Participatory research with older people: A sourcebook

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HelpAge International

Leading global action on ageing

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HelpAge International is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives.

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Foreword

Older people have been neglected in the development agenda. Their realities, needs and capabilities are now at last being better recognised and accorded higher priority in development policy and practice.

The renewed emphasis on poverty reduction and the new focus on the inclusion and participation of those who are weaker and more marginalised, should direct more attention to older people. Older people are rising fast as a proportion both of populations as a whole and of those who are poor. They are often isolated, left out and voiceless and their capabilities need to be better understood. As with other categories of people who appear weak and less able, they can do for themselves and for others much more than most of those who are younger and stronger have supposed.

Older people need to become a more significant target of development programming if the international development target of halving the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015 is to be achieved. Giving more attention and priority to older people will contribute not just to their wellbeing – vital and justified though that is on its own – but also to wider processes of development.

The preparation and publication of this sourcebook by HelpAge International is, then, extremely timely. To my knowledge this is the first guide of its kind concerned with older people. It shows what can be done and how to do it. It presents tested practical ways of enabling older people to analyse and present their realities. It indicates how older people can influence policy and monitor practice.

Much that has been learnt in the past decade about participatory approaches and methods is to be found here. The importance of adequate field-based training for facilitators is stressed. Appropriate behaviour and attitudes on the part of facilitators is indicated, for example not rushing, taking time, listening and showing respect. The main methods for visualisation, through maps and diagrams, are described. The danger with any manual or toolkit, of routinisation is acknowledged. Much experience shows that good participatory processes foster and flow from creativity and diversity. The reader and user is urged therefore to be inventive, not to become trapped in ruts of repetition, to take the instructions as suggestions and pointers, not rigid rules. Seen like this, the book is a rich source of ideas for all that seek to enable older people to analyse their realities and priorities, to inform others, to influence policy, and to take more command over their lives.

To all concerned with older people, and especially fieldworkers and trainers, this sourcebook will be a valuable resource. With commendable clarity it lists what outside facilitators can do and how they can do it. Let me hope that it will be widely and wisely used and have a big impact in empowering older people and enabling them to enhance the quality of their lives.

Robert Chambers

Introduction

Background

In recent decades, social and economic progress has brought an unprecedented rate of growth in the numbers of older people worldwide. For the first time in history, those who survive childhood in all countries can expect to live past 50 years of age.

But in developing countries, where the ratio of older to younger people is increasing fastest, this triumph of development is marred by the deep poverty of many older women and men. Older people remain a neglected social group, largely invisible to those who promote economic development, healthcare, education and poverty reduction.

The contributions that older people make to their families and communities are poorly documented, and many subsist on only a fraction of the resources they need. Some experience discrimination, exclusion and even violence in their later years. If population ageing is to be positive, the rights of older people to live free from poverty and benefit equally from development must be secured.

Until recently, there has been little interest in the situation of the world's poor and marginalised older people. But this is changing. There is now a growing interest in better information and research on ageing issues to inform policy making.

Better research shows that the significance of old age varies considerably within and between societies, and that the experience of ageing differs for men and women. Our understanding of the critical relationship between poverty and old age, and the structures which create and sustain older people's poverty, is growing.

The importance of older people's direct involvement in conducting their own analysis and using their knowledge in advocacy and decision-making is increasingly recognised. Participatory research methods developed, adapted and recorded by practitioners and researchers all over the world are increasingly used with and by older people in poor communities.

The participatory process goes beyond simply gathering information, to engage older people, especially those who are poor and marginalised, in service and policy development. By taking part in planning, carrying out and disseminating research, older people can open up new opportunities to communicate their situation directly to practitioners and decision-makers.

By identifying and involving key stakeholders, the approach starts to take change forward. Issues voiced by older people can be linked to broader development debates from which they have been typically absent. Plans to meet economic and social development targets, for example, can incorporate interventions based on direct evidence of older people's needs and contributions.

Aims of this publication

Participatory research with older people: A sourcebook takes as its starting point the belief that participatory research with older people should form a key element of:

- Local and national government policy making in areas such as health, employment and social welfare.
- Programme planning by international aid agencies, in both development and emergency contexts.
- Advocacy for and by older people.

It has been produced to meet the need for a non-specialist sourcebook to help with all stages of participatory research with older people, and offers a clear overview of the whole process which will be particularly helpful when designing research.

Participatory research with older people: A sourcebook contains**:**

- Comprehensive guidelines for planning, carrying out and disseminating the findings of participatory research with older people, with checklists and practical tips (*see Sections 1-3, p5-44*).
- Case studies drawn from the experience of HelpAge International's partners and the older people working with them, which illustrate the application of processes described in the text. Many come from research activities carried out in Ghana and South Africa in 1998-99, funded by the UK government's Department for International Development.
- A selection of participatory exercises and tools developed by HelpAge International and practitioners around the world, for copying (*see Section 4: Training and research tools, p45-60*).
- Practical examples of materials developed and field-tested by HelpAge International, for copying or adapting (*see Section 5: Practical examples, p61-78*).
- A glossary of key terms commonly used in participatory research, which appear in ***bold italic*** on first usage.
- Sources of useful information and contacts.

It will be of interest to people in:

- Community-based organisations wishing to research and advocate around specific aspects of older people's situation, including those within HelpAge International's network.
- Non-government organisations and government departments seeking to research older people's situation to develop policy.
- Local and national organisations working with communities on issues such as rights, education and healthcare, and in emergency settings.
- International agencies wishing to learn more about ageing issues as part of their work to achieve development targets.
- Academic institutions and researchers interested in ageing and development.

HelpAge International and participation

Founded in 1983, HelpAge International is a unique development agency, made up of a network of community-based development, research and social service organisations which share a common mission to improve the lives of disadvantaged older people. Our membership includes national organisations, community-based groups and regional networks. We work:

- **Practically** We support and fund projects which combat economic insecurity and poor health among older people, and tackle social issues such as isolation, fear, discrimination, disability and abuse.
- **At policy level** We challenge the poverty, inequality and discrimination which prevent many older people achieving their potential and realising their rights. We strengthen their involvement in development activities and local and national policy making; promote awareness of their rights, needs and concerns; and support their participation in finding solutions to problems.
- **In emergencies** We respond to the specific needs of older people affected by civil conflict, economic collapse or natural disasters.

We believe that the full participation of older men and women in the economic, social and cultural life of their communities and societies is both a key to sound development, and a matter of basic human rights. We value participatory research as an approach and a philosophy which ensure older people's inclusion in – and ownership of – the process of development.

