed.

The resources available to the organization. Any investment in research is likely to pay for itself through better targeted programming. But the scope of the assessment will still have to depend on budget, time constraints and available research skills. Some of these factors may be more fixed than others and should be a starting point for research design.

Targeting the investigation

Information collection should be carefully targeted. More is not always better. Too many research projects, especially those using qualitative methods, collect far more data than they can ever properly analyze. In the time-consuming effort to sift through piles of notes and records, the most helpful information may be overlooked. This is especially true if translation is a factor. There is also a danger that the core concerns - the day-to-day interactions between caregivers and children - may receive less attention than they require if too much time is given to background information. It is essential to understand the broader context of community life, but care must be taken that this not absorb too much of the researchers' time and energy. Selection of the issues to be investigated, then, should balance economy and comprehensiveness. If your organization can respond only to the one-to-three age group, focus on what will be most helpful. If you need a broad range of information and have limited time or limited support for analysis, look at a wider range of issues, but limit the methods used.

Selecting methods for different perspectives

Some of the methods and exercises suggested (pages 35-89) are different ways of collecting similar information. Although there's no need to use all of the approaches suggested, it is important to get different perspectives. A group discussion on disciplining children, for instance, is likely to provide an "official" group position. But individual caregivers may have viewpoints that challenge local norms to some degree and that indicate the variation between households and even within households. Observation may reveal still other realities - there is often a gap between what people assert and what they actually do. Get information from more than one source before you make generalizations, and be sure to have a balance of group perspectives, individual perspectives, and the kind of "reality check" that hard figures can provide.

Determining a sequence

There is no one ideal sequence for collecting data. A lot depends on such local factors as when people are available. Team skills will also affect how a sequence is determined. More confident and skilled researchers will be able to respond flexibly to circumstances in the community. A less experienced team will probably want the security of a sequence and schedule laid out in advance.

One possible sequence might involve doing all group discussions first. Once there is a sense of community norms and perceptions, and after target households have been selected (see page 17), researchers can move on to household level research. If researchers are living with families, however, it may make sense to develop these relationships, and to conduct observations and interviews with family members in the course of daily interactions - and then to move on to community level research.Other teams may choose to proceed topic by topic, so that they have a clear sense of what information they have and what they still need. Be aware of the need for flexibility, and for the importance of seizing opportunities when they arise. You may have decided to conduct group discussions first, but don't pass up a good opportunity to interview a local health worker who may not be around the following week

Whatever the overall approach, it is helpful to move from the more general to the more specific, and from the more concrete to the more reflective. For instance, find out about health care options in the community before asking an individual family about their preferences. Spend time with a family finding out what their lives are like and getting to know them before you interview them on the worries they have about their children. The topics starting on page 35 are organized to reflect this move from background information to daily practices to beliefs, values and concerns. There will always be some messiness and overlap, but the order set out here can serve as a rough guide. Box on pages 7-9 offers a sample research design, which indicates how choices might be made within a given setting.

Scheduling

A time frame for the research will be dictated by circumstances. There are a number of factors to consider:

- How open or closed the community is, and how long rapport building is likely to take;
- How reliable people are about showing up for planned meetings;
- How busy they are: is this a heavy work season, are there any festivals or holy days?;
- How extensive the formalities are around different kinds of interactions;
- How much negotiation it takes to get access to community members and local VIPs;
- How easy access is to women and children in the community;
- How much support the team is likely to need;
- Whether there are tensions between groups in the community that could make research more difficult.

These factors can have an enormous impact on the time the process takes. Even a simple version of the data collection is unlikely to be accomplished in less than two weeks; and it will probably take longer.

A sample research plan with an urban community

An organization focused on support for children under three has been approached by a women's micro-credit group. Many women in their poor urban community work in a nearby factory and need assistance with child care. A four person research team of two men and two women from the organisation has between two and three weeks to investigate the situation and to come up with a preliminary plan with the community.

Initial contacts with the community indicate that this "illegal" settlement is unserved by local government; living conditions are poor, but the community is well organized. In addition to the women's group, there is a health clinic, a local religious group supporting families in crisis, and a community group negotiating with local government for basic services. The women's group arranges for four households to host the team members (selecting them to represent a range of local realities), and also makes a room available to the team for daily meetings and to store equipment.

DAY	ACTIVITY/ METHODS	WHO WITH
Every day	Team members meet for daily morning discussion, recording of findings, prelimi nary analysis; on-going observation of during any time spent with host households; general observation, conversations within community during any free time.	
DAY 1 morning	Group discussion to explain research and discuss local conditions; *Social Map*	Members of women's group and the larger community
afternoon	Observation walk around community and informal introductions	Some community members
evening	Team members settle into host households	
DAY 2 afternoon	Team members 1&2: Interview on local conditions, political realities, women's status in the community, child care solutions and problems; *Well Being Ranking*	The leader of the women's group
afternoon	Team members 3&4: Interview on health conditions and awareness, health status/problems/needs of pregnant women and children under 3, potential collaboration on health and nutritional education. Review health records of women and under-threes.	Outreach worker at the health clinic
evening	(In pairs, two teams): Conversations on family background, daily practices with their under-three children. Supported by *Who does What in Childcare Matrix, Interaction Venn, Food Ranking or Daily Timeline,Disease and Accident Ranking, Household Map*	2 host households (all household members - grandparents, mother/ father/ girls/ boys)

DAY	ACTIVITY/ METHODS	WHO WITH
DAY 3 late morning, afternoon	Team members 1&2: a) Interview on local living conditions, challenges and coping strategies of the most stressed families. Cross check *Well being ranking*. b) Interview on locl conditions, political structures and tensions, cross check on information from other sources	a) Local religious support group, b) Leader of the community advocacy group
late morning, afternoon	Team members 3&4: a) Interview on child care problem, factory's willingness to provide space and support for a centre. b) Interview on possible solutions for younger children, experience dealing with parents and families, willingness to collaborate with an effort for younger children	a) Factory manager b) Director of local preschool for 4 and 5 year olds
evening	On-going conversations, focusing on beliefs and values. *Child Timeline, Concerns Matrices*	2 host households
DAY 4 late morning, afternoon	Team members 1&2: Group discussion on daily responsibilities with children, changes in child rearing practices, supports they could use. Supported by Food Ranking, *Who DoesWhat Matrix, Disease and Accident Ranking*	Group of grandmothers, (main child carers during day)
late morning, afternoon	Team members 3&4: Group discussion of child care responsiblities and needs, concerns and hopes for children. Supported by *Interaction Venn;Concerns matrices*	Fathers and grandfathers
evening	Discussions with 2 remaining households (same as Day 2 evening)	
DAY 5 afternoon	Further discussion on understanding of children's development, beliefs about children's entitlements. Using *Child Timeline, Concerns matrix*	Group of grandmothers,
afternoon	Group discussion about concerns and hopes for local children, perceptions of development. Use Concerns Matrices, *Child timeline.*	Members of the women's group
evening	Discussions with households continued	
DAY 6 morning	Observations	2 remaining households
morning	Team meetings	
afternoon	Group discussion about responsibilities, perceptions of younger children's needs. *Who does What in Childcare Matrix; Interaction Venn; Matrix or Ranking on young children's play*	Older girls and boys (separately) who care for their young siblings
afternoon or early evening	Group discussion on worries about their children, day-to-day child care strategies and problems, experience of pregnancy and childbirth;	Mothers working at the factory
evening	Further discussions with households on beliefs and values. Child Timeline, Concerns Matrices	2 households

DAY	ACTIVITY/ METHODS	WHO WITH
DAY 7	24 hour observation	One child from each household - boys and girls of different ages
DAY 8 all day evening	Team meeting: write up notes; discuss and cross check findings; modify research plan Group discussion on beliefs and values	 Group of mothers
DAY 9 & 10 (mornings and evenings)	Interviews Observations using same tools as with host households	2 additional households (selected for characteristics not Found in host homes, e.g. certain income categories,children attending school etc).
afternoon	Two team members interview on daily routine with the children, their understanding of children's development, need for training and support as child care workers; *Child Timeline, Daily routine timeline*. Others continue observation with target households.	Three local women who provide care in their homes for local children
DAY 11	2 team members 24 hour observation - children from the 2 additional households 2 team members Cross checking and unanswered questions	
DAYS 12, 13, 14, 15 mornings	Analysis of data	
DAYS 12, 13, 14, 15 afternoons	Cross check information, on-going analysis	
DAYS 16,17,18 1 week	Community dialogue sessions culminating in a preliminary plan Report writing - overview of findings and recommendations	

Different circumstances would dictate different responses. If researchers had more weeks to spend, more tools could be used. In some communities, it might be more difficult to work with families late into the evening, and times would have to be planned differently. In a place where grandmothers played a lesser role in childcare and fathers a greater role, the make-up of discussion groups would reflect this - and so on.

Selecting the team

Choosing a project manager

The role of a project manager will be determined primarily by the size of the team. The smaller the team, the more feasible it is for the project manager to serve as a researcher, or at least as a research advisor and support. The larger the team is, the more time will have to be given to handling logistics and coordination, budget, hiring and human relations. In addition to research and management skills, a background in early childhood development is helpful for the project manager, with an emphasis on broad cross cultural understanding and experience rather than more formal, academic qualifications. This is not essential if there is an easily accessible advisor with a strong background in this area. In cases where more than one language is involved - especially where researchers and senior office staff or any advisors speak different languages - the project manager should be fluent in both.

Selecting researchers

The selection of researchers is fundamental to the success of the project. The ideal researcher would be experienced in ethnographic and participatory research methods, knowledgeable about children's development, committed to children's rights and to participatory community development, and experienced at working with a group, possibly under challenging conditions. But the chances of assembling a team of such rare individuals is remote, and capacity in any of these areas will be an asset.

There are strong practical reasons for hiring the staff of the group that will implement the programme as researchers - they are more likely to be familiar with the community, and will be able to follow up and apply their own learning to the programme. But outside people may bring a broader perspective to the process, or a wider range of skills. These practical concerns should not be primary in selecting researchers. The most important consideration is to find people who are right for the job, and who will work well together.

Background and experience

Research experience can be extremely valuable, but is not sufficient to guarantee good results, and may even be an obstacle, especially if it has been mostly in structured surveys and more quantitative approaches. Some highly trained researchers may be too fixed in their ways to try new methods, and too conscious of their status to work democratically with others on the team, or to take a serious interest in the concerns of an illiterate mother. A less experienced but warm and interested team member may be far more successful at establishing rapport with the community and getting down to the real issues. Some of the most useful background experience includes:

- having raised children or worked with children;
- experience in community building and local activism;
- background in human rights, gender, child development programming, social analysis and poverty work;

- experience and skill in participatory methods and group facilitation;
- fluency in the language of the target population as well as of senior staff;
- good report writing and documentation skills.

Personal qualities
Essential qualities in any researcher are genuine curiosity, a relaxed and comfortable way with people regardless of their social status, the capacity to listen, and the ability to work cooperatively with others. Flexibility is also important; realities in the field may call for changes in direction, and researchers cannot be rigid about holding on to their original plans. Researchers also need to be willing to live in difficult conditions at times, and to share the lives of the people they are working with. The way they relate to community members can set the tone for the relationship that develops over time between community and organization. These qualities cannot be acquired in the course of a few training sessions, and should be a basic requirement for all researchers.

The capacity to work well as a team member is also an important consideration. A good screening device is to invite all applicants to a shared day of discussion and information about the project. Various approaches can be used to determine how they interact in a group setting, how responsive they are to other's opinions, how cooperative, how well they listen. It's also a chance to test some skills - to see how well they facilitate a small group, how effectively they sum up what has happened in a group interaction, how well they observe. Their informal interactions at meals and breaks can also be watched. At the end of the day ask people to list the four or five others they would most like to work with.

Screening applicants

- **LIVING CONDITIONS:** Let applicants know what conditions in the field will be like, in as much unpleasant detail as possible if conditions are likely to be difficult. Read their body language as they respond. Some candidates may eliminate themselves when they consider possible discomforts.

- **AVAILABILITY:** Ensure that researchers can be fully available for the duration of the job, given the difficulties of establishing with total certainty what the time frame will be.

- **PERSONAL QUALITIES:** It is relatively easy to assess people's background and formal skills, but more challenging to determine whether applicants have the necessary personal qualities. Various exercises can be developed to decide whether a person is well equipped for the job.

- Ask applicants to interview the gardener or the gatekeeper for 20 minutes, and then to tell you what they found out about this person. Ask the person who was interviewed how comfortable the process was, how willing they were to share their thoughts.

- Contrive an informal situation in which applicants are required to interact with lower status people - for instance the tea lady in the organization, a waiter at lunch, a taxi driver. Consider how graciously or abruptly they deal with them.

- Ask applicants for their thoughts about poverty and its causes. Ask how they think belonging to a marginal group in their culture would affect the way children were raised. Listen for answers that attach blame to poor or low status people.

- Ask about any field experience and what aspects they found unpleasant or challenging

Putting together a research team

Team size

A large team may seem a logical choice especially if there is a large community to consider, or if more than one site is being considered for assessment. But there are a number of reasons to use no more than three or four people. Managing group dynamics can be more of a problem with a larger group (see the next paragraph.) With a large team there are also significant logistical issues. Training, accomodation, materials, equipment, transport and every other aspect of the process become more complex, and the management of both the research and the researchers can become almost as time consuming as the research itself.

Status issues

Be aware of how issues of status can disrupt the collaborative functioning of a team. Take into account the effects that age, gender, background, professional qualifications and ethnicity might have on relations between team members - possibly causing conflict over responsibilities, or undermining appreciation and respect for one another's contributions. Do not be reluctant to discuss these issues with potential team members. If there are differentials in pay, make it clear why this is the case. If there is a team leader, this person (who may also be the project manager) should have clear authority in the eyes of his or her peers to assume that role - whether by virtue of experience, qualifications or age, where that is a factor. This person should also have the capacity to take the responsibilities seriously and not to abuse the role.

Gender

In most places, it is important to have men and women in a team; in many cultures, women tend to be better able to interview other women, and vice versa. This also can raise the team status issue, and needs to be addressed as part of training. It is unacceptable for female team members to be given an unequal share of team responsibilities simply on the basis that they are women.

Collaboration

Team members should possess collectively the various skills necessary for carrying out the job, and the willingness both to recognize and draw on one another's abilities. Necessary skills include strong group facilitation, report writing, analysis ability, language, interviewing and observation skills, formal presentation and liaison skills. If team members aren't easily able to work cooperatively, the benefit of many of these skills will be lost. For instance, if one person is an excellent observer, but doesn't write well, her contribution will be lost if there is poor collaboration (and here again status is a major issue.)

Training and team building

Training for researchers will depend on their skills and the work they are expected to do, and also on the size of the team. It will probably need to cover the following main areas: research methods and issues likely to arise during the research; necessary background on children's rights and child development; and team building and issues related to the dynamics of the research process.

The smaller the team, the easier it will be to spend time on the specific skills that individual researchers need. Because the research stresses participatory methods, the training should be as participatory as possible, encouraging people to offer their opinions, to respect the perspectives of others, and to share the responsibility for constructive interaction. As far as possible, this should be an opportunity to learn by doing.

The logistics of the research process should be discussed as early as possible in the training - what accomodations will be like during the research, what the time frame will be, and so on. Training will proceed more smoothly if any worries are dealt with initially. The roles of different team members should also be made quite explicit.

Training goals

The following are some areas where training is likely to be necessary:

- **FAMILIARITY WITH THE RESEARCH METHODS TO BE USED:** Researchers should have as much practice as possible conducting interviews, facilitating group sessions, carrying out observations, and keeping field notes. Role play can be effective, but real life practice in nearby locations is far more helpful, and video feedback can be an effective learning tool. Especially where the research is to be carried out in a number of areas, a full piloting of the process will be useful, so that researchers can see how the pieces fit together. This can be complicated, however, by the ethics of bringing a team into a community to do research with no intention of follow up.

- **FAMILIARITY WITH THE CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS THAT ARE LIKELY TO BE RAISED BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** People are likely to ask about the goals of the research, and the prospects of future support for the community, but may also have questions about health, schooling, local services and entitlements, and opportunities outside the community. Researchers should be as informed as possible, but should also be able to admit when they don't know the answers, and to refer people to those who do.

- **FAMILIARITY WITH THE MISSION, GOALS AND INTENT OF THE ORGANIZATION:** This should include an understanding of the objectives of this assessment and the likelihood of follow up, so that team members have a framework for their efforts, and can answer questions from community members.

- **AN INTRODUCTION TO CHILDREN'S RIGHTS:** This should include a discussion of the fact that, while these extend to all children everywhere, they are not rigidly prescriptive. They are designed to be interpreted in the light of local realities, with an attempt to find the best local solutions for addressing children's interests.

■ **BACKGROUND IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT:** Team members should be encouraged to think about how children develop and change in different areas: in terms of their physical growth and abilities; in their capacity to think, learn, communicate and solve problems; in their ability to regulate their own behaviour, to understand social norms, to get along with other people and to be involved in warm relationships. It should avoid the use of jargon and abstract concepts, and focus on personal experience and perceptions, encouraging an interest in the perspectives of others. If it is presented as formal knowledge, it is likely to result in an oversimplified and rigid understanding, which may lead to a tendency to "teach" community members, rather than eliciting their own perspectives. The trainer should have a strong background in child development, but with an emphasis on cross cultural knowledge and experience, rather than a narrow academic view.

■ **AWARENESS OF CHILDREN'S NUTRITIONAL AND HEALTH STATUS:** The research is unlikely to include formal measures of children's nutritional or health status in most cases. In communities where there is no routine health monitoring, however, organizations will need to decide how extensively to train team members in determining health status. Where resources and capacity allow for it, they may decide to undertake basic weight and height measurements, for instance. Or they may decide to alert team members to signs of malnutrition and ill health, and make trained health workers available for more formal assessment in communities where this seems warranted.

■ **TEAM BUILDING:** This should take into account the status issues within any research team, and the ground rules for behaviour and cooperation within the team.

■ **GROUND RULES FOR BEHAVIOUR WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS:** Team members need to be aware of their role in building a positive relationship that will contribute to later programme success. This may involve being willing to answer personal questions as well as asking them.

■ **RESEARCH ETHICS:** Team members should have a clear sense of the ethical issues that research presents - the rights of community members to information about the research goals and process and how the information will be used, to control over the decision to participate, to confidentiality when appropriate and to an honest representation of their perspectives. Team members need to be aware of their potential effect on participants' lives.

■ **A FOCUS ON POWER RELATIONS:** Researchers need to be able to incorporate all viewpoints in their research, and not be lured into accepting a dominant perspective. Training in gender issues and discrimination of all kinds, and an awareness of the kinds of status differentials that are likely to be found within the community is essential to their preparation. Training should include a focus on the implications of discrimination for child rearing and for the opportunities available to children. There should also be an emphasis in training on power differences between researchers and community members, the implications for the research, and the need for sensitivity to this issue.

Finding the right trainers

It may be difficult to find a single trainer who is knowledgeable in all the relevant areas. If researchers are experienced and the group is small, they can share their skills with each other. It may be necessary, however, to bring in different resource people for different areas of training, for instance, on child rights, on social analysis, on particular research methods. This obviously adds complexity to the training. Sufficient time should be allowed to ensure that various resource people fully understand the project and are able to coordinate with each other.

Some examples of useful training exercises and approaches

- As part of the discussion of child rights, have a quiz about the status of children in the country - the percentage of children in the total population, the rate of infant mortality, the relative number of girls to boys, the percentage of disabled children, the number of girls in prostitution, the number of children with access to safe water, and so on. (This exercise might be found humiliating in some settings, depending on how it is presented.)

- As part of the training in social awareness, ask people to think about times when they felt powerless, humiliated, ignorant, mistreated - and to discuss with one another what caused those feelings. Lead this towards an attempt to understand the experience of those who are routinely subject to these feelings. How might it influence they way they live their lives? The way they raise their children? Remembering experiences in childhood can also be an effective way of relating to children's issues in more immediate and subjective terms.

- To stimulate thinking about child development, ask team members to reflect and write on the factors that they feel have determined who they have become as people. Has it been luck? Have they been shaped by their circumstances? Has their fate been "written"? They might also think about this process as it applies to their own children, or other people they know.

  - Give them time to share and discuss their thoughts. Stress the fact that it is the differences that are interesting, and that there isn't one right answer. Share some very different "theories of development" - not in formal academic terms, but by drawing on beliefs from different places that stress the role of karma, the role of the parents' past deeds, instrinsic qualities in the child, or the effects of experience.

  - Do not move towards a shared theory, or an "official" theory, but try to encourage curiosity in discovering as many versions as possible. This may encourage researchers to try to discover indigeneous theories of development within the target community, rather than trying to fit the perceptions of community members into a fixed framework. If any team members are knowledgeable in the area of child development, stress the fact that formal explanations are one among many versions, and ask for their help in pointing out the disagreements and conflicting theories that exist within the academic world.

Getting set up in the community and establishing rapport

Settling in to the community

Where it is acceptable, there is much to be said for researchers living with families. It gives them an invaluable opportunity to observe all aspects of daily life, and helps in building rapport. On the other hand, separate living arrangements within the community makes it easier for team members to reflect together on their findings at the end of the day, and to plan the following day. Ideally, team members could live with families, but have access to some space for discussion, storing equipment, and managing their growing store of information.

If possible, team members should eat with households (either providing food or paying for it.) If this is not workable, their own cooking arrangements should reflect local realities. If community members can seldom afford meat, for instance, it's inappropriate for the team to have it with every meal. Since the responsibilities of daily life, such as cooking and washing up, can be an added burden and even a source of dispute for busy researchers, it can be helpful if other arrangements are made for these tasks. Under all circumstances, however, it is important to ensure that these tasks do not fall on the women team members, by default.

Getting to know the community

With the help of the local contact, call on community leaders and influential people, spending as much time as protocol dictates. These initial contacts can be critical in establishing the legitimacy of the research within the community, as well as building support for future programming. However, when there are tensions within the community, good rapport with local leaders may create mistrust among more marginal groups. Introduce yourselves to representatives of all sections of the community - and become acquainted with as many local people as you can.

Schedule an initial community meeting for introductions and to explain the purpose of the research. Encourage questions, and answer them as fully as possible. The ethics of the situation demand that community members be made fully aware of the goals of the research and the ways in which information will be used. If much information has been assembled in advance (for instance, figures on demographics, infant mortality, school attendance and so on) find visual ways to present this - both for people's interest and to determine whether information is correct and up-to-date, and whether there are different perceptions of reality on the part of certain groups.

From the outset, establish a sense of reciprocity. Researchers obviously should not come in as "experts", belittling local knowledge. But they should also not downplay their own knowledge. It is accepted procedure among some participatory researchers to announce that they know nothing, and are there to learn from the community. This is false humility. Be clear that the team is knowledgeable about realities outside of the community, and willing to share what they know. But acknowledge that community members are experts on inside realities, and that their knowledge is essential to the team - that this is a process of mutual learning and is the whole purpose of the research.

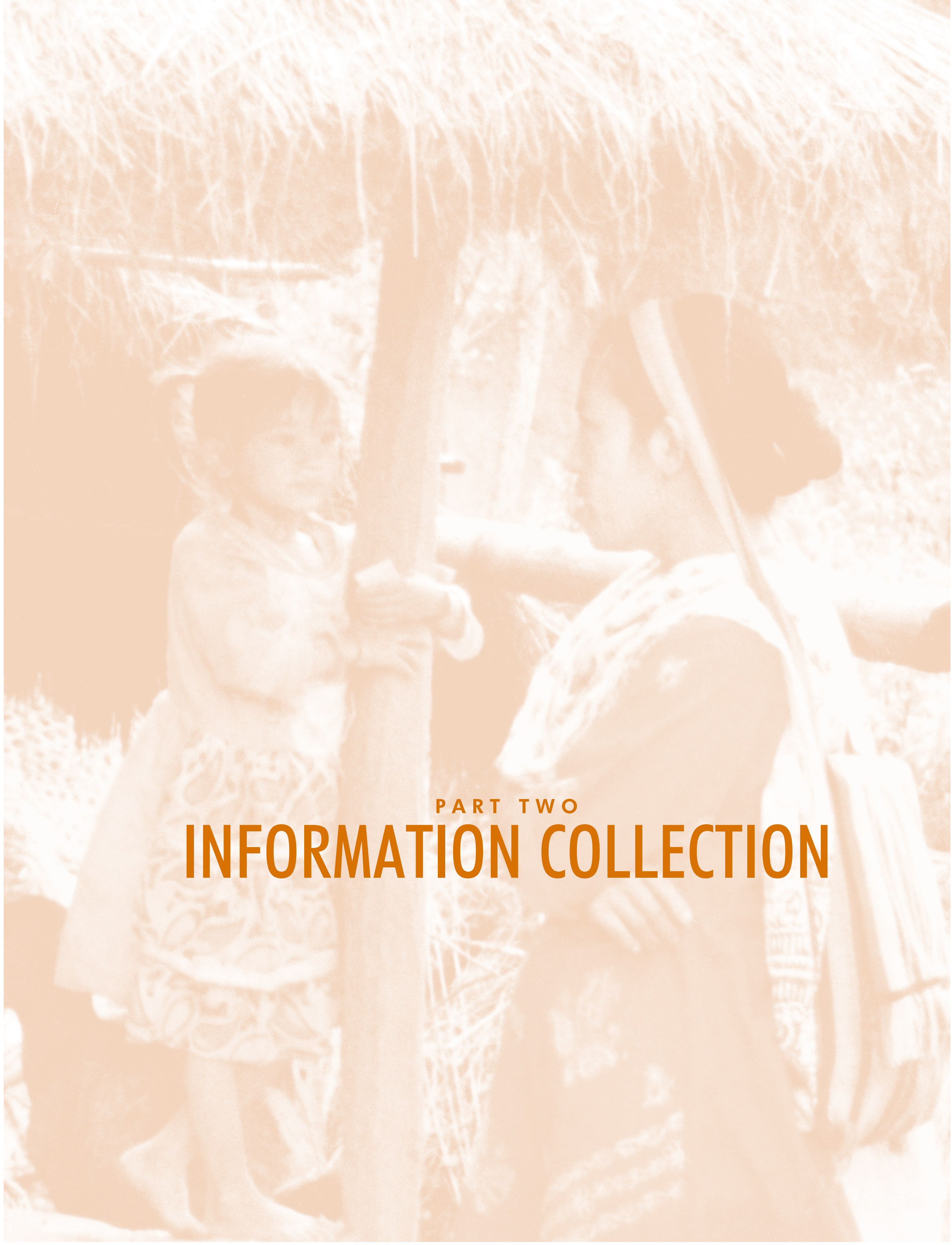
Even if comprehensive background information on the community has been collected in advance, it is worth doing a Social Map with community members (see page 39) as a way of establishing rapport and allowing the community to introduce itself.