HelpAge International has used participatory research methods in its work with older people for eight years. Disadvantaged older people in Cambodia, Lao, Vietnam, Nepal, Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Ethiopia, Jamaica, St Vincent and Haiti have voiced their opinions and been listened to by decision makers, often for the first time in their lives. Summaries of research findings can be found on our website at www.helpage.org.

For further information about HelpAge International's participatory research activities with older people, please contact:

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Section 1: Planning your research

Introduction

This section covers what you need to think about – and do – when planning ***participatory research***. Important questions to consider at this stage are:

- What are your purpose and objectives?
- What information is already available?
- Who will you work with?
- Who needs to know what?
- Who will manage your research?
- How will you work with stakeholders?
- What expertise will you need?
- What will you do when?
- How much will it cost?

This section contains practical suggestions to help you tackle all these questions confidently. Use it as a checklist and source of ideas, and to help you prepare funding proposals.

Key points to remember

- ***Involve others*** *Involving people who have (or should have) an interest in your research and its outcomes is the most important aspect of planning. If they feel involved in your research from the start, they are more likely to act on the results.*

- ***Include older people*** *Including older people in your planning is essential. People often ask at this stage: 'Where are the older people? Why aren't they in this meeting?' They may not be there because they are too poor or far away. Perhaps not enough time has been taken to involve them. You need to make sure that your planning process enables older people to be active participants.*

Getting started

What are your purposes and objectives?

Start by clarifying your purpose and objectives.

- The ***purpose*** of your research is the reason you are doing it – the change that you want to achieve as a result. One way to think about this is to answer the question: 'What problem does this research seeks to address?'
- The ***objectives*** of your research will be more specific. They contribute to achieving your purpose. You might have more than one objective.

For example, the purpose of your research might be:

- To contribute to the development of appropriate health services for older people.

The objectives of your research might include:

- To find out about older people's experiences and perceptions of health services.
- To identify the reasons why older people make certain decisions about using health services.

Case study: Clarifying aims and objectives

When HelpAge International was developing the objectives for two participatory studies in Ghana and South Africa (1998-99), we wanted to make sure that the views of older people were central and that they would take part in policy discussions. We defined our purpose and objectives as follows:

Purpose

- *To contribute to greater responsiveness of policies and services to the needs and capabilities of older people in Africa.*

Objectives

- *To identify the livelihood strategies and the perceptions of wellbeing of older people in two African countries, and the contributions they make to family and community.*
- *To influence social policy discussion and policy making on issues which concern older people in Africa and other developing countries.*
- *To develop a methodology for enhancing participation of poor older people in decisions which affect their lives.*

You also need to think about evaluation and how to assess whether you have achieved your aim and objectives. You need to develop ***indicators*** – clear ways of measuring impact – to help you assess this.

Practical tips: Brainstorming objectives

- *Work out your objectives in a group brainstorm exercise.*
- *Get as many stakeholders as possible to take part in the brainstorm exercise.*
- *Agree how you will assess whether your objectives have been achieved.*

What information is already available?

Once you have decided what you want to achieve and what your objectives are, you need to find out what information is available about the issues you are planning to research. This ***background research*** can help you to avoid gathering information that has already been collected and to develop your research objectives in more detail.

Where you look will depend on your situation and the resources you have available. The following may have useful published and unpublished information:

- government ministries
- university libraries
- donor agencies
- international and national non-government organisations
- resource and information centres
- internet sites.

Identify and review 'secondary' sources like these as part of your planning. They can be used to help shape:

- a summary of your research proposal
- the introductory section of your final research report.

Who will you work with?

Stakeholders are people and groups that are affected by the outcome of a proposed intervention, negatively or positively, or those who can affect the outcome. In the course of your research, you need to work with all the stakeholders you can identify.

Think about the different stakeholders you might need to work with at every stage of your project:

- planning your research
- carrying out your research
- using your research in policy development and advocacy.

Important stakeholders with an interest in older people might include:

- older people
- families of older people
- community members
- national government officers from ministries and departments such as finance, statistics, health, social welfare, local government, gender, housing, agriculture, education, and legal affairs
- local government officers
- local non-government organisations working with older people
- local non-government organisations working in development

- women's or men's organisations
- international non-government organisations
- local health workers and other service providers
- private sector organisations, such as business, pension and insurance companies
- labour organisations
- media, such as press, television and radio.

Depending on your research objectives, you may need to identify specific sub-groups of stakeholders. For example, if your focus is on health services for older people in rural areas, the most important stakeholders will be older people in rural areas, rather than all older people. If poverty is the focus of your research, the most important stakeholders will be the poorest and most disadvantaged older people, in both urban and rural areas.

Case study: Identifying stakeholder groups

During the development of HelpAge International participatory research with older people in Lithuania (2000), a meeting was organised for a group of older people, leaders of older people's organisations, service providers and local government officials. At the meeting, they drew up a list of stakeholder groups they wanted to research, including:

- *older men and women aged 80 and over*
- *older people in rural and in urban areas*
- *older people living with their families and without them*
- *older people in institutions*
- *three-generation households*
- *older people with and without a good level of education*
- *older people with high and low levels of pension.*

In most countries, ministries or departments of social welfare or health are responsible for policies and services for older people. This is because welfare and poor health are still widely considered to be the main issues related to ageing. But older people are affected by many other government policies and services, so you will need to work with stakeholders from a wider range of government departments.

Local government staff are particularly important stakeholders, especially in countries decentralising responsibilities to district and local level. Issues of ageing need to be discussed with them, to ensure that local conditions and differences will be taken into account in national planning and policy making.

Case study: Working with government

While conducting participatory research in Ghana (1998-99), HelpAge International learned two important lessons about working with government officers at national and local levels:

- *Try to see the highest-level officers.*
- *Involve government staff in your research.*

We were usually able to see senior- or middle-level personnel. During these visits, we asked if government staff might be able to join our research team. Two national and two local government officers were assigned to help us, representing the departments of social welfare, local government, and agriculture.

Our full research team also included stakeholders from Ghana's National Council for Women in Development, the Centre for Social Policy Studies, and HelpAge Ghana.

Stakeholders outside government are also important, especially those with experience of how policies and services affect older people. These might include:

- non-government organisations
- community-based organisations
- pension associations
- trade unions
- faith-based organisations
- media groups
- international non-government organisations
- United Nations agencies
- women's groups.

There may be other groups in your country which have an interest in older people. Think about the most important stakeholders in your situation.

Who needs to know what?

Once you have a list of important stakeholders for your research project, you need to find out what they think about older people and to seek their support for your research. Tell them why you think your research is needed and what you expect the outcomes to be.

A ***project outline***, which lays out your objectives and planned activities in summary form, can be a helpful tool. *See Example 1: Using a project outline to win support, p62*.

Conducting ***semi-structured interviews*** with stakeholders, based round a question list you prepare beforehand, will help you obtain their views and to plan your research. *See Example 2: Using an interview checklist to map perceptions, p63*.

You can also approach the media to obtain support for your planned research, and ask them to inform the public about it.

Think about how you can use print media such as newspapers and newsletters. Find out about opportunities on radio and television. Coverage in these media can prove very valuable in raising awareness of older people and the issues they face.

A press release is an effective way of publicising key information to the media. Remember to keep the information you offer clear and simple, summarising what you are doing, with whom, why and when in your first paragraph.

Case study: Using the media

At the beginning of participatory research in Ghana and South Africa (1998-99), HelpAge Ghana sent a briefing to the press in Ghana. Two articles appeared in the daily newspapers. The national television station filmed part of the researchers' training and interviewed some of them.

In South Africa, press releases were sent to the media about the research programme and later, about how the findings were being shared in a national dissemination workshop. This led to articles in the newspapers and a live interview on prime-time national radio about key outcomes and policy implications.

In both countries, the research team made a video recording of some of the older people and community members who took part, as well as some of their own preparation activities. These recordings were put together and edited to produce a video suitable for training purposes.

Agreeing clear roles

Who will manage your research?

Most research projects have a ***project coordinator*** who is responsible for day-to-day management tasks, such as making sure activities are carried out as planned, and monitoring the budget. You may need to recruit a coordinator if there is no one suitable in your organisation. *See Example 3: Recruiting a project coordinator, p64.*

You should set up a group of people to oversee progress and provide advice. Some projects have a steering group – a small group which monitors activities and advises the co-ordinator. Other projects have an ***advisory group*** – usually a larger group of stakeholders that can help to advise, raise awareness and communicate findings to other organisations.

In large projects that involve several organisations, it is useful to have a written partnership agreement. This agreement, sometimes called a ***memorandum of understanding***, defines the roles and responsibilities of the different organisations. *See Example 4: Agreeing a memorandum of understanding, p65.*

How will you work with stakeholders?

Stakeholders can contribute in many different ways. For example, their knowledge and experience can help to:

- define research objectives
- raise awareness about the purpose and objectives of the research among their colleagues and in their organisations
- identify research sites and inform communities about proposed activities
- carry out the research or identify research team members
- disseminate findings
- advocate for change based on the research findings.

Once you have decided which stakeholders to work with, you need to think about their roles and responsibilities. Each group and individual needs to understand their own role and the roles of other stakeholders. It is a good idea to work out the different ways in which all groups of stakeholders will be able to contribute to the project right at the start. The stakeholders themselves will have ideas about ways in which they and others can contribute.

You can conduct a ***stakeholder analysis*** at a meeting or workshop that involves all the important stakeholders, including older people. This involves drawing up a simple chart as follows:

- Write a list of all the people and groups affected by the research down one side of the chart.
- Write the important stages of the research project across the top of the chart in columns.
- Use the chart to plan activities with the people and groups identified.
- Use the chart to discuss what contribution they will make at the different stages.

See Example 5: Using a stakeholder analysis chart, p68.

Think about how to keep stakeholders informed and involved. One way to do this is to organise stakeholder meetings at each important stage of the project. Look for ways they could be involved in:

- planning
- monitoring research progress
- reviewing research findings
- deciding how to use findings
- evaluating the impact of findings.

If you cannot hold regular meetings because, for example, the project covers a large geographical area, you need to agree with stakeholders at the start how they can best be kept informed and involved.

A good way to keep people informed is to send them progress updates at various stages of your research programme. These should be brief, easy to read and simply produced. If your programme lasts several months, these updates will be useful for new contacts and participants.

Practical tips: Working with stakeholders

- *Hold meetings with stakeholders early on in the project.*
- *Try to include groups and organisations which would not normally be involved in issues concerning older people, as well as those that would.*
- *Use a stakeholder analysis chart to make sure all that the important stakeholders are included at different stages of the project.*
- *Encourage everyone in the group to share contact information.*
- *Plan meetings so that people can learn from the experience and views of others.*

What expertise will you need?

You need people with a wide range of skills and expertise to help you plan, carry out and follow up your research. These might include:

- ***Participatory facilitator*** To train research team members, to guide participatory research activities such as leading the ***field research*** team and helping them record findings, and to prepare the final report.
- ***Research team*** To carry out participatory research and report writing.
- ***Research advisors*** To advise the research team on sources of information and research methodology.
- ***Interpreters*** To provide translation during training or field research if necessary.

Depending on the capacity of your organisation, you may need to recruit outside experts for these tasks. Skills and expertise in facilitating participatory learning and action are the most essential. *See Example 6: Recruiting a participatory facilitator, p69.*

If possible, create opportunities for your own staff to take part as research team members and to develop skills and expertise in participatory research.

Another way to get expert advice is to establish small groups of local researchers and academics with an interest in the subject who are willing to advise on:

- research design
- methods and site selection
- background materials
- useful contacts.

Local experts may also be willing to comment on reports or help you to link research findings with policy and programme development.

Practical tips: Recruiting effectively

- *When you recruit participatory facilitators, make sure that they understand what participatory research is, and how it works.*
- *Make sure that your interpreters for training sessions also understand the concept of participation, so that they can translate the meaning accurately.*

Planning and funding your activities

What will you do when?

You need to plan and timetable specific activities in two key areas:

- how you will carry out your research
- how you will use your research findings in policy development, advocacy and dissemination.

Carrying out your research will involve:

- selecting ***research sites***
- making a ***preparatory visit*** to each site
- planning and organising training for your research team
- deciding what methods and tools you will use during field research
- recording and writing up the findings from field research
- discussing findings with participants at research sites
- collating information
- organising and writing your final report.

Using your research will involve:

- deciding who needs to know about the findings
- disseminating and sharing the findings with people and organisations which need to know about them
- thinking about what actions could be taken as a result of your findings, and by whom, including older people
- monitoring any changes which come about as a result.

All these activities are covered in more detail in *Section 2: Carrying out your research* and *Section 3: Using your research.*

In participatory research, planning and follow-up activities normally take more time than carrying out the research. Preparing a ***timeframe*** helps you clarify how long activities will take and when you will carry them out. It also helps you develop a realistic budget. *See Example 7: Preparing a timeframe, p70.*

How much will it cost?