Selecting households for in-depth study

At some point it will be necessary to select households for a closer look at day-to-day realities. The team may do this themselves as they get more information about community members, or they may involve people in deciding what households would allow for a representative look at daily life and child rearing practices. A number of factors should be considered in making this selection:

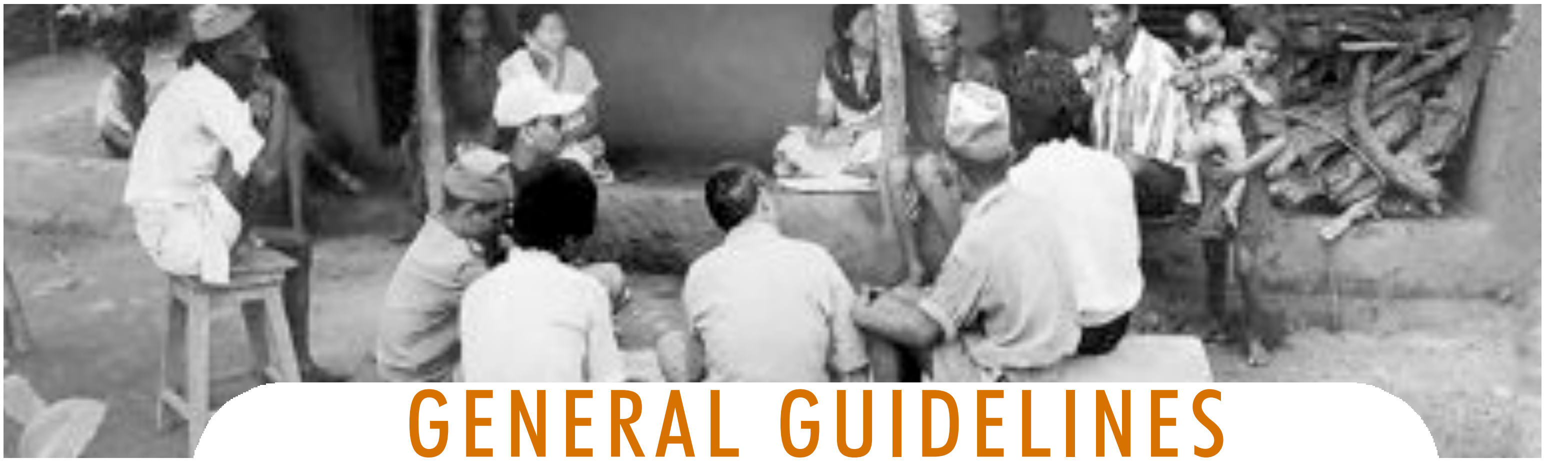
- the range of wealth in the community;
- different ways of making a living;
- differences in living conditions and physical environment;
- variation in household structure (for instance, are there both nuclear and extended households, any households headed by women or possibly even children etc);
- different ethnic or religious groups within the community;
- children who do or don't go to school;
- children with disabilities, or other special cases;
- relative access or lack of access to basic services.

All selected families should of course have children in the age range of the group targeted for services. The number of households selected should reflect the size and complexity of the community and the time available to the team.



PART TWO

INFORMATION COLLECTION



GENERAL GUIDELINES

The information in the first part of this handbook was directed primarily at those within an organization who are responsible for planning the research; this section is directed primarily at researchers. These guidelines can be drawn on by trainers, but may also be used by researchers in the field.

Finding formal records

The availability and reliability of formal figures on the local population will vary from one site to another. In some cases, health records and school records will be readily available and well maintained; local government offices and community organizations may also have figures on births, deaths, land ownership, access to services and so on. Collect whatever is available to help shed light on local realities, but be cautious about making assumptions based on these figures. School enrollment figures, for instance, may have little to do with actual school attendance. Ask questions, compare figures with your own observations, and try to assess reliability. At the district level it should also be possible to find figures that will reveal general trends in the area, offering a basis for questions and observations.

Conducting interviews

Interviews can be open-ended, flexible and conversational in nature, or they can be fairly structured, following a pre-determined set of questions that will be the same for all respondents. An open-ended interview is a good way to explore someone's beliefs and opinions; it is more likely to go in unanticipated directions and to yield unexpected and often valuable information. But it takes skill to handle it well - the interviewer needs to keep in mind all the issues that should be covered, to redirect conversation if it gets too far off track, and to introduce new questions gracefully without interrupting the flow of conversation. A structured, or guided, interview that takes a respondent through a list of carefully prepared questions is easier for a less experienced researcher to handle. It is also possible for a researcher to find a balance between the two, keeping in mind the sequence of questions that need to be covered, but allowing and encouraging the respondent to add other information and to go beyond the set questions.

There are some guidelines that can be helpful to researchers whichever form an interview takes:

- **BE FAMILAR COMMUNICATION PATTERNS:** Take the time to become familiar with how people converse in this community. Remember that communication happens not only with words, but through facial expression, posture, tone of voice and gestures. Being familiar with the local "vocabulary" is important not only for understanding others, but for ensuring that they do not misinterpret you.

- **HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Go into the interview with the assumption that this person has valuable knowledge and opinions that you can find nowhere else - but that only your close, undivided attention, interest and respect will encourage them to reveal what they know .

- **INTRODUCE THE TOPIC:** Start out by saying what the general topic is that you want to discuss, why you have selected this person for the interview, and about how long it will take.

- **ADAPT YOUR METHOD TO PEOPLE'S LEVEL OF COMFORT:** If people are unaccustomed to offering opinions or having lengthy discussions, this may be a stressful experience. If you are using their second language, it may be difficult for them to follow and respond easily. Slow down and use simple words if necessary.

- **TRY TO ENCOURAGE AN INFORMAL ATMOSPHERE:** If you are using a prepared list of questions, be familiar enough with it not to have to read the questions. You should be able to ask them in a conversational way.

- **RECORD INFORMATION:** You are unlikely to remember everything that was said, and you may miss some significant points if you don't record the information in some way. There are various alternatives: you can tape record the session if this is comfortable for the person; you can take very brief notes to remind yourself of things; or you can have a colleague sit nearby and take notes. Find what works best for you.

- **SEQUENCE QUESTIONS:** Begin with questions that are easy to answer. Save more challenging or uncomfortable questions for later, when you feel the person is at ease with you and the situation.

- **ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS:** to encourage more thoughtful and informative answers. For instance, instead of asking "Is the local school a good school?" say "Tell me what you think of the local school." Try to avoid questions that call for "yes" or "no" answers unless you need to know something very specific. If you want to know whether a certain child attends school, for instance, a specific yes or no question makes sense.

- **PROBE:** Encourage respondents to expand on their answers by asking probing questions like "How did you respond when your child did that?" or "Why do you think that happened?" These questions are important for getting under the surface. Parents might say, for instance, that girls don't need as much food as boys. Ask "Why do you think that is? Is this true for all girls?"

- **CLARIFY:** Be sure you're clear about what someone has said. Say what you understood, and ask if that is correct.

- **LISTEN:** Try not to think about your next question while the person is talking. You may miss something important.

- **DON'T RUSH:** When the respondent seems to have finished answering, instead of moving on quickly to the next question, wait for a moment. Often, after a pause, people will continue with another thought.

- **BE SENSITIVE:** Be sensitive to the realities of people's lives. If a child needs attention or a neighbour comes by, make it clear that you can continue when it's convenient. If the interview is taking longer than expected, ask for permission to continue, or to return another time.

- **END INTERVIEWS WELL:** When you are ending the interview, ask if there are any points that you didn't cover that the person would like to raise.

- **GET DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES:** Remember that different people have different perspectives, and that one person's truth may be different from another's. Some people have a stake in a certain version of reality. A local politician may tell you, for instance, that all his actions are for the good of his constituents and are never affected by self-interest, and he may sincerely believe this. For a well-rounded picture, be sure to get more than one perspective on every issue.

- **PRACTICE:** as much as possible ahead of time.

Facilitating group discussions

Facilitating group discussions well can be a challenge. Some people may be more naturally gifted than others at creating a relaxed atmosphere, stimulating the flow of conversation, and encouraging those who feel constrained to share their views. But with practice all team members can become more skilled in this area.

The following guidelines can be helpful in facilitating group discussions.

- **BUILD CONFIDENCE:** Start by working with small groups, and with people who don't feel intimidating to you. A young women with little facilitation experience, for instance, will gain confidence by having a discussion with three or four women her own age before she moves on to larger numbers or more mixed groups. She may even have more success with them than team members with more experience would, because she is perceived as less intimidating.
- **BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR OBJECTIVES:** what do you want to learn from a group? what do you want them to discuss? The better they understand the objectives, the clearer and more forthcoming they are likely to be in their discussion. If you have a number of questions in your mind, it will be easier to keep things moving, and you will feel more in charge of the situation.
- **LEARN FROM THOSE WHO ARE MORE EXPERIENCED:** Watch them facilitate a group, take notes about how they probe for more information, how they handle disagreements, how they change to a new topic. Look for things they could have done better. Invite them to observe you handling a group discussion, and ask for their critical comments. It's nice to be praised by colleagues, but it's also important to get constructive criticism in order to learn something.
- **REMAIN NEUTRAL:** Remember that your role is not to contribute to the substance of the discussion, but merely to facilitate it.
- **SEQUENCE QUESTIONS:** On any given issue, start with questions that call for objective answers ("What schools are available to children in the community? How many attend?) and move on to questions that call for reflection or opinion (How important is it that children receive an education?").
- **LISTEN:** Try to listen for what people are really saying, rather than for what you expect to hear. Summarize or rephrase what they have said, and ask if you understood them correctly.
- **BE AWARE OF POWER DIFFERENCES:** If those with more power and influence take over every discussion, find opportunities to discuss issues separately with those who have less of a voice - with women alone, with marginalized groups, or with individuals who can represent them. Compare the perceptions of different groups, and try to discover reasons for differences.
- **BE AWARE OF YOUR OWN BIASES:** Power issues extend to team members as well. Maybe you have a tendency to downplay the input of some people, or to deliver knowledge to those whom you consider to be "backward" rather than engaging in real dialogue.

Conducting interviews or discussions with children

A number of practical and ethical factors must be considered when you are working with children. Your questions and responses will need to be adapted to children's age, sx, competence and level of comfort, and to the ways that they are typically treated within the household and the community.

Be particularly careful not to abuse the power you have as an adult. Children may not have had any significant involvement with adults outside of their family, and even within the family there may not be a tradition of discussion with adults. This may be especially the case with girls. Although there are cultural differences in this regard, children in many places are expected to show deference to adults, and to do what they are asked. This can make it difficult to have a genuine exchange of ideas.

If you plan to interview children we suggest that you review the following guidelines:

- **GET PARENTS' PERMISSION:** Before asking the child, get parents' permission and explain why children's views are important to the task. This may be difficult in places where children are not expected to offer their opinions. Explain that the perspective of children on their own daily patterns of activity is valuable to your full understanding.

- **BUILD RAPPORT:** Before attempting to interview them.This will happen most easily if you show an interest without intruding, or make yourself available for play or to accompany them on their daily routines. They may be more comfortable with individual interviews after you have done some group work with them. You might also allow them to watch adult interviews with adults or older children before expecting them to becoming involved themselves.

- **GET CONSENT:** Make sure that the child truly agrees to be interviewed by you. Be extremely clear about what you want to know and why you are asking them. Stress that they are under no obligation to be interviewed.

- **OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO RETREAT:** Remind the child during the interview that if they want, you can stop at any time.

- **FIND A COMFORTABLE PLACE:** Interview children in a place where they are comfortable and can easily speak their mind. This is unlikely to be a school building, even after school hours. A place where children commonly play, with their friends nearby, might be a good idea.

- **OBSERVE CHILDREN'S LEVEL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COMFORT:** When they are unresponsive, this may indicate stress, not necessarily a lack of interest or knowledge.

- **BE AWARE OF ATTENTION SPANS:** Allow children to be diverted from what is going on. Don't expect their full attention for extended periods. End the discussion if they have clearly lost interest.

- **BE AWARE OF HOUSEHOLD REALITIES:** Children may find that it is more interesting to talk to you than to do their work. Make sure you are not creating friction in the family.

- **AVOID ASKING CHILDREN UNCOMFORTABLE QUESTIONS:** If a child seems reluctant to answer a question, for instance one that may call for criticisms of their elders, let it be.

- **FOCUS ON EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE:** Don't ask them to reflect on abstract questions and generalizations. Children as young as three can respond competently to concrete questions, if they are asked in a thoughtful way.

- **ASK CHILDREN TO GIVE YOU A TOUR OF WHAT THEY DO EACH DAY:** When they lead you around to places that are familiar to them and discuss their activities, it is likely to be more comfortable and to encourage freer communication than a more formal interview.

- **USE VISUAL COMMUNICATION PROPS:** If children are not confident or competent with words, drawing pictures or modeling with clay can enable them to communicate more comfortably. Dolls and models can also be helpful to represent themselves, other people and familiar settings, and allow children to act out their own scripts of familiar routines.

- **USE GROUP DISCUSSIONS:** These can be useful for children who are not used to speaking to adults. Their fears and anxieties are reduced just by the presence of their friends.You might for instance ask a group of first grade children to talk about their experience of school, or a group of children who herd animals together to discuss their patterns of work, play and learning. Be careful in bringing children together that are from classes or sub-groups that have dominance over one another, for this may result in silence from some of the children. In these instances it may be necessary to hold separate group sessions. Girls may also be shy about speaking in mixed groups with boys. If you have them first share their knowledge in same sex groups it can sometimes lead them to feel more confident in a mixed group.

- **BE AWARE OF LANGUAGE ABILITIES:** Remember also that children's abilities with language may be limited; your questions should reflect their capacity. Although we know that children remember things as clearly as adults, they may not always be clear about what they know and do not know; sometimes they slip into fantasy in their accounts. For these reasons, particularly with pre-schoolers, it is important to keep discussion focused on events that are part of their own experience.

Preparing for interviews and group discussions

Prepare yourself well ahead of time. Perhaps you are planning to interview the mother of young children on health issues. Go over in your mind what you and the rest of the team already know about health in the community. Do you know where various health services are located and what the costs are? Do you know what access is likely to be for this family? What do you know about local environmental health issues? Does provision of water and sanitation vary a lot between households, or is it the same for most families? If you already have a lot of background information, and if conditions appear to be similar for most community members, a few questions will be sufficient to double check that what you know is true for this family too. If

conditions vary, it may be necessary to ask a lot of questions about this particular family's access to health care or to clean water, or the measures they take to care for their children when they are ill.

The same is true for household beliefs and practices around health. If the team has already gathered a fair amount of consistent information from other households, your interview may be mostly to double check this information. But perhaps the information that has already been collected has been contradictory, or has raised new questions for the team - this will be a chance to clarify some issues. If you don't expect a lengthy interview, it might make sense to include some other questions, for instance on food and children's nutrition, or on the health supports that this mother made use of during pregnancy.

Write down all the issues you want to cover, drawing on the questions listed under Relevant information in the appropriate subject areas starting on page xx. Remember that these questions are NOT designed to be used directly in interviews or group discussions. They are intended as a guide to researchers in thinking about the *information* that is needed. In some cases these questions are detailed enough to use in an interview, but in other cases they are far more general, and will need to be elaborated on.

For instance, the question "How good is preventive health care?" is addressed to you, the researcher. It is not a question you would ask parents (although it might be a good question to ask a health worker.) When you are speaking to caregivers, you might ask instead "What things do you do to keep your children from getting sick? Is there any way to prevent diarrhoea? Is there any way to prevent eye infections (etc, etc)? How well do these measures work? Is there anything else that you do?" If parents do not mention immunization and hygiene, you might then probe further: "Does it make any difference to children's health to keep them clean? To wash their hands before meals? To have them immunized (etc)? What difference does it make? How do you know?"

The answers to these questions would be supplemented by information from health workers, any traditional healers, pharmacists etc, and by your own observations of local practices. For instance, how adequate is the local sanitation system? Do children wash their hands after defecating, or before meals? Is water easily available to children for washing? Some of the prompts listed in the sections below are helpful to consider in deciding what to cover with people - but they are also ways to help you, the researcher, listen well when people talk about an issue.

Tips for discussions or interviews on beliefs and values

These are likely to be the most difficult issues for researchers to uncover for a few reasons:

- Sometimes people are clear about their values, and articulate them easily. But sometimes values are fairly unconscious - people simply act on them in an automatic way without much reflection or discussion.

- In other situations, especially where societies are in a process of rapid change, values also shift and change, and people may be confused and unsure of what they think and believe. Either way, they may find it difficult to express what they think.

- When people are unclear in their own minds, when they feel unsure of themselves with the research team, when they are afraid of being looked down upon, or when they are just trying to be helpful, they may say what they think the researchers want them to say. And it can be very difficult for researchers not to communicate what they expect to hear in various subtle, or not so subtle ways.

Some tips for dealing with these difficulties:

- **BE CONSCIOUS OF YOUR OWN BIASES:** Prepare for discussion by thinking about your own beliefs and values, how they might affect what you expect to hear and even how you ask your questions. Discuss the issue with other team members.

- **ASK QUESTIONS IN A WAY THAT ALLOWS FOR A RANGE OF RESPONSES:** If a question does not lead to much response, try to think if there's another way to express it. For instance, if you ask "What are your feelings about disciplining children?" and you get only a vague answer, try asking instead "What responsibility do parents have to teach their children right from wrong? How do they do this?" Think of it as trying to get into a locked building. You may need to try all the keys on the key ring before you can get in.

- **USE PROMPTS:** In many cases you will need to rely on prompts - but be sure that these, like your questions, are as open ended as possible, and that, as far as possible, you are encouraging people to think rather than putting ideas or words into their heads. If nothing else works, specific prompts may be a way to get things moving, but be sure to indicate this in your notes, so that it can be weighed during analysis.

- **GET FURTHER CLARIFICATION:** After discussing an issue with several people or groups, that may find that you gain insights that make it easier to go back and get further clarification from people you have already spoken to.

- **DISCUSS WITH TEAM:** Be sure to spend plenty of time with other team members discussing possible interpretations of what you are finding, and thinking of good strategies for further exploration.

Observation

Observation is critical to the research process. It's a valuable way to cross-check information, and to discover the gaps between what people say and what they do. It's also an important source for unexpected information. No research design can anticipate everything that will be significant in a particular community. Part of the challenge of qualitative research is knowing what questions to ask, and careful observation can help you find out.

Structured observation

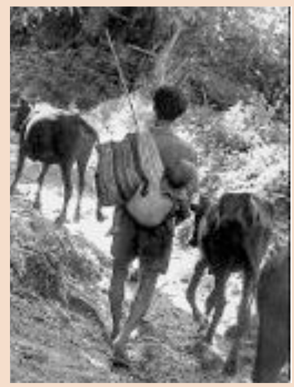
- Many observations will be quite structured and focused, with the goal of answering particular questions or finding out about a particular activity or facet of life. They may be specifically designed to supplement the information in an interview or group discussion. A focused observation might involve, for instance, watching a mother prepare the household meal, seeing how long it takes, who helps out, how she juggles cooking with breastfeeding, how food is allocated, and what the interactions are with children during meals.

- There may be aspects that you don't understand. You may have been informed, for instance, that all family members get the same amount of food, but in fact you notice that a girl gets less than her younger brother. Later on, ask why this is. Perhaps you misunderstood during the interview, and they meant that all family members get the same kind of food. They may also explain by saying this child is never as hungry as her brother - or that girls don't need as much food as boys. Or perhaps they will be somewhat defensive, and insist that the portions were actually the same. Either way, there is reason for more observation and discussion. What do you observe in other households? What do other people in the community say when you ask them if girls need as much to eat as boys? Check to see whether there are weight records at the health post - is there a pattern of difference in the weight of boys and girls? Have more discussions about the differences between the needs of boys and girls, and why these differences exist.

- There are other ways, also, of structuring observations that do not revolve around specific questions. You should go out of your way sometimes to systematically observe all actors in a setting. This will allow you to notice some people who do not at first seem very active or important: the grandfather in the corner of a courtyard, for instance, who seems to be quietly working alone. When you observe him carefully, you may find that he is keeping a careful eye on the children, and that he calls out when he sees some risk or when a child needs to be admonished. He may regularly receive a visit from a three year old, who gets a comforting pat or a few minutes of attention from him. Also, some people may be struggling to do a number of things at once and it may not at first appear that child supervision is one of them. It is important to an understanding of the child care situation to know what other demands caregivers are coping with at the same time.

More general observations

- Some of your most valuable information may come from informal observation and interaction in the course of everyday life. When you're living with a community, everything you do becomes an opportunity for observation. Being part of a household is particularly valuable for the opportunities it offers. Keep your eyes and ears open, be aware of what's going on around you, ask questions, show an interest, go to local events, become a community member as far as possible. This kind of "participant observation" is not just a matter of looking and listening - it includes informal conversations with people, and the insights you gain by doing what they do.



- Fruitful observation is not as easy as it sounds. Often people look without really "seeing". They notice what's going on around them in a general way, but they have trouble remembering details afterwards, or picking out the significant pieces of information. Sometimes, especially if they belong to the same culture, researchers can take things for granted. They may assume, for instance, that people eat what they "always" eat in that culture instead of really paying attention. They may be so accustomed to seeing infants tied to someone's back, that it does not occur to them to ask how much time an infant spends like this each day, or whether there are also periods in the day when the mother spends some face-to-face time with her child.

- The more questions you have in your mind, the more productive your observation is likely to be. For less experienced researchers, structured observations may be more effective because there are specific things to look for. But if you maintain a high level of curiosity all the time, you may find that you learn the most when you are just washing at a water tap or having a cup of tea at the tea stand. When you don't understand what is happening around you, or when you notice inconsistencies between what you observe and what the team has found on other occasions, follow it up and ask questions. Your growing understanding of the community will cast new light on information collected earlier. This means you must carry a small notebook at all times to keep notes on what you observe. Then you can challenge yourself and other team members to come up with as many new questions as possible in a day.

Visual tools

Observation, interviews and the facilitation of group discussion can be challenging tasks, and are often less appealing to researchers than the relatively more structured and concrete visual tools. It is easy, as a result, for these visual methods to become overemphasized during research, relative to the discussions they are intended to support. If these tools are going to be really helpful, it is critical that they be seen as a means to and ends and not as ends in themselves. If used well, visuals are a powerful means to enabling people to do their own analysis: comparing and contrasting their own information, which in turn generates new questions.

The following guidelines may be helpful facilitating visual methods:

- **BE FLEXIBLE:** It is not necessary for these tools to be undertaken as a formally planned event - in other words, a group of people need not be called together specifically to "do" a visual exercise. When there is a group discussion on a particular issue, and it feels natural and easy for a visual exercise to be introduced as a way of stimulating or focusing the discussion, then make use of it. If people feel awkward with the exercise, don't push it. If it evolves in ways you hadn't anticipated, be flexible and encourage it.

  USE SYMBOLS: Asking people to draw is generally not as useful as having them move materials around to show patterns and relationships. Some people feel awkward about their drawing skills, and are more comfortable using stones or bottle caps to symbolize figures or concepts. This also makes it easy to change their mind as they work on the idea; drawing often involves too much commitment for ideas that are being expressed for the first time. This is advantageous for group work - it enables a group to work together to express something whereas a pencil or pen can be used by only one person. The group may subsequently be very comfortable committing on paper what they have expressed using objects.

- **DON'T BE RIGID ABOUT INSTRUCTIONS:** These visual tools have traditionally made use of natural materials from the surroundings - for instance drawing on the ground with sticks, using stones or leaves as counters and so on. Don't be artificial or dogmatic about the use of these methods. In some situations people may find it more comfortable to use paper and markers. Don't be rigid about the instructions either - the number of stones used to indicate something, or the way a matrix is drawn is not important. These tools are an attempt to help people visualize concepts so that they can talk about them more easily - a way to help gather information, not a tightly prescribed exercise. Do whatever works easily with people.

- **INNOVATE:** Don't be limited by the methods described in this book. If other possibilities occur to you, give them a try.

- These visual supports are not one time exercises, but can be used over and over for different purposes. For instance, in a rural area a Seasonal Calendar is an excellent way to indicate the different work loads at different times of year. But it can also be a way to indicate when diseases are most likely to occur, or when water or food runs short, or when squatter housing is at greatest risk from flooding or landslides. All of these different components can also be compared or shown on one graphic as a way of looking at linkages and getting the big picture.

- **FACILITATE ANALYSIS:** Visual representation of information can enable people to do their own analysis. When men and women actually see their comparative work loads represented on a graph, for instance, this can have quite an impact, and can be a more powerful stimulus for discussion than any verbal account of different roles. Use the visual as a real tool, a way to make something happen, not as an exercise that is an end in itself.

Asking "Why?"

Whether you are interviewing someone, conducting a group session, observing an interaction or working with a visual tool, always try to find out more.

Ask Who?	Where?	What?
Why?	When?	How?

This can be especially important for inexperienced researchers, who may be more likely to settle for incomplete information.

If a mother tells you that children do not like to play outside, ask her which children? All of them? Why don't they like to play outside? How do you know? Where do they play instead? What do they play there?