The final step in planning your research is to prepare a detailed budget. This should allow for all the planning, research and follow-up activities you will do, including the costs of:

- **Background research** Time and materials.
- **Personnel** Management, staff salaries, recruitment and fees for local experts.
- **Training** Workshop for research team (venue, accommodation, facilitator), workshop for stakeholders (venue, accommodation, facilitator).
- **Equipment and materials** Computer, video, camera, tape recorder, stationery for office and field research.

- **Communication and transport** Stakeholder meetings, advisory or steering group meetings, travel to meetings, interviews and field research sites, costs of telephone and fax.
- **Field research and analysis** Accommodation and daily expenses for research team, expenses (snacks, drinks for participants, cash or in-kind donation to community), workshop to collate and analyse data.
- **Awareness raising and dissemination** Project outline, press releases, report production and distribution, dissemination and advocacy activities (meetings, workshops).
- **Monitoring and evaluation** Follow-up activities and impact assessment.

You may not need to budget for all these items. For example, if the field research sites are not very far away you will not need to allow for accommodation.

If your research project includes other organisations in more than one country or region, you will need to work with them to develop a budget which allows for their costs.

Section 2: Carrying out your research

Introduction

This section covers what you need to think about – and do – to carry out your participatory research. Important questions to consider at this stage are:

- How will you prepare for work in your research sites?
- How will you train your research team?
- How will you organise the training?
- What do you know about your research community?
- How will you guide research in the field?
- How will your team structure its research?
- How will you plan and review research activities?
- How will your team introduce itself to the community?
- How will you manage community relations?
- How will you work with older people?
- How will you share your findings with the community?
- How will your record your findings?
- How will you synthesise your findings?
- How will you write up your findings?

This section is designed to be used alongside *Section 4: Training and research tools*, which offers a wide range of exercises to pick from and adapt as required. Use it as a checklist and source of ideas.

Key points to remember

- ***Develop good teamwork*** *A team whose members communicate effectively and support each other is more likely to gain the community's trust.*
- ***Include disadvantaged older people*** *Older people who are poor or disabled may be less visible and less mobile than others in the community. They may work long hours. Carry out your research at times and places that are convenient for them.*
- ***Listen actively*** *Good listening skills are vital. They encourage people to speak.*
- ***Record accurately*** *Make every effort to record what older people actually say. Use their words in advocacy and dissemination.*
- ***Be aware of gender differences*** *Older women and men are often affected differently by ageing and social and economic change.*

Getting started

How will you prepare for work in your research sites?

When you have selected your research sites, visit them and prepare people. At least one member of your team should be from the community. When you visit, ask this person to explain your plans and win support for them.

During a preparatory visit you need to:

- Explain the purpose and method of your research to community leaders.
- Ask permission from relevant traditional and government authorities.
- Identify ***key informants*** – people or groups whose views and knowledge are critical to your research. These may include older people's groups, community-based organisations, religious organisations, community leaders, health workers, farmers and traders.
- Gather information about the community, such as total population, numbers of older people, services and markets in the area.
- Agree when you will do your research.
- Arrange accommodation for your research team in or near the community.

Case study: Using local knowledge

While preparing for participatory research in Ghana (1998-99), members of the HelpAge International research team visited three proposed research sites in different parts of the country. This enabled them to tap into valuable local knowledge.

They called on district council offices and talked to staff. They visited communities and met with village chiefs and traditional council members to seek permission for their research and agree timing. They began to build profiles of individual communities. They identified key informants such as war-veteran pensioners in the north of the country, ex-cocoa farmers in the middle region and ex-dock workers in the southern coastal industrial area. Local knowledge about community livelihoods and access to services proved critical to their final selection of communities.

They recruited an additional researcher in each site, bringing local knowledge, contacts and language skills into the team. They also identified and arranged team accommodation.

Practical tips: Including older people

- ***Be relaxed*** *Older people are often excluded in research so it is important to take enough time to adapt the environment and methods to maximise participation.*
- ***Hearing and sight*** *Visual methods may exclude older people with impaired sight and verbal discussions exclude people with poor hearing. Find out about your participants and use appropriate methods.*
- ***Disability*** *People with disabilities grow old. Find out who they are and the nature of their disability so that you can include them.*

Working with your research team

How will you train your research team?

Before you begin field research, you need to organise a ***training workshop***.

The purpose of the workshop is to ensure that every member of your team can carry out participatory research effectively. The specific training objectives you set will depend on the extent and nature of their knowledge, skills and attitudes. You should aim to build on their expertise and develop any new areas of understanding, abilities and awareness they need.

It is helpful to express training objectives as learning outcomes. Ask yourself: What will participants know and be able to do by the end of the training workshop?

Case study: Defining learning outcomes

At the beginning of a training workshop in Ghana (1998-99), HelpAge International's research team and facilitators agreed desired learning outcomes. By the end of the 10-day workshop, they wanted to ensure all team members would have:

- *Acquired a deeper understanding of their own and other people's attitudes towards older people.*
- *Learnt more about participatory learning and research methodology.*
- *Practised participatory research methods.*
- *Discussed issues relating to ageing in Ghana.*
- *Planned field research activities.*
- *Worked effectively and reflectively as a team.*

In the course of the workshop, participants regularly reported on which learning outcomes they felt they had achieved.

What you cover will depend on the knowledge, skills and attitudes your researchers need to acquire. For example, they may need to learn about:

- National and local policies, laws and practices affecting older people.
- The profile of the communities where they will carry out research.

You may need to reinforce or develop their skills in:

- communicating
- working as a team
- using participatory research methods and tools
- sequencing areas of enquiry and selecting appropriate tools
- checking information
- recording information
- developing a field research guide
- planning research activities in the community
- gathering background information about the community

- synthesising information from different sources
- report writing.

You may need to encourage them to probe their attitudes, including:

- their own and others' attitudes towards older people
- their understanding of what makes for effective teamwork
- their awareness of age and gender issues
- their awareness of the impact of policy and practice on older people and their households.

Add to and adapt these lists to plan your training in line with your researchers' specific needs. Then look at *Section 4: Training and research tools* for exercises you can use or adapt to achieve the training objectives you have identified.

Practical tips: Planning participatory training

- *Your training methodology, like your research methodology, should be participatory.*
- *The aim is to learn by doing, to reflect on this experience and to share ideas about it with others.*
- *Plan the training with your training facilitator, who will help you build a strong programme.*

How will you organise the training?

Think about when and where you will train your team. Decide how many days you will need.

The training workshop normally takes place just before you begin research activities in the selected communities. But team members will continue learning in the field, so make sure they can discuss what they have learned throughout the research process.

If possible, locate the workshop in or near one of the selected communities, so research team members from the community can attend easily and the team can field test research methods and tools.