If a group of fathers say that it is important for girls to be obedient and quiet, ask Why is it important? Is it important in all situations? Who thinks it is important? Why is more important for girls? How do they learn this? Who teaches them? What happens of they don't obey?

If a grandmother indicates on a Daily Timeline that no-one is supervising a two-year-old in the early afternoon, ask Why not? Where is everyone else in the household? What are they doing? How does the child manage alone? What happens if he gets hurt?

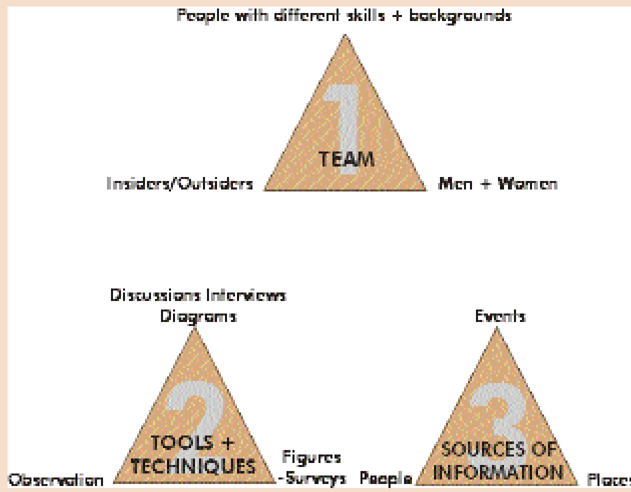
If you, the researcher, live in a culture where repeated and insistent questioning is considered rude, this may be uncomfortable. Explain that your job is to find out everything you can about the way they raise their children. Your intention is not to be rude, but to do a good job.

Cross checking

It is always a good idea to cross check or triangulate; that is, to get information from more than one source or through more than one method in order to have a sense of how reliable it is. Just because one father says that children can walk at six months, that doesn't make it true. Conversations with more people, or observation of a few children will make it clear that this is just one man's perception. And even if an individual's beliefs are true for that person (a belief, for instance, that children should never be beaten), that doesn't mean they are true for a whole community. Get the perspectives of different people, and cross check using different methods. This will ensure that you examine your own assumptions and reconsider hypotheses that do not hold up under scrutiny.

Triangulation or Cross checking

In participatory research, accuracy is achieved through obtaining diverse information from different sources and comparing and contrasting one piece of information or source with another. Having a diverse team helps to ensure that this cross checking is also done from a variety of perspectives in order to minimise team members imposing their own biases. This cross checking or triangulation can be shown at a number of different levels



1) Composition of the team

- A diverse group of team members - men and women with different backgrounds and skills - provides different perspectives.
- Involving community members as well as "outsiders" will help provide an "insiders'" perspective.
- A variety of different perspectives helps team members reflect on their own biases

2) Tools and Techniques

- Different methods for getting the same information also provides different perspectives and enables cross checking
  - Group discussions may give official positions
  - Individual interviews may challenge local norms
  - Observations may reveal differences between what people say they do and what they actually do

3) Sources of information

- Visiting different places, observing different events and people's interactions enables opportunities to find out richer, more diverse information
- Discussing with different people - actively seeking out the poorest and most marginalised- gives a more complete picture and the opportunity to hear the opinions of those who are normally left out
- Reflect on what is said and not said, what is seen and not seen, who is met and not met

"From Theis, J and HM Grady (1991) *Participatory Rapid Appraisal for Community Development: A training manual based on experiences in the Middle East and North Africa,* London: IIED and Save the Children Federation"

Recording and managing information

Even the most perceptive observation or the most stimulating interview will be worth little if you fail to record it. Great insights can easily be forgotten when you are taking in so much information each day. Once information is recorded, it must also be managed well - labeled, filed and stored so that it can easily be retrieved in good condition.

Taking notes

Written notes are likely to be the most common way of recording information - no special equipment is necessary, there's nothing to set up or check on, it's not too intimidating, and the notes can be easily filed and referred to later. But this is clearly an incomplete way to record information; it's impossible to do justice to a fast moving conversation or a complex set of interactions by taking notes. It's also very subjective; when researchers select what to write down, they are actually engaging in a level of analysis, filtering out what they personally assume to be unimportant. And if one person is working alone, he or she is likely to miss some of what's going on, or to interrupt a good conversation by constantly stopping to take notes.

Working in pairs is a good way to minimize the problems. If one person takes notes, while the other asks questions or guides a discussion, both jobs will be dealt with better. And with two sets of ears and eyes, it's more likely afterwards that gaps in the notes can be filled and misunderstandings resolved.

Sometimes in taking notes, only an overview of the exchange may be necessary (for instance, "All the women agreed that they felt uncomfortable leaving young children unattended when they went to work. Some of the reasons given included …"). But there may also be more complex interactions that should be recorded in more detail, or statements with a particular impact that deserve to be quoted in full. Both the note taker and the interviewer should feel free to ask for a moment to catch up in these cases. The person taking notes should also develop shorthand ways of reminding herself of things that can be more fully described later.

When recording interviews or group discussions, it's important not only to note what a person said, but what the questions were that stimulated that response - whether the response was clear and spontaneous or very much encouraged and directed by the questions. Otherwise things may be taken out of context, or it will be unclear how much weight to give that response. After a discussion, read over the notes together and try to fill any gaps. Make sure you note the location and the age and sex of those involved, identifying people specifically wherever possible. It is easy to make generalizations about "children", for instance, when the relevant information actually refers to six-year-old boys. Try to prevent such faulty generalizations by making your information as specific as possible.

Taking notes during observation is more likely to be something that one person does alone. But a good way to practise this skill together during training is to have all team members observe the same scene and make notes on it - and then compare their notes in a critical way, trying to learn from one another about effective ways to present both an overview of a situation and the significant details. During actual note taking, it is important to jot down as many details as possible, and then afterwards to think about what you have seen, refer back to your jottings, and write up a fuller overview. Be sure to record such basic information as the sex and age of those observed, their relationship (if known), the place and time of day, and any contextual details that will contribute to a clearer understanding of the situation. It can be useful to label notes as you take them, making them easier to refer back to in later days. Taking notes on just one side of the page, leaving the other side blank (or else dividing the page in two) makes it possible to jot down your analysis of the situation later.

There are great advantages to having all researchers keep their own logbooks. This enables them to become personally involved in building their own set of ideas and hypotheses as they periodically review their notes. It does mean that when they come together as a group to discuss their observations they will sometimes need to copy some of these notes again to file into this or that category of data. The decision should be a matter of personal style but it is important to note that many researchers find the accumulative, sequential building up of an understanding though a log book is fundamental to being a good qualitative investigator.

Using tape recorders and video cameras

The most accurate way to record an interaction is to use a tape recorder or a video. This allows you to go back later, to listen or watch again, to reflect on people's intentions and meanings, and to notice things that slipped your attention at the time. It's also a way to examine and critique your own performance as a researcher. There are real disadvantages however. The expense may be prohibitive. People may feel uncomfortable about being recorded. There are often technical problems that can end up interrupting the process. And although accuracy is high, analysis presents real problems, calling for many hours of listening or watching, and for either transcription or note taking later on. Remember - one hour of taped conversation can easily take six or seven hours to transcribe.

If the equipment is available, a compromise may be to use it only for those situations in which so much is happening that it is impossible for one person to capture it reasonably in note form. Visual exercises, for instance, or large group meetings are an ideal time for using a video camera to pick up interactions, comments or disagreements that might otherwise be overlooked. Be sure that whoever is using the equipment is thoroughly familiar with it, or they will distract attention from the task at hand. Be sure, too, that people being recorded are familiar and comfortable with video, tape recorder or still camera. Informed consent is essential: people need to understand that what they say and do will be captured, and they need to know how it will be used. If they are not used to the equipment, tape them briefly and play it back before starting, so they know what it is all about, and can give their full consent.

Video and still photography can also be a valuable way of simply recording life and daily interactions with children in the community - not just the more formal exchanges of the research. Be sure that the camera person has a good sense of the kinds of interactions that will be useful and interesting. It's better to train a person with background in ECD to use a camera, rather than to use a skilled camera person who may be more drawn to what is visually appealing or unusual, rather than the routine activities that are the fabric of a child's life.

SPECIFIC TOPICS AND METHODS

This section presents the topics or issues that are likely to be addressed in your research. Under each topic, there is a list of the information that should be collected, followed by a description of various methods that have been found effective. In most cases it won't be necessary to use all the options described. Based on the objectives and constraints of a particular assessment, researchers should decide which methods or tools will be most useful, bearing in mind the need for a range of perspectives. Refer back to page 5 for some guidelines on this.

These topics are divided into three groups:

- **Background information**
- **Daily life and supports for children's development**
- **Beliefs, values and expectations.**

Note Well

Although the background information is critical in providing a context for the investigation, it is not the primary target of the research. Because it happens first, it is easy for researchers to be over-scrupulous in following every possible method. In order to ensure that core issues, involving child care beliefs and practices, receive enough time and attention, research on these background issues should never be allowed to take up more than a quarter of the time available to researchers.

It is easy for the production of visual methods to become more important than the discussions they are intended to support. It is critical that observation, interviews and the facilitation of group discussion are prioritized and visual tools be seen as a means to an end, and not as ends in themselves.

1. Background information on the larger context

A familiarity with the local context is essential to understanding the factors that shape child rearing practices - both in the short and longer term. This kind of information is also helpful for understanding the supports within the community for potential programming and the constraints that may need to be overcome, be they lack of space or lack of interest on the part of local leaders. Much of this information will ideally have been collected ahead of time, before the research team begins its work. These guidelines can be used at either time.

Table of Topics and Methods

TOPICS	METHODS	KEY INFORMANTS
BACKGROUND INFORMATION		
DEMOGRAPHICS	Review existing records House to house survey	District and local records; health, school, census etc. Household heads and families
LOCAL CONDITIONS	Interviews *Social map* Observation walk	Local leaders, health workers, members of community groups, others with good overview of community Any community members A few community members
LIVELIHOODS	Interviews *Well Being Ranking* *Seasonal Calendar* Observations	Those who know the community well; People in various occupations; Men, women, girls, boys
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES	Interviews and group discussion Observations	Local leaders; representatives of excluded groups; groups, especially women and older children
STATUS, KNOWLEDGE AND POWER OF MOTHERS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS	Interviews Group discussion Observations	Women of different ages, including young girls; Other caregivers Health workers Community group representatives; Men
PREGNANCY AND BIRTH	Health records for figures Interviews Group discussions supported by *Food Matrix, Body Mapping* Observations	Health workers or TBAs Pregnant women, those with children Fathers and older family members
GETTING TO KNOW INDIVIDUAL HOUSEHOLDS	Interviews Group discussions supported by *Family Timeline* Observations	People from selected households
HOUSEHOLD SETTING	Interviews supported by *Household Mapping*	Individual household members - include women and older sisters. Also children for *Mapping*

Demographics

Find what records are available within the community (health, school, census etc) and decide whether they are adequate for the research needs. If records are unavailable, outdated, or of questionable accuracy, it may be necessary to do a house-to-house survey in order to have a clear overview of the community.

Information to collect

- Name of household head (male or female)
- Ethnicity, religion or caste
- Number of people in household (sex/age/relationship to household head)
- Number of disabled people (sex/age)
- Number of children enrolled in school (sex/age)
- Number of children attending school regularly (sex/age)
- Number of children that have died in the last 10 years? (Sex/age)
- Any women who died in child birth?
- Number of children immunised? What kind of immunisation?
- Number of mothers immunised? What kind of immunisation?
- Any weight and height records for children?
- Does household own or rent home? Is tenure secure?
- Does household own land? How much? Sharecrops?
- Source of livelihood?

Methods

This survey can be undertaken ahead of time by the contact person or by team members, as part of their attempt to get to know the community. While these questions are being asked, it would also be possible to double check on much of the information in the following sections, especially if this has been gathered primarily from a few key people.

Another approach to conducting the household survey would be to train some community members to carry it out - members of a woman's group, a youth group or a children's club for instance. Be sure to accompany them for their first few visits, to ensure that there are no problems.

Local conditions

Living conditions affect health, daily work burdens (especially for those dealing with children), many of the opportunities available to children and their families and the general quality of life. Any ECD programming will have to take these daily realities into account.

Information to collect

- **LOCATION:** Relative to roads, markets, towns, transport; or in an urban community, relationship to the rest of the city, and to various significant points? Time it takes to get places? Cost or availability of transport?
- **ISOLATION OR CONNECTEDNESS OF THE COMMUNITY:** In terms of outside ideas, practices?
- **WATER SUPPLY:** Quality, quantities available, distance, regularity of supply? Where do people bathe? Wash clothes? Different source for drinking water?
- **SANITATION:** How close, how suitable for small children, for women, how long a wait, how well maintained? Drainage? Waste removal?
- **GENERAL QUALITY OF HOUSING:** Crowding? Ventilation? Safety issues?
- **PARTICULAR RISKS OR DIFFICULTIES:** Flooding? Landslides? Exposure to toxics or pollutants? Heavy traffic? Concerns about eviction?
- **FUEL:** For cooking and heating, sources and costs?
- **RANGE OF HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE:** Health posts or clinics, traditional healers, pharmacies, local health workers, emergency care, acute care? How accessible are various services? Distance, affordability, attitude of health staff, regularity of provision? Who uses? Level of satisfaction?
- **LOCATION AND ACCESSIBILITY OF SERVICES:** School, administrative offices, post offices, telephone, shops, rice mills, etc? Who uses? Level of satisfaction?
- **RELIGIOUS PLACES:** Temples, churches, mosques or other religious centres or holy places? Are these accessible to everyone in the community, or just to some groups? Is religion a source of support in the community? A cause of tension or division?
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR WOMEN:** Do local conditions have different implications for women or those in marginal groups?
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD CARE:** How do local conditions affect child care and child rearing?

Key informants

Local leaders or people with a good overview of community realities (such as health workers or members of community groups) can be interviewed individually; any groups of community members can help in getting other perspectives.

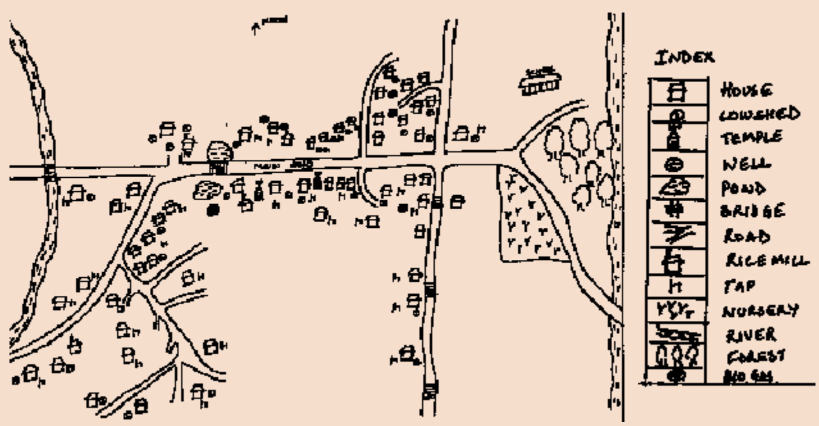
Be sure to ask about any problems, about differences in access for different groups, about changes that have occurred, and plans for change in all these areas.

Visual methods

Using the Social Map

It is effective to do this exercise with separate groups as part of the discussion of local conditions, and to compare their maps afterwards to generate discussion; but where it is feasible, a mixed group is suggested. If the group is too large, however, the exercise will be difficult to carry out.

- Choose a suitable place (large, flat, piece of ground/an indoor meeting place/ a wall) and gather materials for making the map (ideally paper and markers for this exercise, so that information can be clearly displayed). Ask people to draw a map of the community and surrounding area, showing any significant sites. If necessary, help them get started by asking them to indicate where you are now and drawing features around it. Ask individuals to place their own homes on the map, but also to locate all the households of all those not present. Houses can be identified with personal symbols if people do not know how to write their initials.
- In order to minimize changes, people can be encouraged to draw houses or other sites on small pieces of paper that can be moved around until everyone is certain where they go. Then they can be redrawn on the map.



- Record the interactions between people and any disagreements.
- Use the map as a catalyst for discussion. Ask questions in order to get the information listed above (for example, when a clinic is drawn on the map, ask when it's open, what people's level of satisfaction is with it, how many people use it, and so on.) Be sure to record all answers.

If necessary, copy the finished map onto a clean piece of paper, and cross check it with all those present. Another method to consider might be a Seasonal Calendar to consider changes in community living conditions throughout the year, e.g. water shortages, flooding etc. See p42 for instructions.

Observation

Walking interview

Walk around the community with children or other community members, and note the location/condition of various sites and facilities. Ask to be taken to specific places, and ask questions as you walk (e.g. "Who uses this clinic? When is it open? Are you happy with the services provided? Where else do people go for health care?") Take notes: for instance, when you see a water tap, observe and record what's happening there. Are the surroundings dirty or clean? Who is collecting water? How long do they have to wait in line?As you walk, notice what children are doing, how conditions affect their activities, and what measures seem to have been taken to make the local setting fit their needs.

Some points to consider

- The Social Map and accompanying discussion is probably the single most useful method here, since it involves a range of perspectives, and results in a map that all can refer to. In theory, a social map should yield information equivalent to that collected in a house to house survey. Experience has shown that this may be unrealistic. However the map can be a fine way of confirming or raising questions about survey information.
- The observation walk allows you actually to see conditions, stimulates questions, and makes it possible to crosscheck information on the Map. It may be most useful to do it after the Social Map discussion.
- Interviews with local leaders, or those who are especially knowledgeable about the community, may be the most efficient way to get all this information, but the risk of bias is high, so compare perspectives. This is true an all these background issues.

Livelihoods

The ways that families make a living affects their capacity for supporting children, as well as the time they have available for childcare. Gender roles are a particularly important factor here. This information contributes to decisions about the scope and scheduling of potential programming.

Information to collect

- **LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES:** How do local people make a living? Formal or informal employment, subsistence agriculture or raising livestock, selling crops, small business or informal enterprises, seasonal labour, migrant labour?
- **GENDER ROLES:** Who contributes to household survival, in what ways? Are there clearly defined gender roles? What are the broad differences in roles of men and women, boys and girls, different groups in the community? At what age are boys/girls expected to become seriously involved in contributing to the household's livelihood? What factors affect this? What are the implications for the children involved?
- **LOCAL CHALLENGES:** What are the most significant local challenges? Lack of land? Food sufficiency? Lack of employment opportunities? Indebtedness? Availability of credit? Seasonal problems? Lack of training? Access to markets?
- **COPING STRATEGIES:** What are coping strategies for difficult times? Loans? Leaving home for work? Sending children away? Putting boys/girls to work? Changing diet?
- **COOPERATION:** What is the level of local reciprocity and cooperation? Shared labour ? Borrowing food? Sharing childcare?
- **SEASONAL CHANGES:** How do livelihood activities or concerns change throughout the year?
- **WEALTH:** What is the range of wealth/security within the community?
- **DECISION MAKING:** Who decides how family income or resources are spent? How are decisions made?
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILD CARE:** How does all of the above affect child care and child rearing? Work loads? Available income? Coping strategies during difficult times? Spending decisions?

Key informants

Those who know the community well, for an overview; people involved in various occupations for more detail; men and women, boys and girls.

Visual Methods

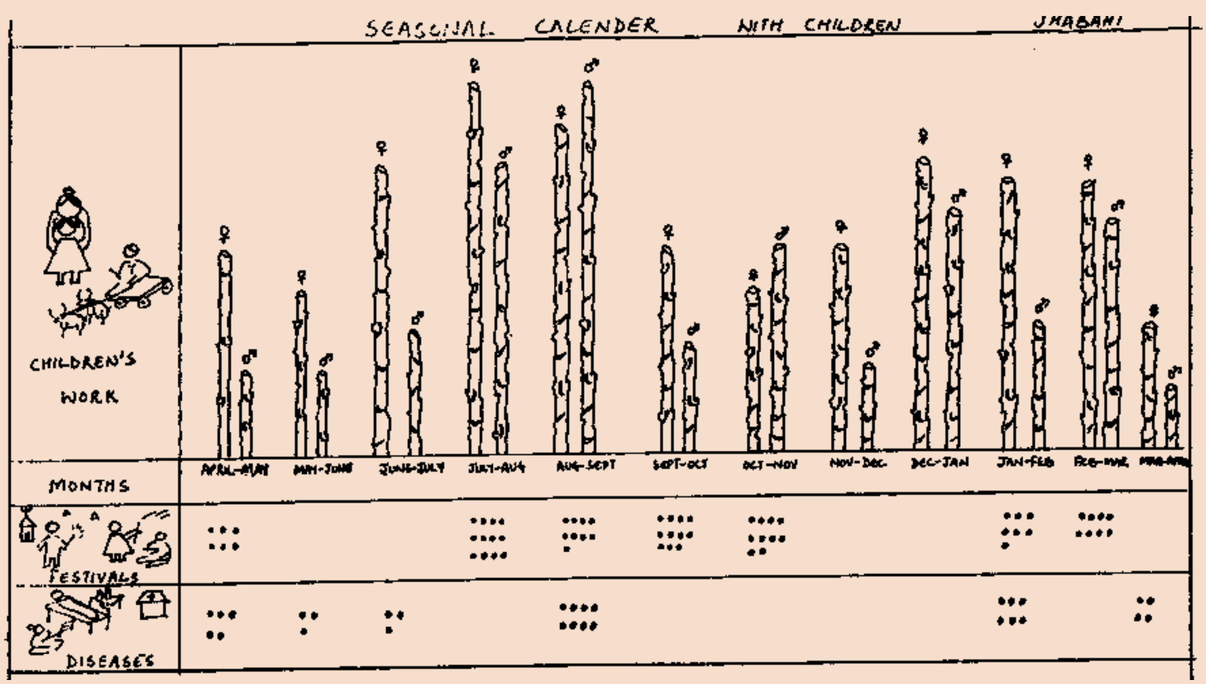
Using the Ranking of Household Well Being

Interviews with those who have a good overall knowledge of the community could include a Well being Ranking, for information about the range of local economic security and other measures of security and comfort:

- List all community households, assign each a number, and write name of household head along with the number on separate cards.
- At least three people (men and women) who know the community well, independently of each other, should sort the cards into as many piles as there are categories of well being in the community, using their own criteria.
- Ask what the criteria are for each pile and the differences between piles. Assure the sorter of confidentiality and avoid discussion of individual families.
- List local criteria and indicators of well being based on these rankings, and consider differences between informants.

Using a Seasonal Calendar

Group discussion (or separate interviews) could be supported by a Seasonal Calendar, which is likely to be more useful in areas that depend on agriculture:



- Ask people to draw a line or circle, and indicate on it how they divide up the work year (by seasons? by months?)
- By placing relatively longer and shorter sticks on the relevant months or seasons, ask both men and women, boys and girls, to indicate how heavy their work loads are at various times of year. Ask them to show what work they do at each time, using symbols placed on the stick or below the line.
- Use this calendar as an aid in discussing seasonal differences in all the discussion points listed above.

Using a Map

People can indicate on a sketch map how far they have to go to work, where various household members go, and what this means for child care.

Observations

Note the kinds of activities people are involved in, and ask questions about anything you don't understand. Who is involved (age, sex)? If some particular occupation is essential to the local economy (growing rice, making pots), make sure you understand what it involves.

Social and political structures

It is important to find out who has the power locally, who is running things, and who is left out of decision making. The level of control that people have over their lives has a significant effect on the ways they raise their children and the opportunities they can make available to them. Local support networks can also be critical to the capacity of families to cope during difficult times. This information will also help to determine what local support might be necessary to allow programming to move ahead smoothly; what the local strengths are that can be built on; and the extent to which programming might need to be targeted towards particular groups.

Information to collect:

- **LOCAL GOVERNANCE:** What are the local governance structures? Formal administrative structures and leaders, political representation, traditional systems of social governance, traditional or religious leaders?
- **DECISION MAKING:** What kinds of decision making or power rests with these various structures or leaders? How are they able to affect people's lives in concrete ways?
- **PARTICIPATION:** What is the level of community participation in governance? What kinds of meetings are there? Who participates (age/gender/wealth/ethnic/religious groups etc)? What kind of participation in each case? What are the advantages and disadvantages of local governance systems for various groups? Do all benefit equally? How are the poorest, most disadvantaged affected?
- **COMMUNITY SUPPORT:** What supports are there swithin the community/ municipality/ district for households in difficulty? Government supports or provisions? Local organizations? Religious supports? Informal supports? Extended family? Neighbours? Particular community members? Local customs for mutual support?
- **SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN:** What formal supports are available for children's needs? Relevant government policies, available subsidies etc. Are local leaders taking advantage of these?
- **COMMUNITY GROUPS:** What community groups are there? Youth groups, children's clubs, credit groups, groups etc? What are their activities? What supports do they offer? Are they open to all?
- **NGOS:** What organizations and NGOs are in the area? What supports and services do they provide? To whom? How are they perceived by the community? Is the community involved in their decision making?
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR YOUNG CHILDREN:** How do local power structures affect decisions regarding young children, and how are they likely to influence the establishment of an ECD programme? If it appears that some group within the community is most in need of provision, how is this likely to affect the level of support among the more influential members of the community?

Key informants

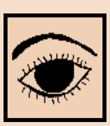
Local leaders, representatives of excluded groups, groups of community members, especially women and older children.

Get an overview of local systems from leaders and those with influence, if possible, But remember that they may be biased about the fairness of the local system, reasons for any local tensions, and the extent to which some people are marginalized. Cross check your information with groups and with individuals during the household level interviews. Check for the extent to which local norms about household organization actually hold from family to family, and what factors affect this.

Visual methods

Using the Venn diagram

Cards can be used to represent all of the different people, groups or institutions that currently support children within the community. A card in the center represents a child, and other cards placed around it represent each of the influences. (See p63) The closer ones show those which have the most frequent contact. The larger cards show the relative importance of the influence even if it is at a greater distance. This is a particularly useful means of beginning to think ecologically about the raising of children. It can lead to valuable discussion of not only what is missing from the pattern of childcare but also what some of the problems are in the relationship of the different factors to one another. After this is done you can then have a discussion of whether this is true for all children or whether some of the cards should be moved around to better represent the situation for different children in the community.