How long you take will depend on your team's experience. HelpAge International has found that 10-12 days is usually enough time to train a team with a range of experience. If possible, make the training workshop residential. This will help people develop the teamwork they will need to work together for several weeks. *See Example 8: Using a training workshop timetable, p71.*

Practical tips: Designing a training workshop

- ***Decide on content*** *Think about what your research team will need to do during field research. Develop a list of skills, knowledge and attitudes required.*
- ***Write process notes*** *Think about what people will do during the workshop. Use your own experience, and draw on manuals and materials to create an outline for each session. Try to include group exercises, discussion and practising research methods in a community setting.*
- ***Prepare a workshop timetable*** *Sequence training sessions so that skills and attitudes are developed in a logical way. Decide how long each session will take and adjust this to the number of hours allocated for training each day.*
- ***Be flexible*** *You should always prepare a clear training schedule. But as the workshop progresses, new needs will become apparent . Participants may need space to create sessions utilising their own experience.*

What do you know about your research community?

During the training workshop, you researchers should create a ***community profile*** – a compilation of background information – for each of the research sites where they will work. This might cover areas such as:

- climate and seasonal patterns
- population data, including proportions of older people and ethnic groups
- legal and governance structures
- people's livelihoods, including their main crops, trades and businesses
- significant historical events
- community culture, including festivals, customs and taboos
- infrastructure, such as roads, communications, transport, and access to markets
- facilities and services, such as hospitals, schools, water and electricity
- topography and natural resources, such as rivers, wells, and vegetation.

Building a community profile will help team members who are unfamiliar with the research community to know about any important customs or codes of behaviour when they arrive. The discussion will help identify key areas to be tackled during field research.

You might start by writing up and circulating information gathered during your preparatory visits and from other sources, with maps, if available.

Team members who live in the research community can share their knowledge. The team can also decide how to gather any missing information during fieldwork. For example:

- Local government offices may be able to give information about population, services, budgets and forms of social security such as grants or pensions.
- Schools, hospitals and churches may have data on attendance and staffing.

- Non-government and community-based organisations can tell you about their own programmes and budgets, and how to involve older people.

Decide what kind of background information will be useful and how much you really need. You may find that what you are looking for is not available from statistical sources or community-level written records. HelpAge International's experience is that age-related data in population statistics and clinic or hospital records is still quite rare.

It is important to check what records are available at community level. The type of data available is likely to help shape policy makers' decisions. The absence of certain kinds of information may lead them to incorrect conclusions.

Case study: Building an accurate picture

During the training workshop preparing for research in Ghana (1998-99), the HelpAge International research team decided to find out more about the first two research sites they would be visiting. The team member from one site, Dormaa, read out the community profile she had prepared. Team members asked further questions. Through this, they were able to add the following important information to the site's profile:

- *The Dormaa chief was the paramount chief, while the chief of the second community, Ammasu, was a sub-chief.*
- *Farming did not normally take place on Tuesdays.*
- *Dormaa held markets on Tuesdays, Ammasu on Thursdays.*
- *As a district capital, Dormaa had development plans. These were requested, plus maps.*
- *Dormaa was the more urbanised area. Here, the team would be able to talk to traditional cocoa farmers and merchants where they came to sit round the chief's palace. In Ammasu, they would be able to meet traditional cocoa farmers on their farms.*

How will you guide research in the field?

Before you begin field research, work with your team to develop a **field research guide**, summarising your main themes of investigation and the viewpoints you seek. This will ensure consistency if the team splits up to visit different communities, and creates an agreed framework for putting research findings together. *See Example 9: Agreeing a field research guide, p72.*

Start with the research objectives you defined. By now, you will have discussed these with stakeholders and have gathered more information about key issues for investigation. Agree the headings you want, such as:

- key research themes
- main areas of enquiry and key questions for each theme
- key groups whose viewpoints you seek
- other groups whose viewpoints you seek
- research methods you will use.

Case study: Developing a field research guide

During a training workshop for HelpAge International research in Ghana (1998-99), the following key areas of enquiry were identified to guide field research:

- *The meaning that older people and others give to old age.*
- *Older people's perceptions of poverty and wellbeing.*
- *Older people's livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms.*
- *Perceptions of good and bad health and main health issues.*
- *Sources of support for older people in times of need.*
- *Older people's achievements and contributions.*
- *How older people's experience is shared and valued.*
- *Access to services and perceptions of their availability and appropriacy.*

Smaller groups then put together open and follow-up questions on each area of enquiry, for discussion by the whole team. Finally, they worked as a whole group to agree a list of key informants and other groups whose viewpoints they would seek.

Drawing up a field research guide will help your research team members develop a sense of shared ownership and direction.

When research begins, the field research guide will be an important tool, but don't feel you have to stick to it rigidly. It sets a broad framework, which you can adapt and add to as the investigation deepens. Participatory research emphasises flexibility and the importance of cumulative learning.

How will your team structure its research?

If team members are working with more than one community, they will need to decide how to organise their research. For example:

- They could all work together in all the selected communities.
- They could divide into smaller teams and work in different communities.

Each method has advantages and disadvantages. In the examples below, communities are represented as follows: C1 is Community 1; C2 is Community 2, and so on.

Whole team approach

Team training → Whole team → C1 → C2 → C3 → Team synthesises site reports

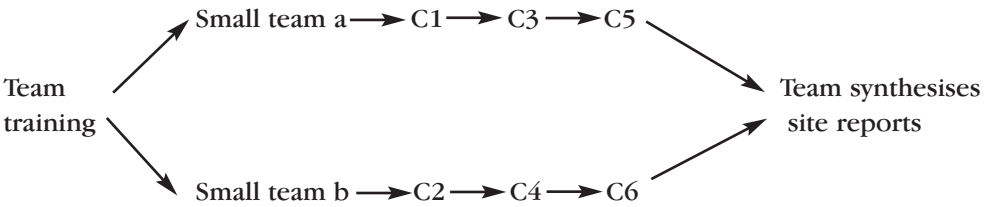
Advantages:

- The whole team will be familiar with all the issues identified in all communities.
- All the researchers will see the whole picture.
- The team can apply what it has learned in one community to the next community.

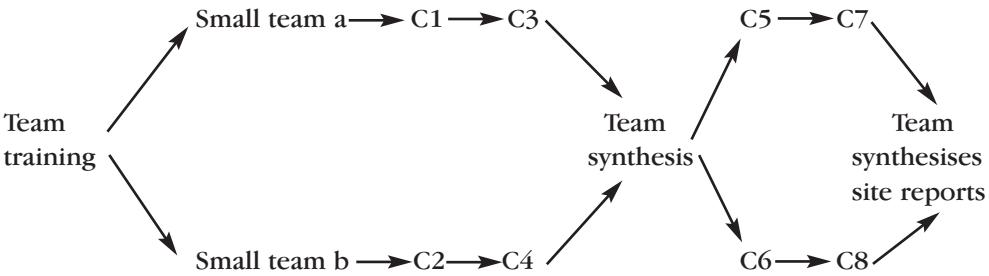
Disadvantages:

- It takes longer to cover the same number of communities than with a small team approach.
- If there is limited time, fewer communities will be visited than with a small team approach.