Observations

Be aware of how people interact with local leaders, what developments occur while you're there, and how they affect people. Sit in the teashop and listen to the gossip. Go to meetings and observe interactions. Find out what the local issues are and how they affect people.

The status, knowledge and power of women

Experience shows that the welfare of children is closely tied to the health, knowledge and position of their mothers. Mothers are generally the primary caregivers and the people most concerned with children's well being. But fatigued and run-down women can't easily put the necessary energy and attention into all the tasks involved in child care; nor can women who lack information or decision-making power serve as adequate advocates for their children. When siblings, grandparents and others serve as caregivers for young children, their effectiveness is also shaped by these factors. This information is essential to an understanding of local child rearing, and to responsive programming.

Information to collect:

- **HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE:** How are local households organized? Nuclear, extended households? Single parents?
- **STATUS OF WOMEN:** What is the status of women within the household? Status of other family members who care for children (boys, girls, older people etc)? Does this vary for different groups?
- **WORK LOADS:** What are the work loads of local women and other caregivers? Within the home? Outside of home? Hours? Help available to them?
- **DECISION MAKING:** Are women free to make decisions about their children? About their own earning? Who makes the decisions, and in what areas? Shared? Household head only?
- **WOMEN'S ROLE:** What is women's role within the community? Are they restricted in their activities? How much mobility do they have? Do they play any role in local decision making?
- **SUPPORT TO WOMEN:** What supports are available to local women? For health? Education? Job training? Are there any local groups that support women?
- **WOMEN'S HEALTH:** What is the general level of health and vitality of women and other caregivers? Life expectancy? Illnesses? Energy levels? Mental health issues? Nutrition? (see page 48 for pregnancy).
- **INFORMATION:** How well-informed are local women and other caregivers? On children's health issues? Their own health? Nutrition? Hygiene? Local services? Political realities? Are they literate? What information sources are there?
- **CONFIDENCE:** What level of confidence do local women or other primary caregivers have? Assertiveness? Willingness to express themselves? Comfort in discussing their lives? Interest in new solutions? Satisfaction with their lives? Worries?

Methods

Key informants

Groups of women and individual women of different ages, including young girls; other family members who routinely provide childcare; health workers, community group representatives. Also get men's perspectives on women's status.

Observations

Observe the activities of women and other care-givers within the home and community. See to what extent they take part in local events. Note the way they are treated by others. Note whether they have time to relax, opportunities to socialize with others. Attend meetings of any local groups that support women. As noted above, researchers should each follow a mother, or other primary caregiver, for a full day, observing her range of responsibilities at any given time, how she copes, how her time is allocated, how much time she actually has to give to children, what the quality of interaction is with various people. (See p58)

Pregnancy and birth

The care of young children begins with the care of their pregnant mothers. The health of pregnant women is important in its own right, and it affects the health of their infants (as well the general well being of their other children especially if there is little family support). Beliefs about pregnancy and the care given to pregnant women have implications for programming, both for the availability of child care support and for the topics dealt with in parenting programmes.

Information to collect

PREGNANCY

- **AGE OF MARRIAGE:** When do most women get married? How much say do they have in this? When do they first become pregnant? How close together do pregnancies tend to be?
- **PREGNANCY BEFORE MARRIAGE:** Is it common for unmarried women to be pregnant, and what are the community responses?
- **HEALTH SERVICES:** What health services are available for pregnant women? What proportion of women are immunised? What proportion go for prenatal check-ups? What constraints and why? Attitudes, access, costs etc.
- **BELIEFS:** What are local perceptions of the changes that take place during pregnancy - physically, emotionally, socially? What beliefs are there about pregnancy? About the foetus? Do people have ways to tell whether the foetus is a boy or a girl? How? How are pregnant women treated?
- **FOOD DURING PREGNANCY:** What should women eat or not eat during pregnancy? Why?
- **WORKLOADS:** Do pregnant women do the same work as usual, or do they get more rest? What kind of help or support do they get from others?
- **MISCARRIAGES:** Are miscarriages common? How are the dealt with? Where do women go for help?
- **UNWANTED PREGNANCY:** Are there any times when women are unhappy about being pregnant? What do they do? What are the attitudes towards abortion? Practices?

BIRTH

- **BIRTHING PRACTICES:** Where does birth happen and with what supports? Availability of clinics? TBAs? Levels of training? Access and costs? What are the beliefs and practices relating to delivery?
- **COMPLICATIONS:** What happens if complications arise? Where do women go for help?
- **MATERNAL MORTALITY:** How msany women in the community have died as a result of child birth in recent years?
- **AFTER BIRTH:** What happens immediately after the child is born? (how is the cord cut? any ceremonies? Etc?) Differences for boys and girls? Children born with a disability? What level of care and support is available for the days/weeks after birth?

Figures

Check for figures on prenatal care, immunization, maternal mortality, perinatal mortality.

Key informants

Health workers, TBAs, pregnant women, groups of women. Groups of men would also be useful for their perspective, as would older people for a sense of any changes.

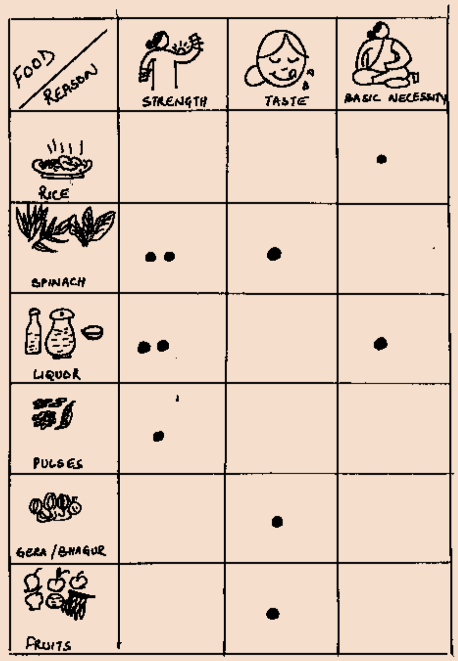
Ask health workers or TBAs for information on the level of services actually available, and the extent to which women make use of them. What are the constraints they face? What do they consider to be the most significant problems, gains? This can be part of a more general interview on local health care and health issues.

In talking to pregnant women, fathers and other family members for their attitudes, perceptions of problems etc, look for differences, contradictions. During group discussion get a sense of local norms regarding pregnancy and care during pregnancy. (See page 58)

Visual methods

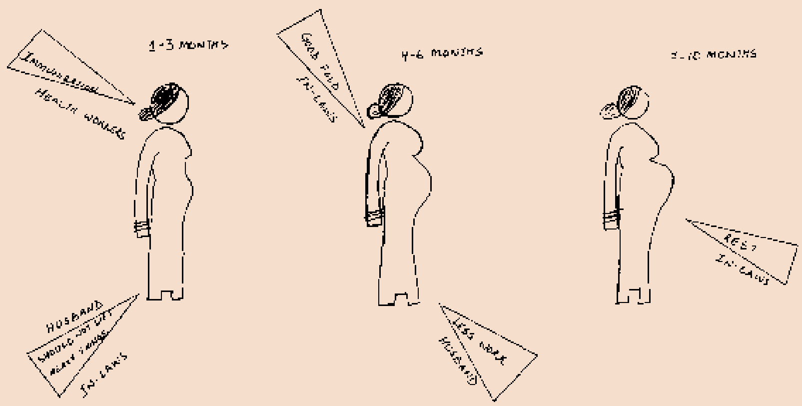
Using a Food Matrix

Along one axis, indicate with symbols or objects the foods that women eat during pregnancy. Along the other axis, ask people to list the reasons why particular foods are good for pregnant women, and to score the foods according to their value, using stones or other counters.



Using a Body Mapping

Ask people to draw the changes in women's bodies throughout pregnancy, and to indicate either by drawing, or in words, the kind of care that's necessary at each stage.



Observations

Spend a day with a pregnant woman and observe her routines. What does she eat? What kind of work does she do? How much rest does she get? What supports from others?

Some points to consider

- Women may be somewhat reluctant to discuss pregnancy and birth. It's also possible that researchers may feel constrained, so this may be an area to investigate when people know each other better. (Experience has shown that in some settings where it is assumed that women will be reluctant to discuss these issues, in fact they are very eager for the opportunity.)
- People may be especially unwilling to talk about abortion, any possible infanticide practices, or early neglect of infants who appear unlikely to thrive. Use sensitivity when raising these issues, and find out as much as possible first from health workers.

Getting to know individual households

Doing in depth interviews and observation with selected households is an excellent way to gain a more detailed understanding of issues raised at the community level, and of the kinds of variations that are possible in response to particular circumstances. For the most part, the background information sought and the questions asked will be those that are asked of the community at large, but there will be greater attention to the particular combination of strategies and practices employed by any one household, and their specific effects for children.

Information to collect:

- **UNDERSTANDING THE RESEARCH:** Do household members have a clear understanding of the objectives of the research? (If not, this should be remedied.)
- **FAMILY HISTORY:** What is the background of the household? Where do they come from? How much of the family's history do they know? What is their social situation within the community? Do they belong to a particular group within the community?

- **HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE:** What is the structure of the household? Who are the household members? How are they related?
- **LIVELIHOOD:** What is the source(s) of household livelihood? Are they secure or insecure? Are there financial/food security worries? Do they own the house or any property? Do they have debts? Are any household members working at a distance?
- **GENDER ROLES ANDS DECISION MAKING:** What are the roles of different individuals within the household? How are decisions made? About spending? About children? About responsibilities?
- **EDUCATION:** What is the level of education of different family members? Are any children attending school?
- **DIFFERENCES:** Are there any factors that make this household different from other households in the community? How?
- **RELIGION:** What are their religious beliefs ? Do they belong to any religious groups?
- **INVOLVEMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE:** Are family members involved in local politics or community decision making? Do family members belong to any local groups or organizations?

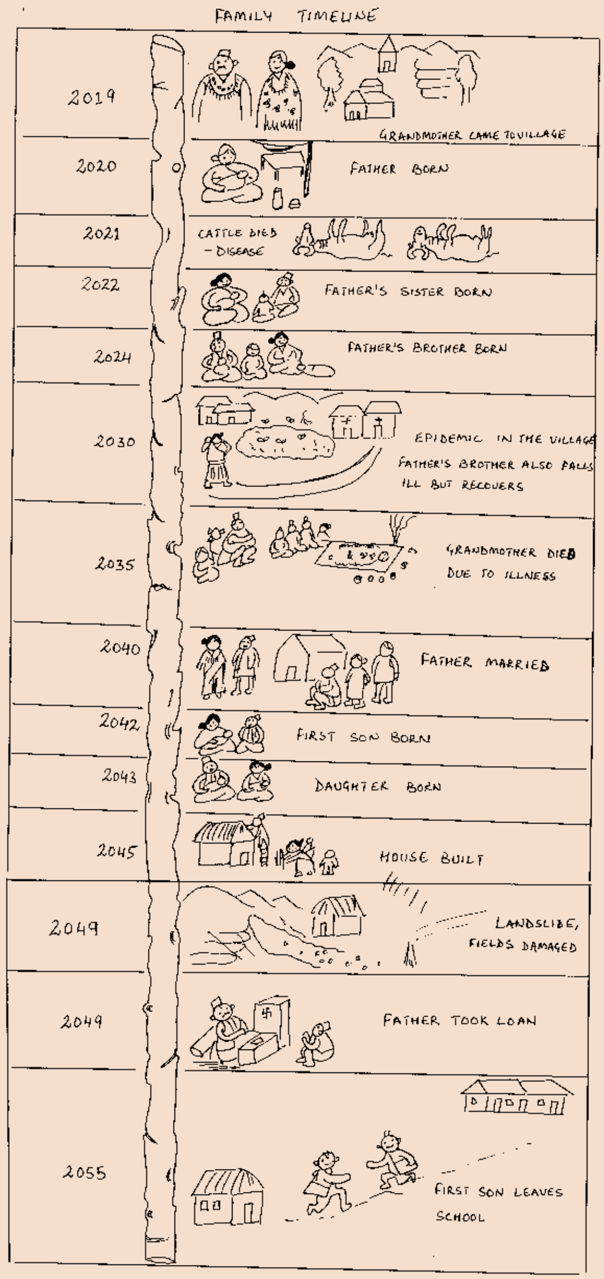
Key informants

All household members, in discussion together and as individuals.

Visual methods

Using a Family Timeline:

Ask family members to draw a line and to represent on it any important events in the life of the household. This might include such events as the grandmother's arrival in the village from another area when she was married, the birth of various members, the building of this house, the graduation of the elder son from the local school, the death of the grandfather and of a younger child in the family, the visit of relatives from a distance, the year the crops failed etc.



Observation:

Watch the household's daily life; observe the interactions, the allocation of responsibilities, the decision making process, the topics of discussion.

Household setting

The quality of housing and the area around it has an impact on health and safety, on the opportunities available to children, and on the time and energy required from caregivers. All of this can affect the need for programming. If conditions are fairly uniform throughout a community, the information collected under Local conditions (page 38) is likely to be adequate here. If conditions vary significantly, then this information should be collected for the selected households.

Information to collect:

- **QUALITY OF HOUSING:** What does the home and its surroundings consist of? How much space per person, how many buildings or rooms, any yard, how close to neighbours, what is access like?
- **HEALTH:** What is the quality of housing and surroundings for health? Dampness, overcrowding, indoor and outdoor air quality, vermin, drainage, water and sanitation, waste removal?
- **SAFETY:** What is the quality of housing and surroundings for safety? Hazards for small children such as open fires, unprotected stairways or rooftops, sharp tools and dangerous equipment, poisons and pesticides, water deep enough for drowning, debris and broken glass, traffic, high catwalks, slippery paths? Housing especially subject to fire, flooding, landslides etc?
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR CAREGIVER'S TIME:** What are the implications for caregivers' time and energy? Distance to water points or toilets, time waiting in line, ease of cooking arrangements, capacity to store food, how carefully small children have to be watched?
- **IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL INTERACTIONS:** What are the implications for social interactions? Are there tensions due to overcrowding or the placement of facilities? Is there common space between dwellings where neighbours can interact easily or share child care? Is the household isolated from others?
- **SPACE TO PLAY:** What are the implications for children's play? Is there enough space? Is it safe? Is the environment stimulating? Are there other children in the immediate area? Are there a range of opportunities that are accessible to the child? How is it different for children of different ages?
- **PERCEPTIONS:** What are people's perceptions of the adequacy of their living arrangements? Do they feel there are problems? What problems do they identify? Are they different from the perceptions of the researchers?

Key informants

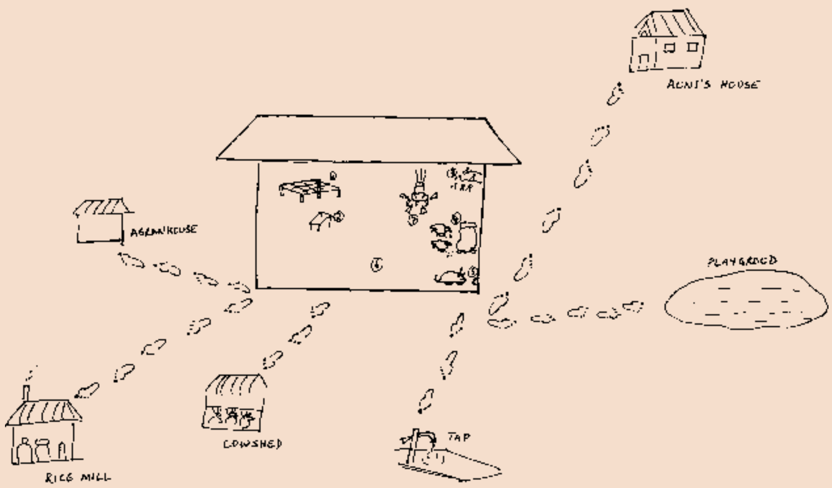
Individual household members. Make sure you talk to women and older sisters (brothers where relevant) - they are most likely to be the ones fetching water, dealing with children's needs, coping with practical difficulties.

Visual methods

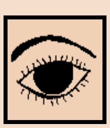
Using a Household Mapping exercise.

This can be conducted in various ways:

- Whoever is being interviewed can be asked to sketch or map the home and the surrounding area that is considered part of domestic space, including any significant places or objects. This map can then be used as an aid in discussion, and notes, symbols etc can be added throughout the discussion. If it is drawn on the ground, the researcher should make a copy at the end.
- If the person doesn't want to draw the map, the researcher can ask for permission to do it, allowing the person to indicate in the course of discussion what ought to be included, where various activities take place, where the trouble spots are etc. Much more information will be revealed if annotations are made during a walking tour led by the household member around the house and outdoor space. This enables the tour guide to mentally relive and to demonstrate problems to the researcher.



- Children can be involved in the same way - the first rough version of the house map can be created by the child with sticks and stones. The researcher can then convert this with the child into a paper version that is useful for annotating.



Observation:

Household living conditions may be just an assumed fact of life for most caregivers, not something they find it worth drawing attention to in discussion. Don't rely only on their answers to your questions. Pay close attention to the real challenges people face and the solutions they have devised. How much time does it actually take to fetch water with small children along for the walk? To care for the fire, at the same time ensuring that children are not burnt? How is bedding dealt with if children wet the bed at night? How does rainfall or cold weather complicate life and child care? What efforts are made to keep flies off food? Etc.

2. Daily life and supports for children's development

Once there is a reasonable understanding of the local contexts for child rearing, it is time to tackle the core issues of this research. This section looks at the daily routines and responsibilities of caregivers, and at the experiences of their young children.

Table of Topics and Methods

TOPICS	METHODS	KEY INFORMANTS
DAILY LIFE AND SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT		
CHILDCARE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	Interviews Group discussions supported by *Who does What in Childcare Matrix* Observations, including 24 hour observation tracking one young child	Those with responsibility for child care. Include fathers to determine their role
NUTRITIONAL STATUS, FOOD AND MEALTIMES	Health records for figures Interviews and group discussions supported by *Food Matrix, Daily Timeline* Observations	Health workers Caregivers responsible for feeding
PREVENTING ILLNESS AND INJURY, AND CARING FOR SICK CHILDREN	Health records for figures Interviews and group discussions supported by *Disease and Accident Ranking, Health Service Map* Observations	Health workers Traditional healers Parents and other caregivers
DAILY INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN	Interviews and group discussions supported by *Interaction Venn Diagramme* Observations	Those involved in child care Young children
CHILDREN'S PLAY AND WORK	Interviews and group discussions supported by *Play and Games Matrix* *Children's Work Matrix* Observations	Girls, boys Mothers, fathers and older family members
SCHOOL	Interviews with teachers and parents Group discussions with children supported by drawings	Mothers, fathers, teachers, school head Girls, boys

Child care roles and responsibilities

The availability of caregivers and the priority given to childcare within a community has an important impact on the quality of young children's lives, and on the need for more formal supports.

Information to collect

- **CHILD CARE ACTIVITIES:** What are the main activities involved in caring for an infant? For a toddler?
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Who takes responsibility for each of these activities? For infants? For toddlers? Why? (Sleeping, feeding, washing, dressing, toileting, care when ill) Are there differences between who is considered primarily responsible for children, and who actually spends time caring for them? How are decisions made about who is responsible for a child?
- **ROLES:** What is the role of mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, neighbours?Differences between formally defined roles and actual time spent with children? Is it different for boys and girls, or in different households?
- **VARIATION OVER TIME:** How does it vary from one time of day or one time of year to another?
- **PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDCARE:** Is childcare considered to be real work? How important is it relative to other kinds of work?
- **BALANCING CHILD CARE AND OTHER WORK:** Do people find it difficult to balance to requirements of child care and the demands of other work? Who finds this difficult? Does it create household tensions? What are the implications for children?
- **CARING FOR SELF:** From what age are children left to care for themselves? Girls/boys? When children are more or less able to care for themselves, is anyone still responsible for them? In what way? What do they do for them?
- **CHILDREN WHO ARE CAREGIVERS:** From what age are children considered competent to care for younger children?Girls/boys? Are young caregivers overseen by adults?
- **CHILD CARE CONCERNS:** Are parents anxious about the kind of care their children are receiving? What are their worries, if any? How do they deal with their concerns?
- **CHANGE:** Have there been any changes in patterns of care over recent years?

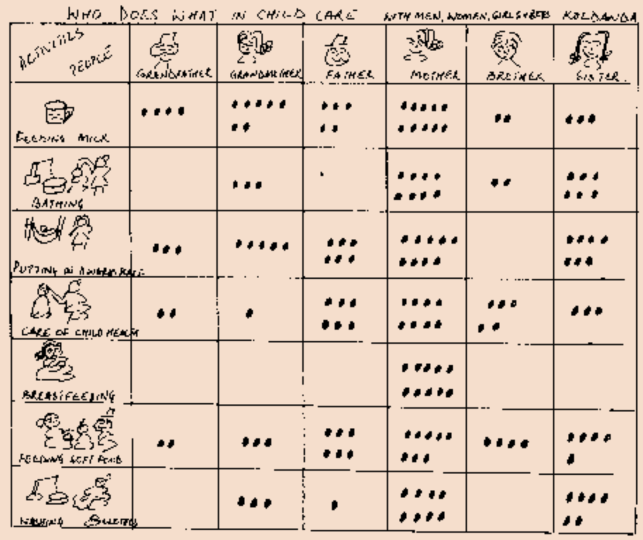
Key informants

All those who are responsible for providing care for children or dealing with them on a regular basis, both individually or in groups. Be sure to involve fathers, even if people say they are not involved.

Visual methods

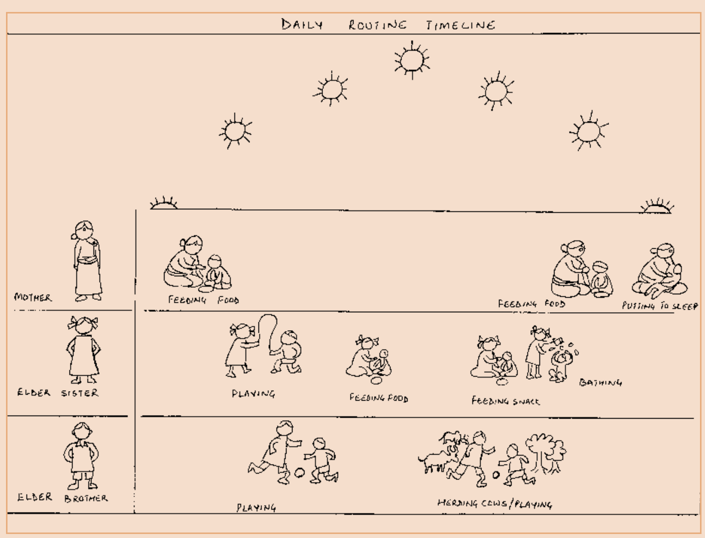
Using a Who Does What in Child Care Matrix:

This can be us ed during individual interviews or in group discussion.



- Ask people to list the main activities in caring for young children using symbols. Put these on the right hand side. Probe for any additional activities (putting children to sleep, etc see above).
- List all those involved in child care along the other axis (including young children and old people if they are typical).
- Ask people to rank who is the most responsible for each activity, using stones or some other kind of counter.
- Use this matrix as an aid to discussing various roles and responsibilities, and the differences.

Using a Daily Routine Timeline



- Ask household members to draw a line, indicating times of day by showing the sun above it in different positions.
- Show a typical day in the life of a child in the household, from when they get up in the morning until they go to bed. Use symbols to indicate what they do at different times of day.
- Indicate who is responsible for the child at different times.
- Find out whether this typical day is different at different times of year, and how.

Observation:

Follow up discussion with careful observation to see if the reality matches people's reports. For instance, although people may say that mothers are the main caregivers, their conflicting responsibilities may mean that in terms of time, other family members actually spend more time helping and supervising young children. See who actually does what with children in the course of daily life, and when. What is the level of care - are children overseen from a distance, or do people feel the need to be with them all the time? At what ages? Are young children fussy about being left with certain people? Are the interactions in some cases more active than in others?

We also suggest following mothers for a full day. If other family members, for instance elder sisters, are the primary caregivers, they too should be followed and observed. During these extended observations, pay close attention to the quality of the interactions between children and caregivers (see Daily interactions, p59-62). One useful approach is to make a simple sketch map of the setting in your log book with everyone present located on it. You can then annotate it with your observations of how all these different people interact with the child who is the primary target of your interest.

Full day Observation

Each team member should follow and record the activities of at least one young child for a full day, observing and noting carefully throughout the day:

- the time and place of specific incidents (e.g. early morning, the goatshed next to the house);
- the people who are present (e.g. the child, his six-year old sister, her friend from the next house, his grandmother nearby on the porch of the house);
- who is responsible for the child at this point (e.g. the sister is temporarily responsible for the target child, a two-year-old boy, but the grandmother is actually overseeing things from nearby?);
- what the child does, and what his interactions are with people and things (e.g. he is dropping handfuls of sand into the goat's water trough, while his sister feeds the goats. She ignores him, but her grandmother shouts for her to stop him. She gives him a small pile of fodder and tells him to give it to one of the goats.)
- what other activities caregivers are involved in (e.g. the sister is laughing and talking to her friend while she feeds the goats; the grandmother is hanging out the wash to dry.

These observations can be conducted at routine intervals (say every half hour) all day long, and recorded on to prepared sheets which have spaces to identify the child, the date, the time of the observation etc.

Daily interactions with children

The quality of children's interactions with other people affects the way they learn, their sense of identity, their level of security and well-being and their ability to relate to others. Programming will need to build on what children are getting in these areas, and on needs that may not be met for various reasons. The questions in this section are particularly detailed: experience has shown that researchers need to be encouraged to pay close attention to the quality of these everyday interactions, which are often taken for granted. In later sections (for instance, on nutrition, illness, play etc) you can also pay this kind of attention to the differences for different age groups.

Information to collect

NOTE: Many of the following questions are repeated, but researchers found it useful to have all the questions listed for each age group.

FOR INFANTS or those children that are still totally dependent on others:

- Do people show love and affection to infants? Who? When? In what ways? Do people consider this important for infants? Why?
- Who do infants most like to be with? Mother? Other family members? Whoever feeds them? Whoever pays attention to them?
- Do people talk to infants? Who? When? What do they say or talk about? Is there a special way they communicate with infants (higher voice, different words, sounds etc)? Do infants like it? Do people feel they can understand? Is it important? Why? When do infants first learn to communicate themselves? How do they learn? When do they start to use words? How do people encourage them?
- What else do infants learn? From what age? Do they need to be taught? How do people help them learn?
- Do people play with infants? Who? What do they do? When? Is playing important for infants? Why? Do they play by themselves?
- What makes infants happy or unhappy? How do people respond? Who responds? Is it considered important for people to respond quickly or not? What do people do when an infant cries? How do people know what an infant wants?
- Are people interested in what infants are feeling or thinking? Who? How do they show their interest?
- How do infants go to sleep? Do they just fall asleep when they are tired? Does someone rock them? Sing to them? Stay nearby?
- Are infants ever left alone for long periods? Under what circumstances? Is this a safety problem? Do parents worry?

- Are infants considered responsible for their actions? Do people ever become angry with them? Punish them? Can they learn what's right and wrong?
- Is there any indication that infants are ever treated abusively? Under what circumstances? By whom?
- Is there any indication that infants are neglected? If so, what form does it take? Is this a question of lack of interest on the part of caregivers, is it wilful neglect, or is it because caregivers do not have the time or resources to care properly for their children?
- For all of the questions above, are there differences for boys and girls? Or are there any other factors that make a difference in the kinds of interactions infants have?

FOR SMALL CHILDREN or those who are mobile and beginning to care for themselves:

(in some communities, especially whesre children take on responsibility fairly early in life, you may want to look at two groups here: toddlers, who are only starting to do things for themselves, and "pre-school" children, who have become fairly independent.)

- Do people show them love and affection? Who? How? When? Is this considered important? Why?
- How do small children learn to speak? Does anyone try to teach them or help them to learn? Who? When? What else do people teach them?
- Do people speak to small children? Who? When? What do they do? Talk about what they're doing? Ask them questions? Tell them stories? Is this considered important? Do children like it? Do they ask questions? Do people answer them? Who?
- Who do they like to be with? Doing what? Where? When? Is it considered important for them to have friends?
- What makes them happy or unhappy? How do people respond? Is this important? Why? Are people interested in what they are thinking or feeling?
- What do people think children this age need to know? How do they learn? Who teaches them or helps them? How? What do they want to learn? Is it different from what they are expected to know?
- How do small children learn to walk, and to use their bodies skilfully? To move around in different ways, to use their hands for many different things?
- How do they learn to get on with other people?
- How do they learn to understand the world around them?
- How do they establish a a sense of themselves?

- Do people play with them? Who? When? What do they do? Do they give them things to play with by themselves?
- What do small children like to do? What makes them happy? Unhappy? Who do they like to be with? Why? Is it considered important for them to be happy? Why?
- How do they learn about the household's daily routines? Just by watching? Does anyone teach them? Do people involve them in what they're doing (for instance fetching water, buying food, cleaning vegetables, visiting neighbours?) Do they allow them to help, explain what's happening? Or do they ignore them?
- What interactions are there around sleep, dressing, washing etc? Who helps them? Is it a chance for talking and play, or is it rushed? Do people help small children when they try to do things by themselves?
- What are small children expected to do for themselves? At what age? Do people ever help them with things that they are capable of doing themselves? What? Who? How? In what situations?
- Do they have other tasks or responsibilities? What? How do they learn to do them? Do they have to do them if they don't want to?
- Are people interested in what they are thinking or feeling? Who? How do they show their interest?
- What happens when a small child tries to do something that may hurt them (walk by the fire, reach for a knife etc?) Do people try to stop them? Who?
- What do people do if they gets hurt or cry? Help them? Ignore them? Who?
- Are they ever left unsupervised? Under what circumstances?
- Do people feel young children can learn what's right and wrong? How? Who teaches them? What happens when they do something wrong? What if they refuse to cooperate? Are they punished? How? Is this considered important? Why?
- Do they understand what they shouldn't do? How do they learn? From whom? What happens when they are disobedient? Are they punished? How? Is this considered important?
- How are they supposed to behave with other people? Parents? Older people? Other children? How do they learn the way to behave? Who teaches them?
- How much are children encouraged to be part of what adults are doing? Do they watch? Are they encouraged to become involved? When adults have discussions, or socialize with one another, are children included? Listening? Talking themselves?
- Do they make their own decisions about anything? What about? Is this encouraged? Is it important?
- Is there any indication that children this age are ever treated abusively? How? Under what circumstances? By whom?
- Is there any indication that they are neglected? How? A lack of interest on the part of caregivers, wilful neglect, or the fact that caregivers do not have the time or resources to care properly for their children?
- For all the questions above: are they different for boys and girls? Are there other factors that can make a difference?

FOR SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN, or those who are ready for real responsibilities:

- Do people show them love and affection? Who? In what ways? Is it considered important? Why?
- Who do they like to spend time with? Doing what? Who do they speak to? About what?Do they spend time interacting with adults as well as other children? Who? Under what circumstances?
- What makes them happy or unhappy? How do they let people know? How do people respond? Are people interested in their ideas or feelings?
- What are their responsibilities? How do they learn the skills they need? Who helps them? Can they decide what jobs to do?
- What happens when they don't want to work, or fail to do a good job? Who responds? In what way?
- How are children expected to behave with others? Parents? Older people? Other children? What happens if they don't behave the right way?
- Is there any evidence of neglect or abuse for children this age? What form? By whom? Under what circumstances?
- What do they make their own decisions about? Would they like more independence? Are they permitted to argue about things? Are they encouraged to think for themselves, or to follow directions? In what situations? By whom?

Methods

Key informants

All those who are involved in any way in child care and dealing with young children - both individuals and groups for a range of perspectives and local variations. If young children are willing, they can also be involved, especially in the Venn exercises described below. In interviews and group discussions, try to elicit not only the content of various interactions, but the quality and intensity of the interaction, and the intent behind it.

Visual methods

Using an Interaction Venn or Chapati diagram

To indicate the relative frequency or importance of various interactions - for instance, to show who a particular child spends most time with, who they most enjoy being with, who they most often talk to, who they are most likely to learn from etc:

- Make paper circles to represent the focus child, and the various people he or she interacts with. Name each one, or draw symbols to identify them.
- Place the focus child circle in the centre, and overlap the other circles on it more or less, to indicate the extent of the interaction.
- The same circles can be used several times to indicate the different kinds of interactions.

Observation:

Observations are especially important, because so much of what people do with their children may be quite unconscious, or may be different from what they say they do. Watch interactions with young children of various ages whenever you have the chance - with different people, in different places, at different times of day. It's not a question of looking for interactions that are "right" or "wrong" - but of trying to capture the scope and the quality of the communication between them. When you don't understand something, ask questions. Keep a list of questions to take to interviews with people or to discuss in group sessions.

> Watch a mother as she goes about her work with an infant tied to her back. Does she talk to the child as she works? Does she offer him something to hold in his hand? Does she bend over so he can look at the goats as she feeds them? Does she tie him tightly or loosely, and how does this affect his movements? Do other people pay attention to the infant while he is on her back? Do they touch him? Talk to him?

> Watch a toddler as she walks to the water point with her elder sister. Do they talk as they walk along? Does the toddler try to imitate the way her sister carries her water pail? Does her sister show her things along the way? At the water point, does the sister let the smaller girl fill her own pail? Does she show her how to do it? Does she help her to get a drink? Does she let her spend a while playing in the water? On the way home, does the elder sister wait for her when she gets tired? Does she sing with her as they walk?

Nutritional status, food and mealtimes

Children's nutritional status, so basic to their health and development on every front, is affected not only by the quantities of food available, but by the kinds of food available, the facilities for food storage and preparation, the frequency of meals, understandings about children's nutritional needs, the way mealtimes are conducted, and children's interest in eating. The need for programme attention can be affected by all of these factors.

Information to collect

D Mckenzie

- **ARE CHILDREN WELL NOURISHED:** Are there local figures on weight and height? Do children appear to be healthy and well nourished, hungry? Any obvious signs of deficiencies? (Age/gender) Are there any feeding programmes in the community?
- **PARENTAL CONCERN:** Do parents feel their children are adequately nourished? Are they well informed about nutritional needs?
- **BREASTFEEDING:** How soon do newborns start to nurse?Are they given colostrum straight away? What are the beliefs about colostrum? How often are infants fed? On demand? What happens when the mother is out working? What can affect the duration or frequency of breastfeeding? What beliefs are associated with breastfeeding (e.g. can the baby be affected by what mother eats?) Any differences for boys and girls? Any changes over recent years, any bottle feeding? Problems?
- **WEANING:** When are solid foods introduced? For girls/boys? What is fed? How often? Any changes from past practice? Do mothers continue breastfeeding after they start solid foods?
- **OBTAINING FOOD:** Do families grow or purchase food? Can they get enough food? Are there difficult times of year? Income problems? Difficulties with storage? Access to markets?
- **PREPARING FOOD:** Who is responsible for preparing food for children? Are there any difficulties around food preparation (e.g. lack of time, lack of fuel?) Do children get involved in food preparation? At what age?
- **WHAT CHILDREN EAT:** What are the most common foods, what are special foods? Do children eat the same things as adults? What amounts are children given? (Age, girls, boys?) Do caregivers feel children get enough food? Any changes in children's diet?
- **WHO FEEDS CHILDREN AND HOW OFTEN:** Who is responsible for feeding children at different ages? When do they start to feed themselves? Do caregivers supervise when they are eating? Are children encouraged to eat, or left to themselves? How often do they eat? Are there set mealtimes? Do children have snacks between meals? Do they get food on demand?

- **CHILD NOT EATING:** What happens if a child doesn't want to eat? If parents are worried that a child is malnourished, what do they do?
- **WHAT ARE MEALTIMES LIKE:** Does the household eat together? Is there any feeding order? Do different family members get different amounts, different foods? Is there any interaction during meals? Is it an enjoyable time? Are there rules for children's behaviour during meals?

Methods

Figures

Check at local as well as district level for weight and height figures. Do families have records? If there is no local monitoring, and if children appear to be at risk for under-nutrition, team members should recommend attention to evaluation.

Key informants

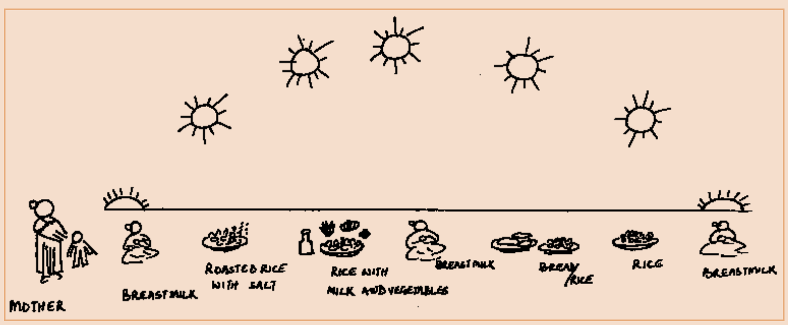
Speak to health workers about children's nutritional status. Are any local children seriously malnourished? Are there any local practices that are a problem? This can be part of a larger interview. Speak to whatever caregivers are responsible for feeding children, find out about their attitudes, daily feeding patterns, any concerns.

Visual methods

Using a Food Matrix

Ask people to list the foods children are given along one axis, and to indicate their value for children along the other axis (see page 50 under Pregnancy, above.) This could be done separately for children of different ages.

Using a Daily Timeline



- Indicate different times of day by drawing the position of the sun in the sky
- Show when children eat, and use symbols or objects to show what their meals consist of.
- Show who feeds children at different times of day.

This can be done for individual households or children during interviews, as well as being used with groups to show local norms.

Observation:

Observe food preparation and mealtimes. Look at the quantities given to children, the range of foods given. Differences for boys and girls, children of different ages? What kinds of interactions are there around eating? Are meals enjoyable for children? Notice whether children get food informally outside of mealtimes - are there frequent snacks, food on demand? Do they get food at other places in the community?

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Some points to consider

Be sure to get a clear sense of both what the ideal situation is considered to be (for instance, rice and beans three times a day, with vegetables whenever they are in season), as well as the kinds of compromises that may have to be made on a regular basis (perhaps children actually get beans with their rice only once a day during some parts of the year.).

Preventing illness and injury, and caring for sick children

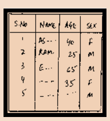
The quality of preventive and acute care is essential not only to children's health, but to their overall development. Sick children can also add significantly to the work and expense burden of caregivers, which can, in turn, make a difference to the quality of care available to other children. Attention to health care, both in terms of services and education, can be an important component of programming.

Information to collect

- **PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE:** How good is preventive health care? Do people know about immunisation? Attitudes towards immunization? What proportion (girls/boys/ages) have been immunised? What type of immunisation? Do children have regular check ups? Who's responsible (in the family)? Are records kept?
- **BELIEFS AND PRACTICES:** Are there particular local beliefs and practices around preventive care? Special foods, infant massage, talismans, things to avoid, blessings necessary etc?
- **AWARENESS:** How good is local awareness of hygiene? Do people act on their awareness? What are the facilities available? Are children kept clean, given clean water to drink? (See also household setting on p53)
- **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Who is responsible for children's hygiene? Bathing? Toileting? Handwashing? How much time does it take? When do they become responsible for themselves? How do they learn?
- **PROBLEMS:** What are the most significant problems?
- **PROTECTION FROM INJURY:** What measures are taken to protect children from injury?
- **COMMON ILLNESS:** What illnesses are common for children? At what age? What time of year? How often? Preventable or non-preventable illnesses? How much illness in the last year? How life threatening?
- **COMMON INJURIES:** What are common injuries for children of different ages? Burns? Falls? Traffic related? How frequent? What circumstances? Different for boys and girls? Could they have been prevented?
- **WHO CARES FOR SICK OR INJURED CHILDREN?** What kind of care? At night? During the day? Does it depend on age/gender? Are children left alone? What home treatments? Are sick children expected to work? Rest?

- **TREATMENTS:** Are children taken for treatment? Under what circumstances? Who takes them? Where? Health post? Pharmacy? Traditional healer? Other? Medications?
- **GENDER DIFFERENCES:** Any evidence of differential treatment for boys and girls?
- **BELIEFS AND PRACTICES ABOUT TREATMENT:** How is prevention or treatment affected by local beliefs? Is there any confusion about the best sources of treatment, e.g. indecision about whether to go to a health centre or a local healer?
- **COST:** How much time/energy/ money do children's illnesses cost the family?
- **PARENTAL ILLNESS:** To what degree does parental or other family illness illness interfere with child care?

Methods



Figures

Find local, district figures on mortality, morbidity, injuries. Establish local health care service availability and costs.

Key informants

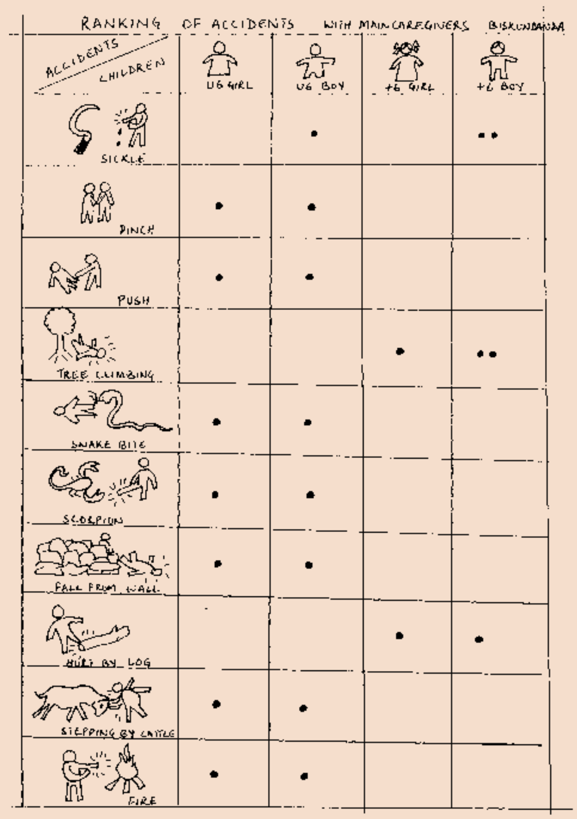
Health workers, traditional healers, parents and other caregivers.

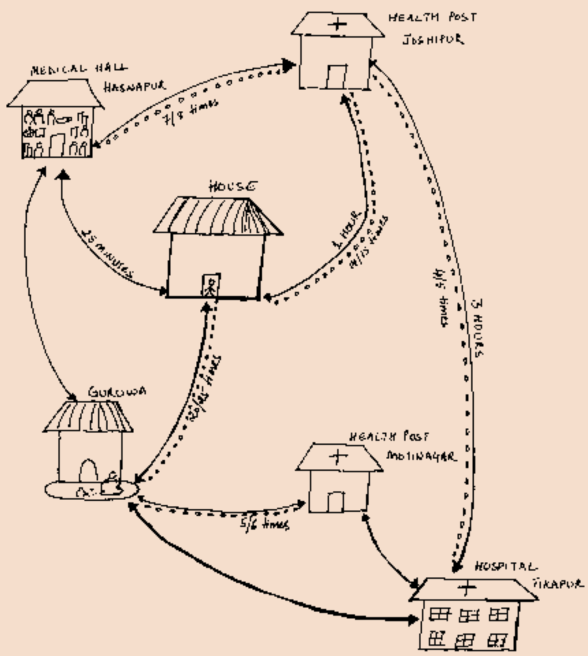
Interviews with health workers and healers for an overview of local health problems, preventive practices, health care availability and local responses to what is available; with parents for a sense of household practices, problems and coping strategies.Group discussion for local norms and perceptions.

Visual methods

Using a Disease and Accident Ranking

Using symbols or objects, show what the most prevalent diseases and accidents are, ranking them in terms of their frequency, and indicate what age groups they most affect. If there are seasonal variations, this could be combined with a Seasonal Calendar (see page 42) showing the times of year when diseases and accidents are most prevalent.





Using a Health Service Map

Indicate where the various health services are located, how long it takes to get there, when they are open, what services are provided, what the costs are. With parents, also get an indication of which services they make use of, in which situations, and why.

Observation:

Observe local hygiene practices, and see how they match people's awareness of preventive health measures. Are children actually encouraged to wash hands after defecating or before eating?

When children are sick, watch how they are cared for, who cares for them. Are there any special treatments, home remedies etc?

Observe interactions at local health services. Are people treated with respect, made to feel welcome? Are they making use of services that they haven't mentioned - for instance patent medicine dealers, traditional healers?

Children's play and work

Play is an essential component of children's development and growing competence. In many cases it is hard to draw a line between work and play for children of this age, since much of their play consists of imitating the activities of those who are older. Although for some young children work can be a burden that interferes with their right to play and learn, for many others it is an important source of learning and enjoyment, an avenue to competence and self worth. ECD programming can be shaped in response to children's opportunities (or their absence) in these areas.

Information to collect

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- **WHERE DO YOUNG CHILDREN SPEND THEIR DAYS:** Do they stay near or go far from the house? Alone, in groups or under supervision? Boys/girls? Different age groups? Any places they are not allowed to go and why?
- **PLAY OPPORTUNITIES:** What range of play opportunities do their environments offer them? Space? Other children? Stimulating possibilities? (e.g. things to climb, materials to play with such as earth, water, stones, toys, household materials)
- **WHAT FACTORS INTERFERE WITH PLAY:** Safety, lack of space, neighbours, parents?
- **TYPES OF PLAY:** What kinds of play are children involved in? Boys/ girls? Different ages? Physical play? Pretense? Quiet play? Alone and with others? Games of skill? Making things? Imitation of adult activity? Language games?
- **LEARNING THROUGH PLAY:** What do children appear to be learning through their play? Physical skills? How to think? Getting along with other people? Solving problems? Learning about their local environment? Learning how to work?
- **PERCEPTIONS OF PLAY:** Do parents consider playing to be important for their children? Why? How? What kinds of play? At what ages? If they say play is not important, ask why they think children play, and whether it has any benefits?
- **SUPPORT TO PLAY:** How do parents support their children's play? Making them toys? Playing with them? Providing opportunities?
- **DEFINITION OF WORK AND PLAY:** How do parents define the difference between work and play? Is it a clear line? Are there areas that could be either one? (for instance, in some places caring for younger siblings is not seen as work, since children are playing at the same time.)
- **TAKING ON RESPONSIBILITIES:** When (at what age) are children expected to start to take responsibility, other than caring for themselves?What kinds of responsibilities? What would come first? Some examples: watching younger siblings; running errands; helping around the house; work outside the house? Differences for boys and girls? What other changes, new skills?

- **TRANSITION FROM PLAY TO WORK:** When and how do children themselves experience the transition from play to work? Are children eager or reluctant to take on responsibility for work? Who? What kinds of work? Under what circumstances?
- **TYPES OF WORK:** What are the kinds of work that children do? Girls? Boys? Different ages? Different groups?
- **LEARNING ABOUT WORK:** How do children learn to work? Girls? Boys? By watching? By playing? By being taught? Who teaches them?
- **LEARNING FROM WORK:** What do children learn from work? Particular skills? Taking responsibility? Making decisions?
- **WORK LOAD:** To what extent does work interfere with play, learning , health, rest? Is this considered a problem? How do children respond? When are children able or expected to do adult work?

Methods

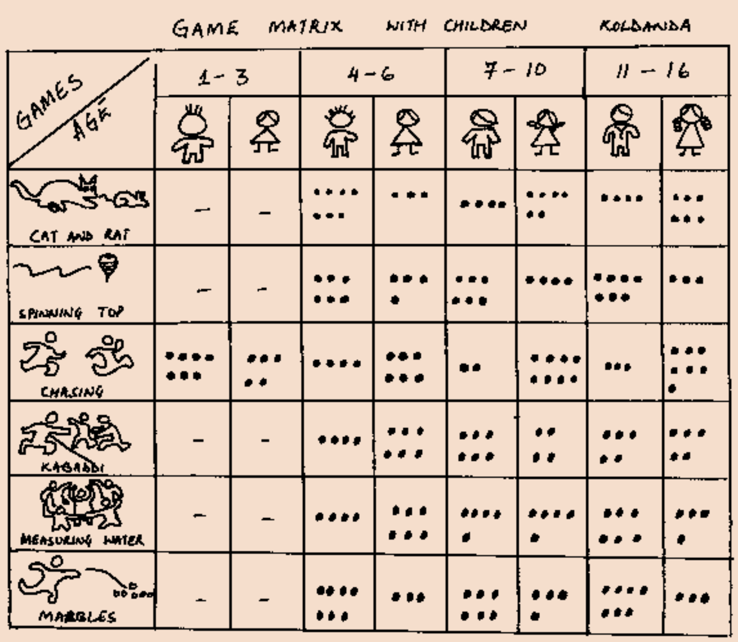
Key informants

Children, parents, other caregivers. It is particularly important that you obtain the perspectives of men as well as women on the issue of children's work.

Visual methods

Using a Games Matrices

Interviews and group discussions can be supported by various matrices - for instance, showing the kinds of play and games that are enjoyed by children of different ages, boys and girls; and the kinds of work most frequently done, also by age and sex. Try to get a range of perspectives on play and its importance, on work and how people feel it affects children.



Observation:

Observe children at play, notice what kinds of play girls and boys do at different ages. Take photos/video, record songs. What are their interactions while playing - between children, between children and adults? Do parents support children's play? How? What restrictions are there are on play, especially for girls? Are there any props for play such as toys or smaller/safer versions of tools that children are allowed or encouraged to play with? Do parents/grandparents play with their children? Remember that this may not always be accessible to observation because it could be at quiet times of night or early morning away from view of strangers.

Watch children at work. What are they doing at different ages? Do they appear to enjoy what they're doing? Are they eager to learn new skills? Does work appear to be a source of pride? Are they allowed to play as they work (for example, if they are herding cattle, are they able to go along with other children and play while the cattle graze?) Do they have to be forced to work? Are they frequently scolded?

School

The availability and quality of local schooling affects the plans that parents have for their children and has significant implications for ECD provision. If programming is to serve as an effective bridge to the world of school, it must respond to some degree to the expectations that will be placed on children when they enter.

Information to collect

- **AVAILABILITY:** What is the local availability of schooling? Where? How many schools? For what ages? What costs?
- **ENROLLMENT AND ATTENDENCE:** What percentage of local school age children are enrolled in school? What percentage actually attends regularly? From what age? Girls/ boys/children with disabilities/ different groups (ethnic, religious, wealth etc)?
- **REASONS FOR NON-ENROLLMENT:** What are the factors that most affect whether or not parents enroll their children? Cost, distance, perception of quality, children's workloads, child's sex, ethnicity etc?
- **REASONS FOR LACK OF ATTENDENCE:** What affects attendance? Distance, reluctance to attend, lack of interest, workloads at home? What difference for girls and boys, different groups? Different times of year?
- **DROP OUTS:** What are the drop out and failure rates? Reasons? Boys/girls/ different groups?
- **STUDENT TEACHER RATIO:** What is the ratio of teachers to students? Men, women? From inside the community or outside? Are there problems with teacher attendance?
- **SCHEDULE:** What is the school schedule? What time does it open? Lunch? When do children return home? What times of year is it open/closed? How does the schedule relate to children's work burdens?
- **QUALITY:** How are classrooms and the school equipped? Amount of space, water and sanitation, outdoor play space, tables, chairs, equipment, books and learning materials? How crowded are classrooms?
- **APPROACH TO EDUCATION:** What is the approach to education? Rote learning or learning by doing? Teacher in front, or circulating? Pupils just listening to teacher, or working on projects? Pupils working alone or in groups? Questions allowed ? Discussion encouraged? Set curriculum?
- **LOCAL LANGUAGE:** Is school conducted in the local language? If not, what support and preparation do children receive? Is there more than one local language?
- **DISCRIMINATION:** Do different ethnic/religious groups attend the school? Are there tensions? Do they get along well? What role does the school play in supporting cooperation or discrimination?