Small team approach



Or:



Advantages:

- Several communities can be visited at the same time, so more communities will be covered in a shorter time.

Disadvantages:

- The team is divided into smaller teams, so no one will see the whole picture.
- Sharing findings and synthesising completed site reports will take time and organisation.
- It is more difficult to share learning from one community with team members in other sites.
- Each small team will need an experienced facilitator.

How will you plan and review research activities?

During field research, team members should regularly work up a ***daily activities plan***. This can only be made a few days in advance, because it is shaped by recent findings and who is available to talk with.

For each day, the team should:

- agree its main theme of enquiry
- agree what groups and individuals to include

- decide on interview methods
- prepare question checklists
- consider whether it will use visual tools
- estimate how long each discussion will take
- decide what time of day is most appropriate.

The daily activities plan should give details of:

- areas of enquiry
- appropriate research methods
- availability of key participants
- timing and duration of interviews
- the gender, language ability, and special expertise of particular researchers
- who in the team will act as main interviewer, recorder or observer
- when material from different team members will be collated
- when the team will review findings and plan the next research stage
- when findings will be shared with community members.

During fieldwork, community members will help you to identify new groups and individuals to talk with. You may need to arrange some meetings in advance, or you may be able to talk with and observe people on the spot. Find out when markets, mobile clinic visits, ceremonies, or pension collection days take place.

Think about team composition. Sometimes women feel more comfortable talking with female researchers, men with male researchers. If you are working in communities where different languages are spoken, each small team will need at least one mother-tongue speaker.

There should be at least two people in each small team – three if you plan to work with larger groups. The roles should include:

- A main interviewer who uses a question checklist and introduces the discussion.
- A recorder who takes notes and copies any diagrams made.
- An observer who notes the group dynamics of participants and within the team.

The whole team should discuss and collate findings and decide on next steps every few days – daily at the start of research. This way, researchers can:

- identify any inconsistent findings quickly
- adapt research methods as required
- review teamwork and community interactions
- learn from experience.

Case study: Solving problems as a group

During HelpAge International research in South Africa (1995), team members divided into small groups at the end of each day to review how they had worked with each other and with the older people they had talked with. Each group discussed:

- *three examples of what had worked well*
- *three examples of what hadn't work so well.*

The group also wrote down:

- *two problems concerning team work*
- *two problems concerning methods.*

Each group then presented its examples to the rest of the team and passed its problems to a new group to discuss and suggest solutions. The process helped team members learn from each other on an ongoing basis.

Plan and review research activities as a continuous process at agreed intervals. In participatory research, everyone encounters situations that are impossible to predict during initial training. Learning from mistakes is central to good practice.

Case study: Learning from experience

Researchers working on a HelpAge International study in Ghana (1998-99) wanted to share information and tips with each other from the outset. They got together at the end of the first day's fieldwork and noted:

Observations:

- *Older men had dominated discussions. Older women had agreed with what they said.*
- *Asked why so few women were taking part, the men explained they were busy cooking.*

Lessons:

- *Agree timing with participants beforehand.*
- *In reporting, indicate the source of information given.*
- *Direct questions to community members beyond dominant speakers.*
- *Help each other as a team and stick to team roles.*
- *Keep a running note of any research issues for follow up.*
- *Travel light and avoid large notebooks.*
- *Build a team which can speak the different languages required.*
- *Give female team members space in team discussions.*

Practical tips: Planning research activities

- *Build in time for scheduled and unscheduled interviews.*
- *Allow time for teams to share their findings with each other.*
- *Build in times when teams can plan the next stage of their research.*
- *Allow time for the whole team to share findings with community members at the end of their research.*

Practical tips: Building teamwork

- *Hold regular team review meetings.*
- *Encourage team members to keep a field diary to record their feelings about their interactions.*
- *Encourage teams to elect an observer to note team dynamics.*

Working with the community

How will your team introduce itself?

On arrival, team members should introduce themselves to as many people as possible and explain why they are there, before starting research activities. They should describe research aims in similar ways. If they appear to be saying different things, this will confuse the community.

In small villages, there are usually meetings open to everyone. In larger villages and urban areas, team members may need to introduce themselves to different groups of people separately.

During introductions, team members should:

- Explain who they are and where they are from.
- Explain the purpose of the research in ways people can understand.
- Explain what the research activities will involve and how long they will take.
- Ask when it is convenient to meet with groups and key informants.
- Explain what they will do with the information that is collected and how the research findings will be shared with the community.
- Give people time to ask questions.

How will you manage community relations?

HelpAge International has found that communities are very willing to participate in research activities if they are clear about the purpose and outcomes.

But it is easy to create false expectations. Many communities have been asked to be involved in projects and research activities that have failed to improve their situation. Explain clearly that:

- Your activities will not result in immediate material benefits.
- You are interested in older people's ideas about their situation.
- You want older people to tell policy makers about their situation.
- You want to influence policies and practices so that older people's views are taken into account.
- You will write a report about what they tell you, in their language, and give it to them.
- This report will be discussed with local agencies, and with local and national government personnel.
- Some members of the community will be invited to take part in dissemination activities, such as a regional or national workshop with policymakers.
- You will support older people in any further advocacy activities that they wish to take forward.

Remember to show your appreciation for the community's help with your research. People in poor communities have little time to spare, and you are asking them for some of it. Observe local customs, for example:

- Greet people appropriately, especially community leaders and older people.

- Follow protocol, such as giving suitable gifts to community leaders.
- Give a small surprise community gift at the last public meeting.

Practical tips: Building good relationships

- *Use the knowledge of research team members and other stakeholders to prepare for community visits and introductions.*
- *Explain the purpose of your research to the community.*
- *Be honest and realistic about the potential impact of research findings.*

How will you work with older people?

HelpAge International finds that older people are often surprised and delighted to be asked to talk about their own lives with people from outside their community.

Participatory research methods emphasise interactive learning or joint learning through discussion and analysis, and rely on strong skills in facilitating interviews and discussions. They include:

- participant observation (watching and taking part in older people's activities)
- semi-structured interviews and group discussions (learning through conversation)
- transect walks (walking with informants through an area while talking and looking).