- **ATMOSPHERE:** What is the atmosphere in the grade one class? Is there time for play? Any art, music, drama? What are interactions like between children and the teacher? Same for girls and boys? Different groups?
- **CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS:** What do children like/dislike about school? Girls/boys?
- **TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS:** What are teachers' perceptions of strengths and weaknesses in the school?
- **PARENT'S PERCEPTIONS:** What are parents' perceptions of the school and the teachers? Do they approve of the schooling their children getting? Are they involved in managing the school? Do they go to meetings? Do they feel comfortable talking to teachers, asking questions?
- **HOMEWORK:** Do children have adequate time/space/support for doing homework? Girls/boys?
- **SCHOOL AND WORK:** What is the relationship between school and work for children?

Methods

Key informants

Parents, children, teachers, school head. Interview the first grade teacher especially on the approach to learning, the readiness of children for school, the problems experienced, the kinds of supports that would be helpful. With parents, interview on attitudes towards schooling, the difficulties in sending children, the quality of the schooling, relationship to teachers.

Visual methods

Using a Drawings

In group sessions with children, focus on their experience of school, using drawing if helpful to encourage discussion.

Using a Map

Refer back to the community's social map with children. (See p39) This will provide an opportunity to learn how children get back and forth to school, and to discuss how this relates to other demands on parents and child caretakers.

Observation:

Get permission to sit in the first grade classroom (and others if there is time) - observe the physical conditions, the quality and number of books and other learning materials available, the level of interest and involvement on the part of children, the interactions between teachers and children, how discipline is handled, any evidence of discrimination against girls or particular children? Watch children playing or waiting outside the school, what they do, how they interact, what involvement there is on the part of teachers.

Observation in school

Ask an older sibling in the house where you are staying if you can accompany him to school one day. Take notes while you are there, and write down all the questions you have to ask him when school is over for the day. Did he understand the teacher's explanation of electricity? Could he explain it to you now? Why did none of the children ask questions? Did they understand everything? Were there any questions he would have liked to ask? Why was the girl in the blue dress crying? What was the game he was playing during the break? Why was there a group of boys standing and watching instead of playing? Did they not want to play or were they not invited? Why not? Do the girls always play their own games? What would happen if they wanted to play with the boys? Could he show you the homework he was assigned? How long does it usually take to do his homework? Is he able to finish it?

3. Beliefs, values, expectations

In order to understand local practices and to plan for programming, it is important to find out about a community's beliefs and values around child rearing, and the expectations they have of their children. An understanding of these values is likely to evolve in the course of discussion about daily realities and ways of dealing with children; you may find that many of the questions listed here already have quite clear answers. This can be a chance to cross check information, or to clarify points of confusion. In situations where community norms are not so clear, or are in a process of change, discussion of the following issues will be a good opportunity for community members to reflect on their values.

Table of Topics and Methods

TOPICS	METHODS	KEY INFORMANTS
	BELIEFS, VALUES, EXPECTATIONS	
CROSS GENERATIONAL CHANGE	Group discussion or individual interviews	Grandmothers, grandfathers Mothers, fathers
PERCEPTIONS OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT	Interviews and group discussions supported by *Child Timeline* Observations	Grandmothers, grandfathers Mothers, fathers
HOPES, CONCERNS AND EXPECTATIONS	Interviews and group discussions supported by *Concerns Matrices (e.g. people's hopes for their children, important characteristics for children to have, important things for children to learn)* Observations	Mothers, fathers Groups of people separated by age and gender Older children
PERCEPTIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS	Interviews and group discussions supported by *Entitlements Matrix* Observations	Mothers, fathers Groups of different age and gender Older children

Responding to change

All over the world, people face social, economic and even geographical change because of the pressures of globalization, and also as a result of war, migration and natural disasters. Both gradual change and more dramatic upheavals demand changes in child rearing practices and values, as families adapt to new realities and attempt to prepare their children for a future that includes different pressures and opportunities from those that they have experienced themselves. Discussions with both parents and older people can give some indication of how families and the community are perceiving and coping with new realities.

Information to collect

- **MOST SIGNIFICANT CHANGES:** What are the most significant changes that people in this community have faced over recent years?
- **ARE THINGS EASIER OR MORE DIFFICULT THAN IN THE PAST:** Why? What has been the effect on how children are raised?
- **COMPARING PAST AND PRESENT CHILDHOODS:** How was the childhood of parents or older people in the community different from the experience of children today? Family structure, livelihoods, care from caregivers, play, work, school, health, nutrition/food, safety, clothing, opportunities, traditions, relationships between generations, changes in media etc.
- **POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS:** What were the positive and negative aspects of the past? What about today? Have any practices or beliefs been lost? How do people feel about this?
- **WORRIES FOR THE FUTURE:** Are parents/caregivers confused or worried about their capacity to prepare children for their lives, or to understand their needs?
- **TENSIONS:** Are there tensions within households as a result of changing values and realities? Are there disagreements within families about how children should be brought up? Within the community? Does the younger generation have a different set of expectations?
- **REMEMBERING CHILDHOOD:** Do people remember their own childhoods and what made them happy or unhappy? Do they think this has changed? Do they feel they understand their children?
- **COMPARING PAST AND PRESENT CHILD REARING:** Is there anything old people would have done differently in raising their children? If they were raising children now, how would they respond to changes in society? For those who are parents of young children now, will they raise their children differently from the way they were raised? How? Why?
- **PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE:** What are the different things children need now in order to prepare them for the future? What do parents say about this, what do older people say, what do older children say?
- **SUPPORT OUTSIDE THE FAMILY:** What role do people feel that local groups, outside organizations or government agencies should have in responding to the needs of children and families?

Methods

Key informants

Grandparents and older people in the community, parents, older children.

Ask older people to reflect back on their own childhoods, and on their own experience raising children in order to compare with their observations of how children are raised today. Ask parents about the kinds of confusion they face in bringing up their children, and about conflicts in values within the community and household. Ask older children about their understandings of changing social realities, and the implications for their own lives. Although all the questions above can also be a part of individual interviews, if you work with groups divided by age and gender, and in mixed age groups, this can provide an opportunity to compare perceptions and discuss values.

Perceptions of child development

Parents and communities have certain understandings of children's development. This influences the kinds of supports they offer their children, and the expectations they have of them. Sometimes these perceptions are shaped by necessity - for instance, children are often believed to be capable of responsibility earlier in communities where their help is sorely needed. Programming should be relevant to parents' beliefs about what their children are capable of and can benefit from, if they are going to support it.

Information to collect

- **WHAT ARE THE FACTORS THAT HELP TO DETERMINE WHAT KIND OF PERSON A CHILD BECOMES?** (rely on these prompts only if necessary) Karma? God's will? The child's nature? The inherited qualities of the parents or ancestors? What the child has been taught? What happens to the child throughout his or her life? What the child did in a past life? The deeds of the parents or ancestors?
- **DEFINITION OF CHILDHOOD:** How is childhood defined in the community? When does childhood end? Are there different terms or names for children of different ages? Is it different for boys and girls? When are children accepted as adults?
- **WHAT KINDS OF CHANGES DO CHILDREN EXPERIENCE AS THEY GROW OLDER?** How do their capacities change in various areas? Physical changes? Level of dependence on others? Quality of understanding? Ability to solve problems? Capacity to deal with others? Ability to regulate their own behaviour? To contribute to the family? To take part in religious activities? Other factors? Are some of these changes considered more significant than others? Is it different for different children?

- **SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT:** What do parents/caregivers do to support development and growth in these different areas?
- **CHARACTERISTICS:** What are the characteristics that children acquire over time that indicate they are developing as expected?
- **DESCRIBING CHANGES:** Describe the changes occuring in each of the areas that people identify. For instance, if level of dependence is an important facet of development: how long are children completely dependent on other people? When are they expected to begin to be able to do things for themselves? Eating? Dressing and washing themselves? Toileting? Working? Is it different for boys and girls? What else are children learning, and how are they changing, during these periods? What other skills are they acquiring? What other changes are they experiencing?

- **HELPING LEARNING:** How do people believe that they can help children to learn new things?
- **FACTORS AFFECTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT:** Are there factors besides age or gender that determine when children are expected to be able to manage various things? Do family resources make a difference? The number of family members? Does it depend on the individual child?
- **WHAT FACTORS INFLUENCE WHEN CHILDREN MOVE FROM ONE PHASE OF LIFE TO ANOTHER?** Community norms? Religious beliefs? Same for all children? Depends on the family's needs? Depends on the child's position in the family? Depends on size and physical development? The child's intelligence? Depends on when the child wants to take on new things? Depends on the support from other people?
- **LIFE RITUALS:** Are there any formal celebrations or markers to indicate that a child is ready to move to a different stage? Boys/girls? Why are they important? What differences do they mark in a child's life?
- **VARIATIONS IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT:** Is there a lot of variation in the rate or the way that children develop? How? Why?
- **DELAYS AND DISABILITY:** How do people tell whether a child is developing normally or not? What are considered to be the reasons for any delays or disabilities? How do people respond to children's delays? How do they care for children with disabilities? What is the attitude of the family, other children, the community to a disabled child? Why?

Methods

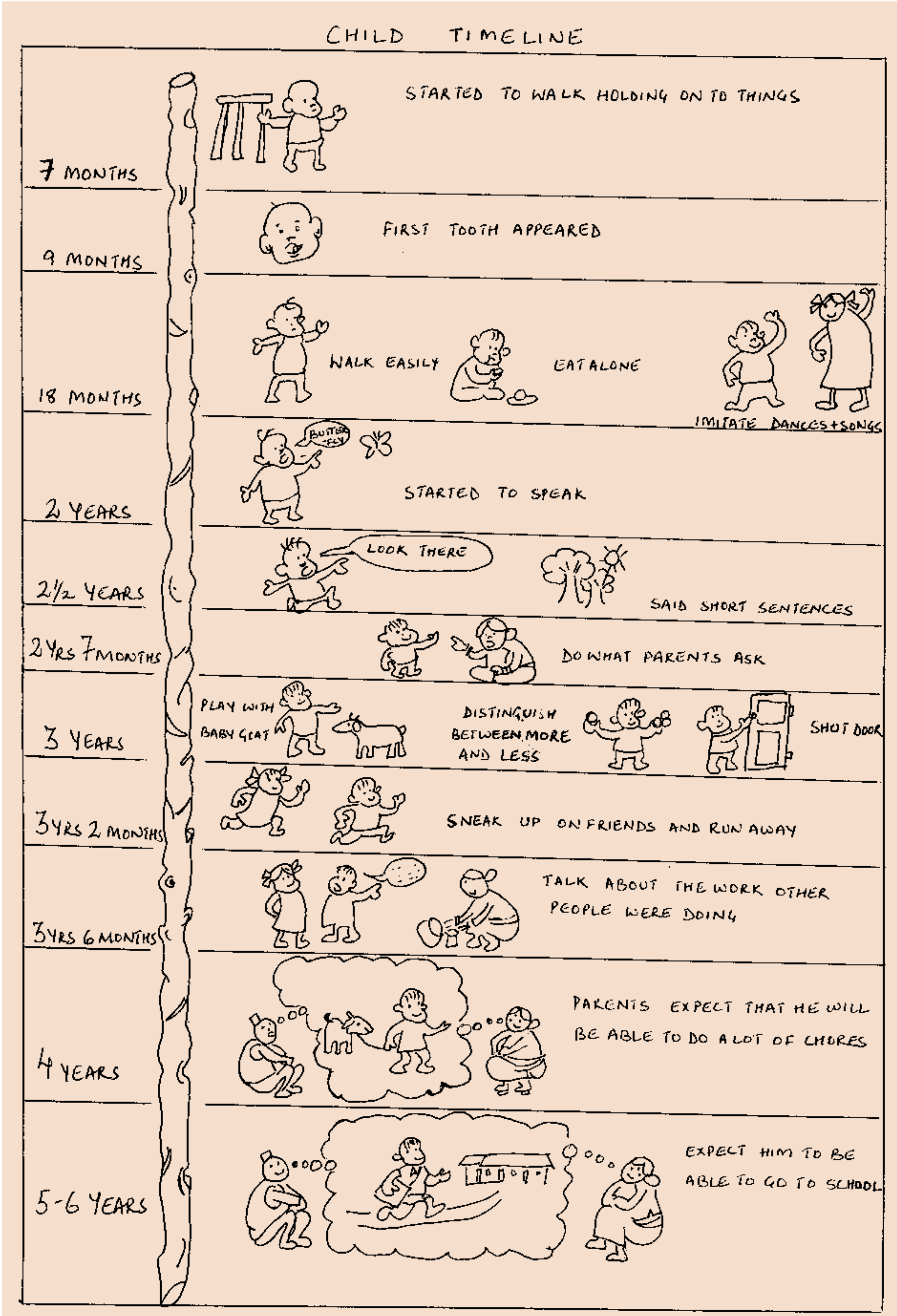
Key informants

Interviews with parents, grandparents, and discussions with different groups within the community. Do men and women have different ideas? Do different ethnic groups vary in their perceptions?

Visual Methods

Using a Child Timeline:

Draw a long line. At the beginning put the child's birth; at the end, the age when the child is considered to be an adult. Show on the line all the important things that happen in between - what they learn how to do, important turning points, celebrations etc. This can be done for individual children or to show more general community norms. For individual children, the line can end with the child's present age - or it can continue, and show the parents' expectations of what will happen in the future.


CHILD TIMELINE
7 MONTHS
STARTED TO WALK HOLDING ON TO THINGS
9 MONTHS
FIRST TOOTH APPEARED
18 MONTHS
WALK EASILY
EAT ALONE
IMITATE DANCES+SONGS
2 YEARS
BUTTER-FLY
STARTED TO SPEAK
2½ YEARS
LOOK THERE
SAID SHORT SENTENCES
2 YRS 7 MONTHS
DO WHAT PARENTS ASK
3 YEARS
PLAY WITH BABY GOAT
DISTINGUISH BETWEEN MORE AND LESS
SHUT DOOR
3 YRS 2 MONTHS
SNEAK UP ON FRIENDS AND RUN AWAY
3 YRS 6 MONTHS
TALK ABOUT THE WORK OTHER PEOPLE WERE DOING
4 YEARS
PARENTS EXPECT THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO DO A LOT OF CHORES
5-6 YEARS
EXPECT HIM TO BE ABLE TO GO TO SCHOOL

Observation

Observe what children are doing at different ages, what level of responsibility they are taking, the ways in which they depend on others. How long are they carried, when do they start wandering around alone, when do they start working? What expectations do people appear to have for children of different ages? Look for variations in the community, and ask questions about why it's different with different children.

Asking about perceptions of children's development:
Sit with the women who are shelling beans while children are playing nearby. Ask for their thoughts about different children: "That small girl who is playing jacks with the older girls - she seems to be able to manage very well. Is that unusual for someone her age? Does she really understand the game, or are the others just being patient with her? Can she really count the stones? What other skills does she need for the game? When do children usually have the skills they need for this game? How much does it vary from one child to another? Is it the same with other skills too?"

Points to consider

Because the attempt is to understand people's own perceptions, it is important to try not to not to bias the discussion by asking about indicators routinely used in the formal ECD world. Researchers should let people share what they think are important events marking children's lives - which may be physical changes, rituals, or growing competencies in a range of areas. However, use probes if necessary to ensure that the question is broadly understood: for instance "Are there other skills or capacities that children acquire as they get older? "Are there moments as a child gets older when any new skills, capacities or responsibilities are recognized by people in the community? Tell me all the changes that occur in the first year of life? All the ways that a ten year old is different from a two year old?"

Hopes, expectations and worries

Parents' goals for their children may be as basic as trying to ensure that they will survive their early years. When survival is not the overriding issue, however, their concerns are likely to focus more around their children's long term success and their adherence to local norms of behaviour and achievement. These goals, expectations and worries have important implications for programming.

Information to collect

- **CONCERNS:** What are people most concerned about for their children? What opportunities do they want them to have, what are the basic things they want to provide for their children?
- **QUALITIES:** What qualities do parents want to encourage in their children? What characteristics do they value in girls and boys? (Encourage them to name characteristics or traits - but not by giving them the words. Instead say for example, "You say you want your children to be more hard-working - what else? Anything more? Can you say what other qualities would be good?)
- **HOW DO PEOPLE FEEL THESE QUALITIES ARE BEST ENCOURAGED?** Can parents and others help children to develop these qualities? How? Girls, boys?
- **WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT THINGS FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN? FOR GIRLS, BOYS?** For children with disabilities? Why? How can they be supported to learn these things? Who helps them? What should they know how to do by the time they start school?
- **DISCIPLINE:** Is discipline important? Why? What kinds of discipline? From whom? What do people think about different kinds of discipline and how it effects children? Persuasion, threats, beating, withholding food etc.
- **HOPES:** What are people's hopes for their children's future? Why? For girls? For boys? Do children share these goals?
- **GENDER DIFFERENCES:** Do people have different goals for their sons and daughters? What and why?
- **HOW REALISTIC DO THEY FEEL THEIR HOPES ARE?** Depends on resources? Depends on parents' efforts? Children's efforts? A matter of luck or chance?
- **SUPPORT:** How do parents feel they can support their hopes or expectations for their children?
- **CONSTRAINTS:**What are the things that get in the way? What makes it difficult to achieve their goals?
- How do they respond to these difficulties? To what extent are their hopes shaped by the difficulties they experience?
- **WORRIES:** What are the things that parents worry about most for their children? For girls? For boys? For children of different ages?
- **DIFFERENT GOALS:** Do men and women, different groups, or even different households differ in the goals and expectations they have for children? If so, do they have explanations for the differences? Do they have different ways of supporting their expectations?
- **CHANGES:** Have goals, expectations or sources of anxiety changed in recent years? If so, how? Why? Are these changes reflected in daily practices?

Key informants

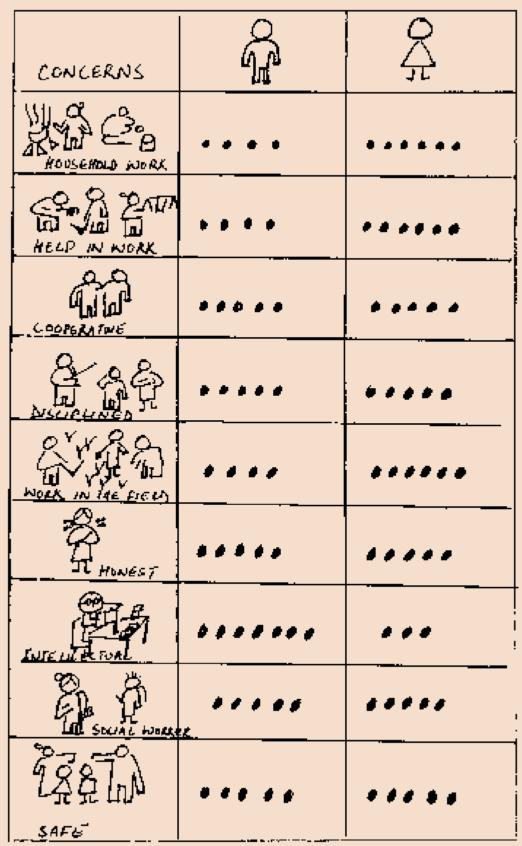
Individual parents, both mothers and fathers; groups of people separated by age and gender ideally to reflect differences and changes in values; older children. Try to get a sense of the variation that exists in the values and concerns of different households, different groups, different generations.

Visual Methods

Using a Concerns Matrix

Interviews and group discussions can both be supported by various visual Concerns Matrices. Each matrix can focus on different things but they are all organized the same way:

1) people's hopes for their children;
2) important characteristics for children to have;
3) important things for children to learn by the time they start school),
4) chief sources of anxiety about children -



- Make a list of the relevant items - for instance, people's hopes might include health; getting a good education; getting a good job, marrying well, being a good person.

- Ask them to select symbols to represent each of these items and put them along a line that runs up and down.

- Ask them to select symbols for a girl and a boy and draw them on a line that runs along the top of the matrix.

- Ask them to indicate with a number of seeds or other small items how important each item is for boys and for girls - for instance, people might put down many seeds to indicate the importance of education for boys, but fewer for girls.

- When the matrix is finished, help people compare and contrast (for instance: "According to this matrix, education appears to be more important for a boy than a girl? Why is that? Is it the same in every family?" Or, on a characteristics matrix, "Obedience seems to be more important for both boys and girls than doing well in school. Why is that? What is likely to happen to a disobedient child?)

Observation

Try to see whether the concerns people say they have for their children are reflected in practice. For example, if they say education is a major concern, are their children actually going to school or not? If not, why not? If cooperation is valued as a trait, what examples of cooperative arrangements are there in the community and how are children encouraged to learn from them? Does children's behaviour reflect the kinds of traits that people value? How does it change with age? How is different for girls and boys? Think of more questions to ask people later on to try and understand how they encourage different traits in their children. If they value cooperation, for instance, you might ask them how community disputes are settled and how this provides an example for children?

Some points to consider

- In discussing the important things for children to learn, focus broadly on the full range of skills that are considered necessary for getting along in the world, both in practical and social terms; for instance, learning how to behave with older people, learning how to harvest rice, as well as things like literacy.
- Focus on the kinds of changes that are taking place in the life of the community, and the way these changes are affecting people's hopes and expectations and the things they find important for their children to learn. Are people aware of changing circumstances, and the implications they will have for their children?

Perceptions of children's rights or entitlements

The discussion of parents' hopes and concerns for their children may lead to a very clear understanding of what they want for their children. On the other hand, it may reveal more clearly what parents want from their children. The following list of questions might help to elicit a sense of what children themselves are entitled to hope for. Parents' and communities' perceptions of children will affect they way they respond to programming, and the way potential programming is presented and discussed.

Information to collect

- **HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOUR CHILDREN ARE HAPPY/CONTENT/DOING WELL?** What are the things necessary to make your children happy/content/doing well?
- **WHAT ARE THE THINGS THAT CHILDREN DESERVE OR NEED TO HAVE IN THEIR LIVES?** (Find a way to phrase this question that makes sense locally. Use prompts only if it's difficult to get responses) To survive? To be healthy? To have a family? To be loved? To have a good place to live? Not to be frightened? To play? To have friends? To learn the things they need for survival? To learn the right behaviour? To get an education? To say what they think? To be respected? What else?
- **DIFFERENCES:** Is this the same for every child? For boys and girls? For children of different ages? For children from different groups? For children with disabilities?
- **IMPORTANCE OF CHILDREN'S NEEDS:** Are the needs of children more or less important than the needs of other people? What age deserves the most consideration? Why?
- **WHAT DO PARENTS OWE TO THEIR CHILDREN?** Is it a duty to care and provide for children? If so, where does this duty come from? Religion, the law? Or do parents do it only because they love them?
- **WHAT DO COMMUNITIES OWE TO THEIR CHILDREN?** Do people have any responsibility to children who are not their own?

Methods

Same as above for Hopes, expectations and worries (See p83). A Concerns Matrix can be used here too, to indicate the various entitlements that people see children as having, and their importance relative to one another, and for both boys and girls.

A sample research plan with a rural community

An organisation is working with local ngos to improve the situation of children in a rural area. The local ngo in the course of its work in the district has identified a particularly poor community, of predominantly low caste people with very few livelihood opportunities and services. NGO representatives make an initial visit to the village to discuss the communities main concerns and the work of the ngo. The community requests the ngo to work with them and agrees to the ngo carrying out research to understand the current situation of children in the village . The project staff gather records from district level and from the village relating to health centre, school etc and set up living arrangements for the 4 researchers who will be living in the village and make arrangments for a community meeting with the researchers on first day of their arrival .

DAY	INTRODUCTORY MEETING	WHO WITH
1	Discussion about local conditions *Social map* *Observation walk* around the village	Community - men, women, girls, boys
2	Key informant interview -village politics, social structure, livelihoods, market -services, particularly for children	Village political and traditional leaders
	Key informant interview - situation, opportunities and problems of children (child care, children's work, school and play) -situation of school , enrollment, attendance	School teachers
	Key informant interview -health situation - services,	Traditional birth attendant, traditional healer neighbouring village health post worker (3 hours walk)
	Key informant interview -opportunities and problems of child care -services relating to children	Mother's group leader
	-Well being ranking	4 well informed community members (2 men/ 2 women)
	Identification by team from well being ranking and social map of households in different situations in village -2 poorest -2 female headed -2 wealthiest	
3	-Community meeting to discuss and agree selection of households for study. -Discussion on changes over the year, workloads by age and gender, how cope with difficult times and what implications for children are *-Seasonal calendar* -Observation	Men, women, girls and boys All family
4 & 5	Team analysis of background information	

DAY	ACTIVITY	WHO WITH
6	Teams move to stay with their households -daily routines and responsibilities discussion *-Who does what in child care matrix* -observation- *Disease and accident matrix- Interaction Venn*	First 2 households.
	Daily routines and responsibilities discussion *Who does what in child care matrix* Observation	Mixed community group - men, women, girls and boys
	Discussion on nutritional status, food and mealtimes *Food matrix (including pregnancy)* *Daily timeline* Observation	Community level - Main carers
	Evening discussions with households on daily routines and responsibilities *Food matrix* *Daily timeline*	Main carers in household
7	Household 24 hour observation	
8	Discussion on preventing illness and injury, and caring for sick children *Disease and accidents matrix* Health service map	Mixed community group - men, women, girls, boys
	Discussion on children's play and work *-play and games matrix* *-children's work matrix*	Community - Girls and boys
	Discussion on school	Community -Group of mothers and fathersSeparate group with children
	Evening discussion with households Core issues *-child timeline* *-concerns matrix* *-entitlements matrix*	All Family
9 & 10	Analysis of information so far	
11	-Cross generational change discussion group	Community Group of mothers and fathers Group of grandmothers and grand-fathers
	Discussion on child development *-child timeline*	Community Group of mothers and fathers
	Move to 2 new households Evening discussion on daily routines	All family 2nd 2 households.