Visual techniques can also be used to support interviews, and can have a powerful effect on the quality of communication and analysis, particularly in work with older people. They include:

- mapping and modelling (to analyse resources, services and mobility patterns)
- ranking and scoring (to prioritise, compare and understand criteria for choices)
- wellbeing ranking (to define categories and criteria for wellbeing and poverty)
- seasonal diagrams (to assess the impact of seasonal changes)
- trend and time lines (to pinpoint changes over time and the impact of key events)
- institutional diagrams (to analyse functions of and relationships with institutions and individuals)
- flow diagrams (to understand relationships, and the causes and effects of situations).

For practical step-by-step examples of how to use these research methods with older people, see *Section 4: Training and research tools.*

See Example 10: Matching research questions and methods, p74.

How will you share your findings with the community?

Community feedback sessions – meetings in which your team shares its findings with the research community – are vital because:

- They signal clearly to the community that you will report their views accurately.

- They allow the community to verify or challenge what you have learned.
- They enable you to clarify any inconsistencies in your findings.

If you are in a village, try to arrange an open community meeting. If you are in a town or city, you may need to set up meetings with different groups in different places. Ask community members and leaders to help you and to identify the best time and place. Include people who have not taken part in interviews and group discussions.

During community feedback sessions, team members should:

- introduce themselves
- summarise research objectives and activities
- present key findings in an interesting, visual way
- check accuracy and clarify any inconsistencies
- invite comments, questions and points of discussion
- thank everyone for taking part or supporting the research
- explain how the findings will be disseminated and followed up
- show appreciation in an appropriate way.

As part of wider community feedback, try to meet with local government personnel to clarify issues or seek answers to issues that older people have raised, even if you have to travel some way. In discussion, aim to:

- Emphasise issues that have policy implications for older people at local level.
- Find out how government policies are implemented locally.
- Find out what constraints and opportunities exist.

Other local groups to whom you might give feedback include:

- national and international non-government organisations working in the area
- faith-based groups working with or impacting on older people.

Remember to make a note of all the contacts you have made in the community who should get a copy of your final report.

Practical tips: Planning a community feedback session

- *Keep your presentation brief but cover all main issues.*
- *Report what people actually said and demonstrated to you during field research.*
- *Identify where views differed and where they were similar.*
- *Use large versions of maps/diagrams created during research to encourage discussion.*
- *Allow time for introductions, presentations, verification and discussion.*
- *Ask one or two team members to note the discussion.*
- *Purchase or prepare a community gift to present.*

Recording and analysing findings

How will you record your findings?

Participatory research generates information from a wide range of sources and through different methods quickly, so your research team will need to work systematically to record their findings. A ***preparation and recording sheet*** is the main tool used to plan and note discussions. It should include:

- date and location of discussion
- theme of discussion
- names of researchers
- description of community participants
- key question checklist
- visual methods used
- key findings
- process notes
- issues for follow up.

During discussions in the field, one member of the team makes notes. At the end of each day, teams meet together to share findings from all the records made that day and plan the next stage of fieldwork. They should:

- discuss findings together
- add any information and observations on process.
- note down any contradictions and issues for further investigation.

See Example 11: Using a preparation and recording sheet, p75.

Preparation and recording sheets provide the basis for two other kinds of records:

- ***Site report*** This pulls together all key findings from a particular site at the end of an investigation. It is built up from preparation and recording sheets, and is used as the basis for community feedback sessions and meetings with other community members.
- ***Final report*** This pulls together and analyses all the information captured in site reports, for use in wider influencing activities.

How will you synthesise your findings?

Recording, analysing and writing up findings is a continuous process. Assembling and analysing information, known as ***synthesis***, takes place at several stages:

- **During field research** Team members record and analyse findings, key issues and next steps, normally on a daily basis.
- **Immediately after field research** Team members pull together site report for each research site.
- **At the end of the research project** Team members create a final report.

To synthesise from question checklists:

- Take each question in turn.
- Report on the views gathered from women, men, young people (or other special groups).
- Record similarities of views within and between groups.
- Record any differences of views within and between groups.
- Discuss possible reasons.
- Note any issues for follow-up and any new issues for investigation.
- Repeat this process, working through each major question on your checklist.
- When you have finished, ask:
  - What are the main points of consensus?
  - What are the main areas of difference?
  - What are the main gender differences?

To synthesise information for reports:

- Discuss research objectives and themes investigated.
- Taking each theme in turn, brainstorm key points learned.
- Write key points on cards and arrange them under subject headings.
- Use the subject headings as headings for sections of your report.
- Taking each subject in turn, ask:
  - Which pieces of information are most important?
  - Which findings are most surprising?
  - What are the major similarities and differences in viewpoints?
  - What are the key policy implications?
- Identify diagrams that illustrate the main points well, and give comparative perspectives.
- Ask team members to write up different sections.
- Copy and circulate the sections so that the whole team can review the report.
- Check that no important issues have been left out.
- Edit the report.

If your research teams have worked in different sites, bring them together in a ***synthesis workshop***, as soon as possible after fieldwork, to discuss all the site reports and start to create a final report. If possible, this should be residential. How long it lasts should be based on time spent on fieldwork. But do not take more than five days or your team will be exhausted.

During the synthesis workshop, ask team members to suggest chapter headings for your final report, and to group information and diagrams from all the different site reports under each heading. Ask your facilitator or lead researcher to draft the final report. This should take one or two weeks. *See Example 12: Synthesising site reports, p76.*

How will you write up your findings?

To develop an outline for your written reports, think about who will read them and why.

Site reports are written in the field for community feedback meetings and for small-scale circulation to local government staff, non-government organisations and community members, who can use them for planning purposes.

The final report, based on site reports, is written to support policy and advocacy work with a wider audience, including contacts from your research sites and the stakeholders you identified during planning. This audience may include:

- local and national government staff
- national non-government organisations
- international non-government organisations
- academics and researchers interested in social development.

The report lays out your research findings, objectives and messages for policy makers and practitioners whose decisions and actions impact on older people and their communities. Most of its readers will have little time, so offer a short summary and make it easy for them to skim through and find parts they are have a special interest in. Include these elements in your structure:

- title page: location, dates, authors, team members, organisations involved, acknowledgements
- summary of main findings
- rationale and objectives of research
- methods used and participants
- map showing research sites
- background information to sites
- main findings, by subject headings
- policy implications.

Section 3: Using your research

Introduction

This section covers what you need to think about – and do – to use your research findings to influence policy and practice, and to ensure that older people take part in this. Important questions to consider at this stage are:

- What changes do you want to achieve?
- Who do you want to influence?
- How will you present and share your findings?
- How will you plan a dissemination workshop?
- How will older people take part?
- How will you continue to influence policy?
- How will you measure impacts?