DAY	ACTIVITY	WHO WITH
12	Group discussion on hopes, concerns, expectations *Concerns matrix* Observations Group discussion on entitlements Evening discusion with household food matrix and timeline observation	Community Group of mothers and fathers Group of girls and boys Community Group of mothers and fathersGroup of girls and boys Main carers in household
13	Discussion with household on core issues	All family
14	24 hour observation	
15	Analysis of hopes etc.	2 households
16	Move to 2 remaining households Discussion on daily routines *Food matrix and timeline* observation	All family and main carers
17	24 hour observation	
18	Discussion with household on core issues Complete any remaining discussions	All family
19	Complete analysis and report writing	
20, 21 & 22	Community dialogue	

PART THREE

ANALYSIS AND DIALOGUE

Part three: Analysis and Dialogue

Analysis is a process that reduces hours of conversation and observation, piles of notes, miles of film and tape into thoughtful conclusions that can be used for planning. It is not something that begins only when all the data is collected. It's an on-going process that starts when questions and issues are first considered, and that continues throughout the course of the research. As information is collected, thoughtful researchers form ideas and theories about the community, and these ideas are modified and refined with every new interaction. The analysis of qualitative data should be a kind of feedback loop - researchers think about what they are learning, discuss it with one another and with community members, and this begins to shape what they look for, and the questions they ask. An assessment of this kind can be planned in advance, but ideally the original design will be refined and improved by everything that people learn as the process continues.

This constant questioning process, a quality of interest that good researchers bring to their work, is an important part of analysis. When initial findings are assessed, summarized and brought back to the community, their reflections and responses contribute further to the process, providing new input, but also a new filter through which the researchers' ideas are passed. The final assessment builds on all that has gone before - and the process of reflection and analysis continues on through the planning of the programme.

Six Questions - a Rights-based Framework for Analysis

To simplify the complexity of the analysis process, we are suggesting an analytical framework that can assist both in reflection and in the organization of data. This framework is composed of six questions, five of which summarize the basic concerns of children's rights - survival development, protection and participation. This reflects commitment to early childhood programming as an integrated response to the rights of young children. A sixth question focuses on the practicalities of programming, and the potential supports or problems within the community.

Both the background context information and the information around actual childcare practices and beliefs is filtered through these questions. It is important to include both. More understanding is certainly needed of what is happening in young children's lives in terms of their daily interactions. We also need in the analysis to be relating this to the fact that childrearing is grounded in the larger context - in economic and social realities - environmental conditions, household structures, power differences, values and spiritual practices, and the pressures of social change.

The aim is to come to a better understanding of what needs to be happening at different levels. This will almost certainly involve areas such as strengthening caregiving practices, ensuring adequate childcare provision when caregivers in the family are working, etc. A rights perspective will also mean a concern with changing systems which exclude or marginalize some children. It may have implications for capacity-building support for the development of effective delivery mechanisms and advocacy voices at different levels. It may (as was found in the Nepal childrearing study) point to the need for work in the area of policy influence as well as community level activity.

Six Questions - a Rights-based Framework for Analysis

1. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY? What do the day's findings contribute to your understanding of the conditions that affect health and safety - environmental health, hygiene practices, nutrition, a chance to move around and exercise, local hazards, how well small children are supervised, what illnesses they are exposed to, what kind of care they get when ill or injured? For example, if you found there is a shortage of cooking fuel, what implications could this have for children's health? Are there differences for boys and girls?

2. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING? What have you found out about the conditions, practices and interactions that help children to learn - to think clearly, to express themselves, to become competent in a range of every day skills, to solve problems, to find out new things? For instance, if you have found that some families believe their children should be seen and not heard, how does this affect the opportunities for learning of those children? Are there differences for boys and girls?

3. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S SECURITY AND SENSE OF SELF WORTH? What circumstances or practices help children feel loved and secure, help them to develop a sense of self worth and confidence, allow them to become people who, in turn, can be aware of the needs of others? For example, if you have found that a certain caste is looked down on in the community, what does this mean to a young child who belongs to this caste? Are there differences for boys and girls?

4. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE? What have you found out about the interactions and situations that encourage children to get along with other people, to learn the local rules for behaviour, to take an active role in the world around them, to be a part of community life, to be able to express opinions, to make their own decisions, to be valued for what they can contribute? For instance, if you have seen a five-year-old girl jumping up repeatedly from her play to chase the chickens out of the family's kitchen garden, how does this relate to her role in the family and community? Are there differences for boys and girls?

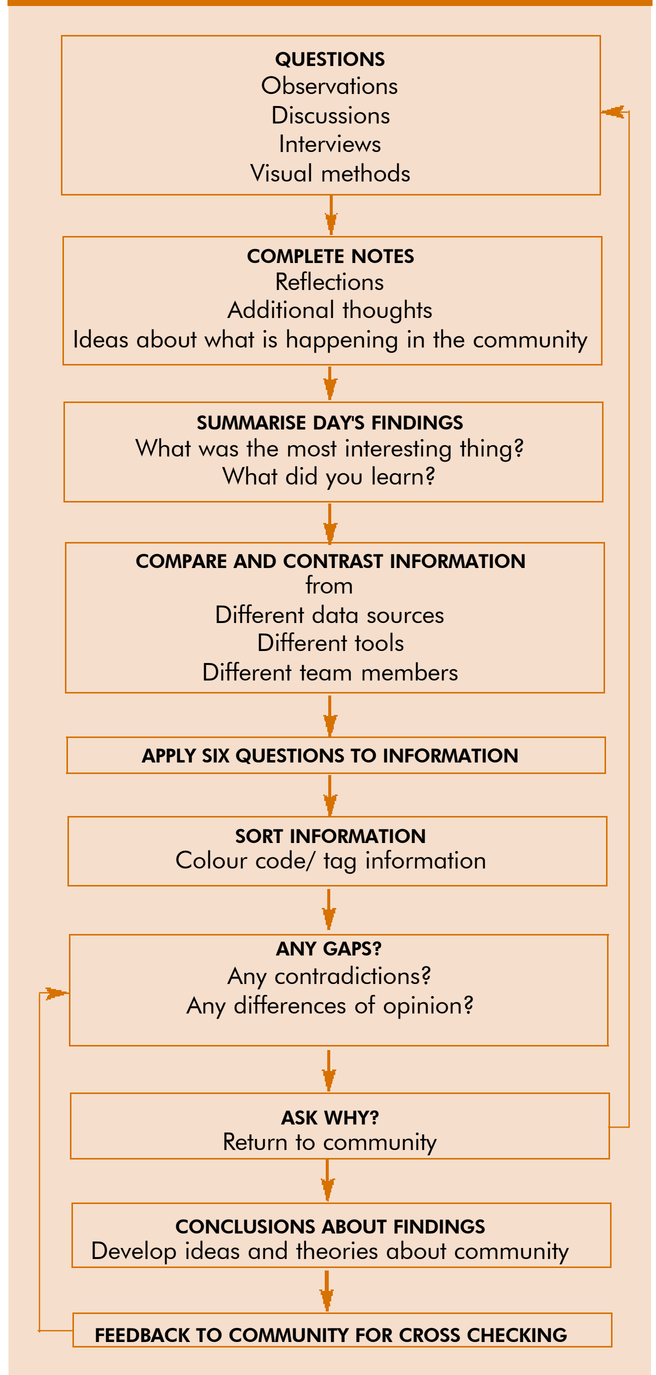
5. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PARENTS' CAPACITY TO SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT? What do the day's finding tell you about how well parents and other caregivers are able to provide for their children's needs? Their capacity to meet basic needs, the time they have available for childcare, their knowledge about hygiene, nutrition, their access to services. For instance, if it takes a mother five hours a day to fetch the water necessary for the household, what are the implications for her young children?

6. WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING? What have you found out that might suggest the need for an ECD programme or that will help or hinder an ECD programme? Political supports, available space, other organizations whose work might be supported, local human and material resources? For instance, if a local grandmother cares for a number of neighbours' children every day, how might her work be supported, or how might she be included in whatever programming is planned? What are the implications for other kinds of institutional supports for children?

Daily reflection and analysis

A review of each day's activities is critical to the success of the research. Reflecting on information, sorting it, comparing and contrasting it with the findings of the other team members, discussing its implications - all of this is just as important as collecting the information. Not only does this daily process contribute to the final understanding, but it also feeds back into the on-going information collection, clarifying what has been done and what needs to be done still, and shaping the next day's plans. Be sure to plan in enough time for this. Research can be exhausting work - and often the last thing researchers feel like is another few hours sorting notes by candlelight and discussing their work. Remember that this is not an "add-on", but a vital part of the process.

FLOW DIAGRAM OF ANALYSIS FEEDBACK LOOP: A process of constant questioning



Some practical guidelines

- Think over the day and see if your notes are complete. Add anything that seems to be missing - any thoughts or observations that you didn't have time to make during the day. Don't rewrite your notes unless they are completely unreadable. Your reflections on the day's experiences and on your notes are far more important than a neat version.
- Summarize the day's findings in your log book, trying to take no more than half an hour. Think about the implications for the research, and ask yourself these questions: What was the most interesting thing I learned? The most surprising? Are there any contradictions? What do I need to find out more about? Does any information need to be crosschecked? Does anything help to confirm what has been found before? Are any patterns emerging? Be sceptical about your own conclusions: if you have noted, for instance, that parents don't seem to talk to children except about work, ask yourself whether this might have something to do with it being the peak harvest season. Enter your summary in a daily log, or attach it to the day's notes. These summaries shouldn't be time-consuming formal reports - simple notes are sufficient.

- From time to time you should take a look back at your earlier log notes too. When you see interesting patterns you can begin to color code with crayons all that you have written in the past on a certain emerging theme of interest to you such as "What kinds of interactions do grandfathers seem to have with the children as compared to grandmothers?"
- Make sure all your additional data, visuals, tapes, films etc are labeled and dated, so that they can easily be identified later.
- Some of the richest observations are never recorded. Share your skills. When writing up notes is not a strength for some team members, be sure they relate their observations to those who can quickly and clearly jot them down. It can be helpful for team members to interview one another on their day's work. Always ask as many questions as you can, trying to uncover the subtleties in one another's findings.
- As a team, do a joint analysis of the day's findings. Discuss your day with the rest of the team. If you worked on the same thing, compare your perspectives on what happened. If you were involved in different activities, share your findings and your ideas about them. See if your ideas are confirmed by information others have collected. Discuss the effects your biases or assumptions might have had. Knowing that you will compare findings with your colleagues tends to make you more focused and alert in your work.
- Unless you have a different set of concerns, you may find it helpful to use the rights-based framework we are suggesting, and to discuss the implications of your observations, interviews and discussions for each of the six areas (see box on page 94).
- As you think about the day's findings through the lens of these questions, be sure to consider any contradictions that come up. Discuss how your findings relate to other findings in the same area. Consider what else you might need to find out.
- The outcomes of this daily analysis can be organized in various ways. You could use colored stickers to identify the particular pieces of data that have implications in particular areas; or you could keep separate files or notebooks on each of these six areas, writing up the day's analysis briefly, and indicating where supporting materials can be found. The implications of water supply on children's health, for instance, might be supported by an interview with a particular mother, in an observation recorded at a water point, in a map made indicating where the water points are, or in health post figures which indicate high levels of diarrhoea at certain times of year.
- It is possible that particular themes will emerge in certain communities that call for special attention in analysis. For instance, tensions between two different groups might have implications for all the areas listed above. As more evidence and perspectives are accumulated, it may become clear that it would be difficult to implement a programme requiring co-operation between members of these different groups. On the other hand, you may feel that a shared programme could be a way to encourage people to collaborate for the sake of their children. Either way, it will be important to continue focusing closely on this issue as you gather information and discuss it each day.
- When you have finished considering the day's work, make plans for the following day. Decide if enough information has been gathered in a particular area, or if more is needed, and adjust the next day's plans accordingly.

The first phase of analysis has been presented here as a daily activity. It's also possible that your team may find it more productive to spend less daily time on this, but to put aside a day every week to catch up together and to consider the implications of the information they have collected.

Completing the initial analysis

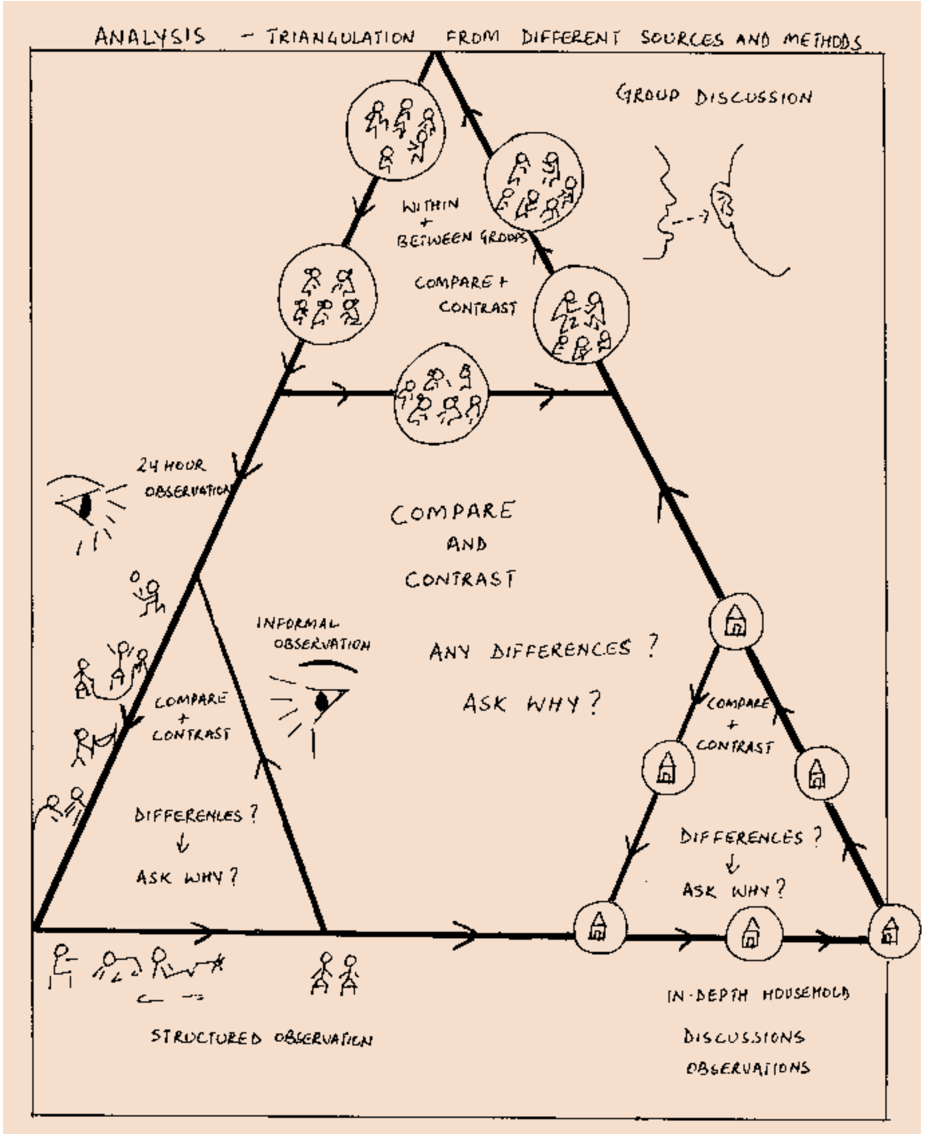
A skilled research team that has been able to organize and reflect on data on a daily basis may find that this process has taken them a long way towards completing a preliminary analysis. A few days of discussion may be all that is necessary in order to prepare their initial findings. In cases where team members find the process of analysis more challenging, extra time and support may be necessary to sift through the raw data and begin to organize it. Senior staff may also prefer to be involved in this phase of the research. Ideally, the project manager (if not already present) or other research advisors will join the team in the field at this point - although the team may also return to the home office. Depending on the scope of the research and the level of analysis that the team has been able to complete on its own, this process may take anywhere from several days to some weeks. If advisors do not speak the language that researchers have been working in, some attention will have to be given to translation at this point - finding the best way to make material available to all parties for the purpose of further analysis.

Interviewing researchers

An effective way for senior staff or advisors to assist the process of analysis, especially if it has not proceeded very far, is to "interview" the researchers as a team, allowing them to draw on their accumulated knowledge of the community, and on their own data for support and confirmation. Even when this is done, however, an effort should be made wherever possible to maintain the group process of analysis.

The questions listed under *Specific topics and methods* (page 35-86) could well serve as the interview questions, focusing on any topics that have been relevant to this particular project. This will encourage researchers to think broadly about their findings, which they can then substantiate by pointing to particular interviews or observations that led them to their conclusions (See page 98: Diagram on Traingulation). When there is general agreement on the scope of the findings around a particular issue, it is time to consider the implications for children and for potential programming, using the six questions (page 94) as a framework.

For instance, if the issue under discussion is the way child care responsibilities are shared in the community, team members and advisors could consider together the questions under *Child care roles and responsibilities* page 56. They could describe local norms and variations in response to each of these questions, pointing where appropriate to particsular conversations or observations. Perhaps they might note that in almost every discussion and inter-



view, mothers were described as the primary caregivers, but that in many households children in fact had a number of caregivers. A team member might produce notes from a day-long observation of a two-year-old, pointing out the number of family members and neighbours who had actually taken responsibility for him during the day. Perhaps they might note that those mothers who sell food at the nearby intersection have more casual arrangements for child care than those who worked further away, because they know they can be called if necessary.

Team members might have a difference of opinion on whether or not children of five or six are actually given full responsibility for younger siblings. One researcher might point to a number of situations in which children that age appeared to be in charge. Another might argue that, in fact, some older person was almost always nearby overseeing the situation; he might recall a specific occasion when a small child cut her leg, and a neighbour appeared almost immediately to help out. Once there is general consensus on the findings, team members could be led through a discussion of the implications of the level of care for children of different ages. What does it mean for their safety, for their learning opportunities, and so on. They might decide that children over about four years of age do very well with the level of care in this particular community, but that a lack of adequate supervision for two and three-year-olds leads to frequent accidents and injuries, and that a child care programme should certainly include these younger children.

Those staff members or advisors who are helping with analysis should be as challenging as possible, pushing for reasons, looking for discrepancies, asking for more examples to confirm hypotheses, and generally "interrogating" the data. "Yes, putting that one-year-old girl in a hammock for the morning *may* ensure her safety when her mother is away working. But what does it mean for her chances to play, learn and explore the world? Is she left in the hammock every day, or was this an unusual case? Is this common for other children also? How old are they usually? How long are they left alone? How did this child respond to being left alone? What happened when she was hungry? What does the mother feel about this arrangement? " Their questions are likely to spark researchers' memories of things they have seen and heard, and will bring a fresh perspective to various issues, helping to generate new hypotheses and to ensure the validity of old ones. The advisors presumably have more experience in the area of ECD programming and child development, and this will equip them to ask informed questions. Their questions may draw attention to things that the researchers may not have paid much notice to, but that they can easily recall when it is brought to their attention. There should always be an effort to ensure that ideas and findings are supported by information from more than one or two sources.

Pulling together an overview

Once all the issues and their implications have been thrashed out, it is time to pull together an overview of the work to date. Building on the analysis so far, team members and those supporting them should try to reach consensus on the initial findings in the following areas:

- local practices with regard to young children;
- local beliefs and values that affect children and their caregivers;
- factors that influence the capacity of parents and caregivers to provide for children;
- team perceptions of the implications of all the above for children's well being;
- community concerns with regard to their children;
- the implications of all the above for potential programming;
- factors within the community that might support or undermine potential programming;
- any points of confusion that still call for clarification.

All of these areas will be further explored during the process of community dialogue described below.

Community Dialogue and Moving towards Planning

Once information has been collected, it is possible that organizations may have no further contact with the community until they are actually ready to implement programming. We are suggesting instead that the initial findings be taken back to the community for a process of cross checking and discussion. This section describes this community dialogue process. The way that dialogue sessions are conducted will depend on the goals of the process as well as on a number of practical considerations.

Clarifying the objectives of the dialogue

Community participation is widely regarded as a key element of enlightened local development, and with good reason: interventions that are shaped and managed with community involvement are more likely to address real concerns, as well as having the potential to build community capacity in a range of ways.

In practice, however, organizations often work in fairly top-down ways. Sometimes this is because they feel that involving communities takes too long, but it may also be that they find the process more complex than they are equipped to handle well. For both sides, successful community participation requires learning, experience and committment.

Another practical concern is this: community control is not always the most effective starting point for addressing the needs of young children. Where it is not managed well, it can end up serving the interests of local power structures rather than the concerns of women and children. Focused support for early childhood development is an unfamiliar notion for many communities, and it may seem a low priority to community decision-makers compared to other pressing needs. Even when parents are worried about providing adequately for their children's needs and preparing them well for school, they may lack the confidence and knowledge to identify solutions or to act on their concerns. Especially in the context of rapid social change, parents may be unsure of their priorities and anxious for "expert" help. Experience has shown that outside organizations frequently need to take the initiative in this area. But they should always do so with a view to maximizing the role of local people. As community members gain familiarity with the potential of ECD, they may gain the confidence to take a more active role.

The process described in this handbook, and specifically in this Community Dialogue section, is one that can involve communities to a greater or lesser degree, taking into account the following factors:

- the level of organization within the community, and its capacity and confidence to negotiate its priorities with outside groups;
- the knowledge and conviction of the community on issues related to early childhood development and rights;
- the ability of the organization to facilitate and support community involvement and debate;

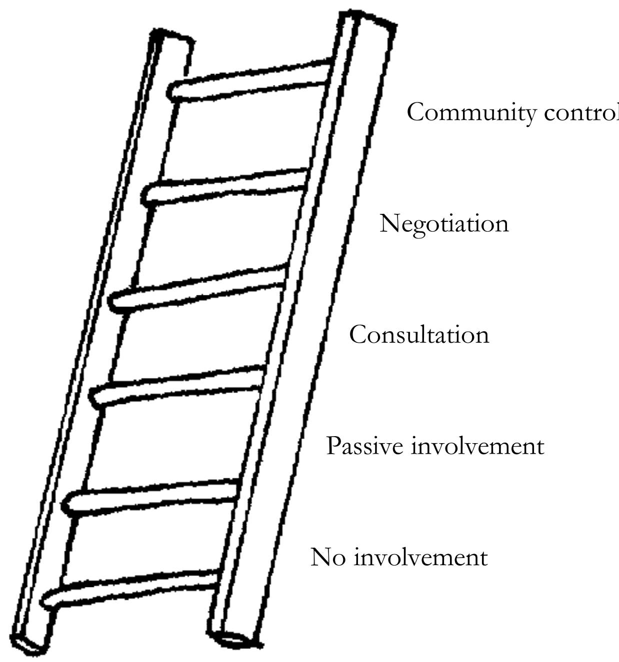
- the willingness and capacity of the organization to be flexible and responsive in its programming and interventions, and to work in close partnership with communities.

Depending on these factors, the community dialogue process may end with the first phase described below *(Cross checking information with the community),* or it may include other phases as well, involving the community more closely in reflection, discussion and possibly negotiation. We would encourage organizations always to take the most participatory route possible here, given their own capacity and that of the people they are dealing with locally. A community's approach to dealing with its young children is central to its identity and to the reproduction of its culture. Community members *should* ideally have a sense of control over, and commitment to, any programming that affects the lives of their children. Where there is confusion and uncertainty about the optimal ways to bring up children and prepare them for their lives, the role of a responsible organization should not be to contribute to this uncertainty by imposing unfamiliar and suspect practices.

Levels of community participation

A number of models are possible for this stage of the process, as indicated in very simplified terms in the ladder diagram.

1. **NO INVOLVEMENT:** The organization introduces its standard ECD programme, with no particular concern for local realities or priorities.
2. **PASSIVE INVOLVEMENT:** The organization (through the team) collects information from the community to inform its programme decisions, but does not involve the community in discussion about potential programming.
3. **CONSULTATION:** The organization engages in discussion with the community about their concerns and priorities, as well as those of the organization, and indicates how these factors might affect programming decisions.
4. **NEGOTIATION:** The community and organization together workout the ways in which the organization can best address the community's priorities.
5. **COMMUNITY CONTROL:** The community determines its own need for programming, and calls on the organization for technical support and advice.



Neither the first nor last steps are relevant to the concerns of this book - but we will consider how the other three models might be approached in the course of dialogue with the community.

Rather, they should be helping people to reflect on their values, to find the best ways to cope effectively with social change, and to maintain continuity. Where local practices violate children's rights or the organization's understanding of positive developmental support for children, these issues should be aired and discussed, always with an attempt to understand them within the broader context of local realities. Where local people are well organized and well aware of different values and practices in the wider world, they may have the confidence and conviction to negotiate the programming that best suits their needs. As long as their preferences do not defy the larger goals of the organization, it should be possible to work constructively from this starting point.

Logistics

Dialogue sessions will be shaped not only by the objectives, but also by various practical considerations, including the facilitation skills that are available, available space for meeting, the time that community members can spare, and the need to conduct the dialogue with separate groups.

Some factors to consider

- **WHOLE COMMUNITY OR SEPARATE GROUP:** There is much to be said both for and against working with a whole community at once, or with as much of it as is able to attend at any one meeting. An inclusive dialogue between community members and organization can more easily happen if the all sections of the community are represented. Disagreements among community members can more easily be made explicit if those who disagree are present at the same time. Realistically, however, this kind of meeting may not work out. It is likely to be difficult in settings where people are unaccustomed to large formal public meetings. It is also difficult to make such meetings truly inclusive in places where there are rigid hierarchies or distinct groups. There may be community members, for instance, (women, minorities, children) who find it intimidating, even impossible, to speak in large group meetings. It may be necessary and more productive to work separately with small groups in order to get a clear sense of their concerns. Even if people meet separately for initial meetings, however, efforts should be made to support their participation in any larger meetings, possibly by working ahead of time with a few people who can best represent their views. If the community is simply too large to allow for meaningful discussion in one group, it may also work well to meet in smaller neighbourhood units, and to have representatives of these units meet together at the end.

- **SCHEDULING MEETINGS:** Be sure that meetings are scheduled for a time and place that allows for participation by a maximum number of people. Don't choose a time, for instance, when most women are likely to be cooking the evening meal; or a place where only one religious group will feel welcome. In most settings, it should be possible to find a large enough place outdoors to meet. If weather or space make this difficult, a local school may serve as a good alternative. Tell community members about meetings well in advance, and be sure everyone knows that their input is valuable and that their presence is desired. It is especially important to ensure the attendance of as many as possible of the people who were interviewed or observed.

- **USE OF VIDEO:** A good way to stimulate interest in the meeting for a wider range of people is to prepare to show any video footage that has been taken by the team. This can be a good stimulus to discussion, but can also be an exciting event for a community.

- **SKILLED FACILITATION:** Especially for large group meetings, skilled facilitation can make a big difference. If team members do not have adequate skills in this area, it may be necessary to bring in someone who can effectively fill this role, and allow them some time to prepare with team members. This person should not only be skilled at facilitation, but should be familiar with the goals of the research, with ECD programming, child development and children's rights, as well as being fluent in the local language. These skills may be difficult to combine in one person, and facilitation may need to be shared. If possible, the dialogue team should include a person skilled at graphic facilitation, who can quickly and effectively summarize discussion as it moves along through drawings and symbols on large pieces of paper that all can see. This makes it easier for people to recall what has already been said and to refer back to it.

- **RECORDING:** Be sure that there is provision for the meetings to be well recorded. This is one instance in which video can be truly valuable, allowing for more complex interactions to be fully recorded for later viewing and discussion. Be sure the video camera is operated by someone who has the experience and skills to cover the discussion well. In the absence of a video camera, a tape recorder can be useful, but speakers should identify themselves clearly. If the meeting can only be recorded by notes, be sure that there are two or three people taking notes, who can share the job of writing down what takes place, verbatim where necessary.

- **GROUND RULES:** At every dialogue meetings, however many there are, and regardless of the final goals or the number of people attending, objectives for the meeting should be clearly described and ground rules repeated. These may vary depending on the size of the meeting and local customs, but at the very least it should be made clear that all contributions will be welcome, that people will take turns speaking and that opinions should be treated with respect even when there are disagreements. A device such as a speaking stick or, in a larger meeting, a microphone passed in turn to each speaker, can help to ensure that people allow one another to finish what they have to say. The role of the facilitator should be made clear to all. If there is a particular format for running local meetings, this can be adhered to unless it is unsuitable.

- **REPRESENTATIVES FROM IMPLEMENTING AGENCY:** If a goal of the dialogue is to arrive at some understanding between community and organization on the potential for programming, then it is essential that someone be present who can formally and knowledgeably represent the organization, so that questions can be fully dealt with when they come up. Members of the research team cannot be expected to take this role. Representatives of any implementing group should also be present, as well as any local leaders whose input and support is likely to be necessary.

PHASE 1: Cross checking information with the community

This is an opportunity to pass back to the community the team's understanding of local beliefs and values with regard to children, and their perception of local conditions, daily practices and routines. It should be made quite clear that the objective is to check the team's perspectives, and that community members are invited to correct misunderstandings, to point to complexities that the team may have overlooked, to provide explanations that may have been missing, and to discuss further any points of interest or disagreement.

This may involve just a simple correction of facts. The team may have assumed, for instance, that most children in the community were receiving vitamin supplements. It may turn out, when this is mentioned during discussion, that many families call all packaged food "vitamins".

But it may involve sorting out more complex understandings. An example might involve children's work. The team might note, for instance, that in general children in the community begin to work at the age of five or six, when they are expected to start caring regularly for their younger siblings. Perhaps community members appear uncomfortable with this assessment, insisting that children this age are not working. Further discussion might reveal that, since children are able to play when they care for younger children, this is not considered work within the community. This could lead to a productive discussion of the community's definition of work for children, and its role in children's development. Another example is discussed in the following box.

Community members looking at photos of themselves taken during research

The team raises the issue of men's involvement in child care.

Team members relate to the community what they have been told about fathers' role in child care, and what they have observed.

Various informants, they say, have told them that fathers have little role in caring for their children. Fathers themselves have agreed with this assessment, claiming that because their role in the household is to provide income as wage earners, they have no time for involvement in "women's work". Women have pointed out in various discussions, however, that many men are unemployed, or work for shorter hours than their wives. They spend their free time socializing, drinking and playing cards, when they could be helping their wives with their heavy work load.

Team members, on the other hand, say they have observed many men in the community carrying their children around, taking them to school, washing them at the water pipe, and even cooking their evening meal when their wives are still away selling at the market. The situation, they say, appears to be more complex than any one perspective suggests.

This becomes a more revealing discussion of men's and women's roles with regard to children than has been generated during earlier group meetings or interviews. Some of the men acknowledge that, while they enjoy time spent with their children, and do in fact help out on occasion, (although not as often as their wives would like), this is not something they like to be seen doing, since it undermines their status in the community. Some of the women say that, although they could use help, they also are not sure they want their husbands to be known as people who do women's work. The group decides to discuss this issue further in another meeting.

Make sure community members truly understand that these challenges of the team's perceptions are constructive, welcome and essential to the organization's clear understanding of the situation. It should be clear to both team members and community members, however, that this is not a time to make value judgements, discuss problems or draw conclusions - but simply to determine whether the team's information and understanding is more or less accurate from the community's perspective. People can be reminded that there will be plenty of opportunity for a discussion of implications at later sessions. It may help to start making a list of issues that people would like to discuss later on.

A particularly interesting and valuable part of the exchange is likely to be a discussion of the community's understanding of children's entitlements - or what children *should* have. There may be significant disagreements about what adults and the community at large owe to their children, especially in communities undergoing change. The issue of whether girls should go to school, for instance, may call up strong feelings and differences of opinion. Again, community members should be reminded that the objective for now is to *record* these disagreements, not to argue for one side or another. On issues where the community has consensus on their ideals and goals for their children, these could be visually expressed and displayed as a community "bill of rights" for children. This could provide an excellent starting point for further discussion, if it happens.

Some organizations (those working with a passive model of participation) will choose to end the dialogue at this stage, if they have not already done so. Having ensured that their information is correct, they will be able to go off to consider how their programming might best be adapted to the child rearing realities in this particular community. They should thank community members for their time and cooperation, and indicate clearly what the next step will be (for instance: "Now that we understand what the situation is here, what you believe and how you raise your children, we will be able to decide how to design a good programme for this community. We'll be returning in two months to start the programme.)

Ideally, however, the process will continue into phase two, a more participatory discussion of the community's strengths and concerns, and the implications for programming.

PHASE TWO: Assessing and discussing community strengths and concerns

This phase of the process takes things a step further and looks at the implications of the research findings from the perspectives of both community members and the organization.

This is a chance, first of all, to discuss how the community is and is not achieving its own goals with regard to its children - how the entitlements of children, as the community defines them, are being addressed. With the help of the team, community members are encouraged to identify their own strengths and difficulties, discuss the constraints they operate under, and determine what they feel could be addressed and improved. The familiarity of the team with the local routines and beliefs allows them to "hear" the concerns of community members better, and to ground their own responses in a more concrete way.

This phase of the dialogue serves, in addition, as an opportunity for the organization to introduce its own perspectives on various issues - especially in cases where children's rights are at stake, or where there are distinct differences in values regarding the appropriate way to support children's development. Although the mission and goals of the organization will ideally have been described to the community before research began, this is now a chance to explain some of their implications for specific circumstances. This is not intended to be a matter of passing judgement on community norms - rather, it is a way of encouraging community members to reflect on their own practices in the context of other values. It can help a great deal here to remind the community that, no matter how strong their own culture is, changes from outside affect all communities. They need to consider issues in the light of these changes and to weigh the implications of alternative approaches. One way of fostering this kind of reflection is to encourage discussion between generations within the community.

The kind of community discussion described in these pages is not something that should happen only in the context of this kind of pre-programming research. Ideally it will continue to be a feature of any follow-up programming. Parent education programmes often consist primarily of message-driven direct instruction on set health and child development topics. But experience shows that when such programmes are discussion based, and build on parents' own strengths and concerns, they are more likely to be helpful and well received. The community dialogue that takes place as part of this initial research can serve to build the confidence and interest of community members for engaging in this kind of reflection and discussion as an integral part of the programme.

Specific areas of discussion for this phase of the community dialogue may be introduced by community members or by the team. Many of the relevant issues are likely to have come up during the previous phase of the dialogue, and can now be discussed in more detail. Community members may be unanimous, for instance, in feeling that children deserve to be strong and healthy, but may have indicated that they are concerned about their actual capacity to provide them with sufficient food. A discussion on this issue may evolve with little need for contribution from the team. But it is also possible that team members will be able to help community members focus more closely and analytically on nutrition. They might, for instance, ask some of the following questions:

How can people tell when children are getting enough to eat?
Are some children doing better than others?
Does the length of time that children are breastfed appear to make a difference to their health?
Is it a question of household food supply, or do other factors appear to be at work here?
Are there different feeding practices in the community that appear to have implications for children's well being?
Do boys and girls really require different amounts of food?
Do families have questions about the nutritional value of the food they are giving their children?

Community members might conclude that they need to know more about nutrition - or they might decide that some steps need to be taken during the time of year when food supplies are very low. Both these conclusions may have implications for programming that can be taken up during a later session. People may also decide, however, that the local youth club or the women's group will work to provide one meal a day for children from needy households during the difficult time of year, using funds collected throughout the year. This assessment of strengths and concerns should make it possible for people to determine what they can realistically tackle on their own, and where they could use support.

A vital role for the team during this discussion is to point to any readily available resources or possibilities that the community might not be aware of. Perhaps the government offers bulk food supplies for communities starting a feeding programme; perhaps healthworkers or even local mothers could start to monitor children's nutritional status in order to raise local awareness and focus attention on those children most in need.

Another example might involve the parents' concern about children's transition to school. They may feel that their four and five-year-olds need to be formally exposed to numbers and letters before they begin school, in order to give them a better start. Perhaps they are concerned that they lack the knowledge to teach these skills themselves in the proper way. This could become a useful discussion of how young children learn, and of the many ways that community members are currently supporting their learning, perhaps unconsciously. Many people feel that the informal learning that is part of everyday life is not "real" learning, and they may have little awareness of the relevance to school work of the skills their children are already acquiring, or of their own skills as teachers. Team members can point to the many occasions on which they have observed young children learning important school-related skills from their elders (see box).

Learning school-related skills while sorting beans

When a small child sorts beans with his mother, he is not only learning a routine household task, he is also developing his capacity to use his eyes and fingers in a controlled accurate way, a skill that is essential for learning to write. He is learning, at the same time, how to distinguish minor differences in the beans, a visual skill that will prepare him to see the differences between letters.Team members can talk about the many ways that the mother might use this activity. She could ask the child to make one pile of the small bits of stone that he removes from the beans, another pile of the beans that are broken, and still another of the beans that are shrivelled and undeveloped. Then she could have him compare the size of the three piles. This will give the child practice in sorting and estimating, also valuable skills for school. If the mother talks to the child about what she is doing and answers all his questions, she will also be giving him important support in his language skills, and encouraging his curiosity and interest in learning. Many other daily routines can be discussed for their potential in supporting young children's competence in a number of areas. Parents may not be fully convinced that this is a real alternative to formal learning, but they are likely to find it both interesting and reassuring that they can help their children prepare for school simply by taking greater advantage of the many opportunities that surround them.

A dialogue session discussion about schooling for girls

(This discussion among a group of men in an isolated hill village in Nepal shows how the dialogue sessions can provide an opportunity for community members to discuss issues among themselves and reflect on their values, an essential first step in arriving at priorities and solutions.)

OLD MAN: Both my granddaughter and grandson are in Grade 8 and both are doing equally well. But how is it possible to send girls alone to far away places for further schooling?

YOUTH CLUB MEMBER: Girls have less self confidence. None of their sisters have gone outside for study in the past so they don't want to go themselves, nor do their parents encourage them. I've asked girls why they won't go, and they say it's because they can't read and write well enough. Once some parents sent their daughter outside the community for school, but she gave it up because of lack of confidence.

A FATHER: Sunisara went out to school, but other girls do not have her courage. And Santi went to Pokhara for four years, and now she is a teacher in Satyawati.

WARD CHAIR: We have to require our daughters to go and read and write with our sons. If they go they'll become confident. If we send them with their brothers, they'll become secure and will be able to read and write. But there is also the problem of work. Girls get less time for study. If boys do household chores, other people tease them and say "What are your sisters doing?" Because of their work, girls have less time to read and write, and so they fail and lose their confidence.

When it comes to discussing the organization's perspective on various issues, once again the community's own sense of their children's entitlements can be a useful entry point. Depending on the situation, it may make sense to introduce the Convention on the Rights of the Child as an international treaty that guides the organization's thinking, and to discuss how the organization interprets and addresses various of the provisions set out in the Convention. If acquainting the community with this formal legal treaty would add significance and interest to the discussion, this could be a constructive approach. But it may make more sense simply to describe the organization's practical responses to various of the issues that have been discussed, stressing the points of commonality with the community, and describing how and why they differ on various points, and how the organization's experience leads it to endorse a different perspective.

To continue with an example described above, for instance: it could be made it clear that the organization, like the community, is extremely concerned with children's health and nutritional status. Unlike the community, however, it is convinced that girls have a right to as much food as boys. Both boys and girls need adequate diets not only for healthy bodies, but also so that their minds can develop fully. The organization is convinced, furthermore, that girls who are well nourished are also more likely to give birth to healthy infants who will survive and thrive. The organization has been addressing this concern through its programming by offering classes on nutrition to caregivers, and by supporting growth monitoring and supplemental feeding initiatives where necessary.

A discussion in Nepal on confidence and communication skills

(On another occasion, the facilitator and team members help parents think of ways to address a problem.)

FATHER: It worries us that our children are so shy and unable to speak to outsiders. Indeed, even when we are adults we often find it difficult to deal with outsiders. Sometimes we are cheated in the market because we don't know what to say.

TEACHER: Yes, in school children are very shy. Even though they know the teachers, they find it difficult to answer questions. But this is how they are raised at home. They are told not to speak to adults, because it doesn't show respect. But this is a problem when they leave the community to go to the market or to get a job.

FACILITATOR: A challenge for many communities is finding a way to keep their customary practices strong but at the same time help their children and young people to develop skills which will enable them to also deal with the world outside. Let's think about how children could be encouraged to be more sure of themselves, without being disrespectful.

Community members and team members discuss the following points:

- At the moment most of the conversations adults have with children seem to revolve around work and food, the major preoccupations for all families. It might be helpful to initiate more discussions with children about other things as well, and to encourage them to start conversations by being more responsive when they ask questions. Take an interest in their thoughts and activities, whatever they are. When young children describe what they are doing and talk about their thoughts and feelings, this helps to develop both their language skills and their confidence .

- Often, as a way of controlling children, parents threaten them by saying that hermits or spirits will come and take them away if they are disobedient. Parents feel that this is preferable to beating children. But threatening children this way could also cause them to be very timid and cautious with people they don't know well. Young children especially can be very frightened by stories of being taken away, and this may affect their confidence in various areas. It is much better for children to understand the reasons why they should cooperate. "You have to go to sleep now or else you will be too tired to come with us to visit your grandmother tomorrow." This approach may take more time, and may even encourage a child to argue or ask questions - but if the parent is patient, this can also be an opportunity for a child to gain more confidence.

The same approach could be taken to the fact that a community chooses not to invest in education for girls at the same level that it does for boys (see box on p110) Here too, although the issue is one of rights and discrimination, it can be presented in the most practical terms.

This phase of the discussion will have allowed the team and community members together to establish a fairly clear picture of local concerns and priorities regarding children. In some cases, these may be quite complex: the priorities of mothers, for instance, may be different from those of other

Supporting girls' education


Tom Kelly

In numerous villages throughout Nepal, as in the rest of the world, boys are more likely to have the chance to go to school than girls are. In discussing this issue with families, it is essential to acknowledge the very real, practical issues they are responding to in perpetuating this particular form of discrimination:

- the high cost of schooling and its lack of relevance at times;
- the heavy workloads faced by the adult members of the family;
- the need for someone to ensure that younger children are cared for and safe;
- the important skills that girls learn from caring for their younger siblings, which they will need to know as mothers.

The aim is not to dismiss any of these valid points, but rather to explore with community members how, despite the difficulties they face, they might be able to give their daughters the chance to succeed in other spheres of life as well as nurturing children. The goal is to consider how girls may continue to play an important nurturing role without being deprived of opportunities to play, explore and learn in other settings, including school.

It can be productive, in the context of this discussion, to consider the changes that are taking place in people's lives and the implications of these changes. Girls and boys alike need to develop a flexible range of skills to deal with a rapidly changing world, so that they can contribute to their families in a number of ways. It is too easy nowadays for people who cannot read or do basic arithmetic to be cheated. When men are gone for several months of the year in search of work, it is all the more important for women to have the skills to make decisions about a wide range of matters. This type of discussion holds close to the community's concerns rather than imposing other views about broader issues. Pointing to role models is also useful - women who, as children, were unique in their communities because their parents were determined that they would have opportunities to develop their potential, and who now combine parenting and economic roles in exactly the way the community has identified as desirable.

But the practical obstacles need to be identified and addressed. What age girls are caring for the one-to-four year-olds? Is it six and seven year-olds who are consequently beginning school when they are older (perhaps at eight)? If so, how much of a problem is this? Is it older girls who are being pulled out of school in order to look after the young children? Find out what the pattern in the village is.

How could the problem be solved? Where there is an extended family with two sisters-in-law, could the mother who is not responsible for cooking for that period take responsibility for the children? Is there another family member who could do this? Is it only during peak agricultural seasons that childcare is really impossible or is it year round? Might it be possible to devise some communal childcare arrangement for the peak work periods? Discussions with teachers and parents together are also important. Often girls drop out because homework loads are incompatible with their heavy household responsibilities. How could parents distribute tasks more equitably between boys and girls? How can the school be more supportive? Encourage teachers to recall their own childhoods and the difficulties of combining study with household responsibilities. How can they help? Perhaps a couple of days a week where children stay at school for a homework period? Just not making children feel ashamed when they've not been able to complete homework?

community members; and the concerns of a marginalized group may not be shared by those with more privileged standing. These kinds of differences should be made explicit.

The organization may decide to go still further with the dialogue process, and to involve community members in discussing the implications for programming (this will be considered under phase three, below.) But if joint discussion and negotiation of programming options is not to be a part of the process, the team should in any case be in a good position at this point to represent the range of local concerns, to discuss the implications of local priorities for programming, to advocate for those children and families most in need, or to support a local group in doing the same thing. Again, it should be made clear to community members what will happen next and what the schedule will be.

PHASE THREE: Moving toward planning

An organization should involve local people to the maximal degree feasible in analyzing the programming implications of their concerns, and negotiating the optimal solutions. Discussion of programming details is something that will probably happen later, ideally during participatory planning sessions that include parents. But there are preliminary issues that could usefully be discussed together at this stage, as long as there is no confusion about what the organization can actually deliver. The discussion might include the following:

THE CLARIFICATION OF ANY CONFUSION ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION'S CAPACITY AND FUTURE ROLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY: If there is little overlap between the concerns and priorities of the community and the programming capacity of the organization, this should be promptly discussed - even if the organization is not encouraging community involvement in decision making. The community may insist, for instance, that their primary concern for their children, and the area in which they most need support, is the provision of clean water and sanitation - both to improve children's health and to make more time available for caregiving. If the organization's capacity is not in this area, this should be made very clear. Perhaps it will be possible to help the community set up contacts with a relevant NGO or agency - but team members should not leave the community with a misplaced sense that their concern will be responded to, if this is not the case; nor should they be left to feel that their significant priority is being ignored.

THE TARGET POPULATION FOR PROGRAMMING: If there are different groups and levels of need within the community, or a range of possibly conflicting priorities, it may be necessary to discuss the fact that the organization is unable to address all concerns, and that its mandate is to respond to those with the greatest need. The young children of a marginalized group, for instance, may be most frequently left untended while their parents work, and may be at greatest risk in terms of their overall health and development. Rather than suggesting programming for all four-year-olds within the community, the organization may feel the necessity for a more intensive response to the needs of this particular group - especially if they are the target of discrimination within the community. Such a decision may cause indignation, but it is preferable to discuss the issue within the context of the organization's mission, rather than to allow unexpressed resentment to create problems later on. The concerns of those segments of the community that are not to be served should be taken seriously, and every effort made to consider practical alternatives, and to provide assistance for potential solutions.

THE KIND OF PROGRAMMING NEEDED: If the organization is able to provide or support a range of responses, community members can play an important role in discussing and determining local priorities for action. Does the community need a centre-based programme for children? Would it do better providing local women with the training and support to offer high quality care in their homes? Do children within the community require health or nutritional supports? Do parents want to meet regularly for information sessions and discussion? Wherever possible these kinds of decisions should be made in partnership, based on the practical concerns and priorities of the community, as well as the organization's assessment of how it can be most helpful. If possible, community members should have these various options described in some detail, especially when they are unfamiliar. If it is possible to show video footage of such initiatives in action in other communities, this could be very helpful.

THE AGE OF THE CHILDREN TO BE SERVED: If there is to be a programme for children, what age group should be included? Infants? Children from two to five? Only those over four? Issues to be considered include the availability of adequate care for young children of various ages, the degree to which child care may be keeping older children, and girls in particular, out of school, and any problems with the transition for those children starting school.

THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE WITHIN THE COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT PROGRAMMING: A community that is eager for programming and involved in the effort may have a number of ideas of ways to solve practical problems and support potential programming. The school management committee might encourage the use of the school in the evenings for parent support groups. The owner of an unused building may be willing to have parents work on it to make it usable as a centre. A youth group may be able to provide the necessary labour to install water pipes and latrines, or to build storage cabinets for materials. A health worker from a neighbouring community clinic may be willing to work with a programme for young children, and to offer height and weight monitoring.

A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS CAN BE RAISED: Are there people in the community who would like the opportunity to be trained as ECD teachers? Are there parents who would like to be involved in the management of a programme? Is the local school willing to work collaboratively with a programme? Further planning will be necessary before programming is implemented, but this effort to gather all relevant information can be a very helpful way to start the planning process. If a community has the opportunity to discuss these issues together, and suggest solutions, they are more likely to feel a sense of involvement and responsibility for any programme that is developed.

DISCUSSING DIFFERENCES: If the organization has some significant points of difference with the community that might be reflected or magnified in potential programming, these should be discussed. To continue with an example described above: in spite of discussion of how young children learn, parents may be quite convinced that they want their four and five-year-olds exposed to the formal teaching of academic skills, in order to ensure their success in school. They may feel that children have plenty of time for play at home, and that they should sit in straight lines and refrain from speaking during their time at the centre, in order to pay attention to the teacher and make best use of the time. The organization's committment to hands-on learning, on the other hand, is likely to result in programming that appears to parents to be a waste of time.

To ensure community ownership of the programme, some sort of an understanding will have to be arrived at. They may work out an agreement whereby children will learn the skills that the parents value, but through approaches that the organization considers more appropriate. There may be a compromise that involves setting aside time each day for the kinds of activities that parents would like to encourage. The organization may also be able to persuade people, on the basis of their programming experience, and with examples from other communities, to suspend judgement for a year and then to judge how their children actually do in school. Experience in some places has shown that parents quickly recognize their children's growth in cognitive and social skills, and tend to become more critical of the rote learning approaches in the schools - especially when programming for children is accompanied by parent support and information sessions which allow for discussion of these kinds of issues.

Once these practical programming issues have been discussed, and ideally consensus has been reached, the team should describe to community members what their next steps will be, how they will represent the community's interests and decisions, how long it is likely to be before programming is implemented, and how communication will be maintained. If the intent of the organization is to involve community members in the on-going process of planning for programming, this should also be discussed.

When the dialogue sessions are over, the team should have all they need in order to present their findings outside of the community. The team should ensure that any new information, perceptions, conclusions are incorporated into their analysis. Ideally, the team should be well equipped to represent the community's concerns, strengths and priorities, as well as providing a clear picture of the practical realities of the situation, the constraints under which people operate, and the potential supports and obstacles to developing programming. Any report should also be translated into the language of the community, if that is different.

Based on their work together, the team should also be able to assess the feasibility of involving the community closely in any future planning process. They should by now should have a good sense of what community members bring to this process, what the difficulties might be, and what level of practical skill and facilitation experience might be necessary on the part of the implementing organization. Ideally the experience of the research will have been an opportunity for learning for both community and organization, encouraging in both sides a willingness to devote time and energy to the development of programming that is rooted in collaboration and mutual understanding and involvement.

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This handbook starts from a number of premises:

1. Early childhood development programmes are about ensuring young children's rights. Interventions are concered with children growing up healthy and well-nourished, with a sense of identity and self-worth and opportunities to play and learn and interact with others.They attempt to ensure opportunities which support childre's overall development and provide protection from factors which can harm children or put a brake on their development.

2. For early childhood programming to be effective and sustainable, it must respond to the values, beliefs and needs of the families it serves. It must build on strengths as well as address issues and concerns.

The handbook offers guidelines for building understanding of local concerns and the situation for young children through participatory research. It describes a process of data collection and analysis through which researchers and community members work to document daily practices and to clarify child rearing beliefs and expectations. Because circumstances vary so widely, this book does not prescribe exactly how research should be designed and conducted, or the extent to which parents and families should be involved. But it equips groups and organizations to come up with their own design - one that responds to the situation and to the capacity of researchers and community members.

This book is a companion volume to the childrearing study "*Bringing up Children in a Changing World: Who's right? Whose rights? - Conversations with families in Nepal*"

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