Use it as a checklist and a source of ideas.

Key points to remember

- ***Think ahead*** *The changes in policy and practice you hope to achieve will shape how you plan and carry out your research. So think about its use in advocacy from the outset.*

- ***Plan carefully*** *To advocate effectively, you need to pinpoint the specific changes in policy and practice you seek, the individuals and groups who might help effect change, and which of your research findings will persuade them to act.*

- ***Disseminate well*** *Draw key stakeholders' attention to relevant aspects of your research findings, and don't neglect wider publicity through the media if this is helpful.*

- ***Seek to create change*** *A key measure of the effectiveness of your research will be whether it creates positive change for older people.*

Planning your advocacy strategy

What changes do you want to achieve?

To ***advocate*** or influence effectively, you need to pinpoint the exact nature of the changes you seek to achieve. Start by thinking about the original purpose and objectives you set for your research. You may have aimed to:

- influence policy at national or local level
- change attitudes towards older people
- improve or develop programmes for older people
- increase older people's participation in decision-making.

Define the specific areas of policy and practice you seek to change. For example, if your objective was to influence government policy, what particular aspects of policy will you target? You might wish to focus on:

- **Legislation** How national laws affect older people.
- **Budgets** How governments and other institutions allocate resources.
- **Service delivery** How older people access services, and how effective, efficient and relevant these services are in meeting their needs.
- **Management** How organisations plan, implement and monitor their work.

The more precise your advocacy goals, the more successful you are likely to be in using your research to create change.

Case study: Defining advocacy messages

During HelpAge International research in Ghana (1998-99), older people identified health as a major issue. They said they resorted to different kinds of care in this order: home remedies, herbalists and other traditional healers, drug peddlers, clinics, and hospitals.

Hospitals, said one older man, were 'the last resort', because they were expensive, time-consuming and demanded payment on the spot. Clinics were cheaper and easier to get to. Older people set a high value on being listened to during diagnosis. In relation to formal health care services, key findings were:

- *Most older Ghanaians did not know that some state health care services were free to people aged 70 and over.*
- *When older people couldn't prove their age, health personnel decided whether they were eligible or not.*
- *Drugs were often in short supply, or only available commercially at high prices. Only one of the hospitals surveyed could treat older people free – because donors paid for its drugs.*
- *Some health personnel expected bribes to supply services and drugs.*

Specific areas for advocacy arising from the research included:

- ***Legislation*** *The government needed to raise public awareness and develop flexible guidelines to help poor people and older people access free care.*
- ***Funding*** *A well-funded, sustainable supply of drugs was central to implementing the policy of free health care for older people.*
- ***Management*** *There was a need to improve health personnel's understanding of the specific health needs of older people, and to develop clear lines of authority and accountability.*

Who do you want to influence?

Define your ***target audiences*** – key people and organisations you might influence to act on your research findings – carefully. Use the list of stakeholders you generated at the start of your research to help identify targets for advocacy and dissemination.

Remember that many different people and organisations contribute to making and implementing policies that affect older people. Your target audiences might include any of the following:

- government decision makers at national, provincial and local levels
- legal advisers
- religious organisations
- police
- government service providers
- non-government organisations
- older people's organisations
- local, national and international development and rights organisations
- radio, television, newspapers and other media.

How will you present and share your findings?

Think about how you ***disseminate*** your findings to the people and organisations you want to influence. Consider how you will present your findings, how you will share them with different groups of people and, most important, how older people will take part in the process.

You will need to use different approaches for different audiences. Busy decision makers may need a short briefing paper summarising your key research findings and policy implications. Journalists and broadcasters will need a clear, succinct 'story' shaped for their particular audiences.

At community and local level, you might present and share your findings through:

- community feedback meetings
- exhibitions of photographs or diagrams from your research
- information booklets in appropriate languages
- workshops with local leaders
- meetings with local government officers
- newspaper articles, radio and television reports.

At national and international levels, you might use:

- written reports
- briefing papers
- meetings with national government staff
- videos, newspaper articles, radio and television reports
- national dissemination workshops, conferences and other events.

Think about how you can use different media to put your message across. The same key messages about older people can be adapted for wider public education as well as the specific groups you identified as target audiences.

See Example 13: Using the media to raise public awareness, p77.

Practical tips: Using a report to influence policy

- ***Include a summary*** *Provide a separate summary of main findings and recommendations.*
- ***Make information accessible*** *Select and shape your material so that it is accessible to different stakeholders, and show how it relates to their concerns. But remain true to the perceptions and priorities of older people. For example, use their words or diagrams.*
- ***Be clear*** *Emphasise key findings for action, clarify which problems are serious and common, and bring out differences between research groups and sites. Provide solid evidence to support and illustrate views and perceptions. Avoid too much detail. If necessary, put additional information in an annex.*
- ***Identify key policy messages*** *Bring out different policy implications for different stakeholders clearly.*
- ***Make practical recommendations*** *Identify recommendations based on a realistic assessment of stakeholders' capacity, and an understanding of how national and local policies are implemented. Avoid recommendations which are unlikely to be put into practice.*

Practical tips: Using the media

- ***Press releases*** *Prepare a short press release, including an attention-grabbing statement about the situation of older people and brief information about your research, its purpose and context. If you mention an event, include date and time. Adapt for different audiences as necessary.*
- ***Radio interviews*** *If possible, talk with the interviewer beforehand about what you want to say. Stick to a few key points and repeat them in relation to different questions. Mention your organisation or a lead organisation that can be contacted.*
- ***Videos*** *Be clear about the purpose of the video and its audience, and if possible get professional help and provide a brief. Identify the key messages you want to get across and focus on older people talking. Decide whether you need a voiceover in different languages.*

How will you plan a dissemination workshop?

A ***dissemination workshop*** brings together different stakeholders to:

- review your research findings
- reflect on their activities in relation to older people
- discuss how they can work together.

Some of the key ingredients for a successful workshop are:

- Participation of older people, speaking about the realities of their lives.
- Participation of a key government stakeholder, providing endorsement and support.
- Media coverage of key issues raised by the research, prior to the workshop.
- Involving people and organisations that have not worked on ageing issues before.
- Identifying key policy implications for different sectors and interest groups.
- Using an experienced facilitator who understands policy processes.

Think about what you want the workshop to achieve. Your aims might include:

- sharing findings and getting feedback
- securing commitment to specific actions by representatives of participating organisations
- identifying indicators to monitor the impact of these actions.

Case study: Making an impact

In South Africa (1999), HelpAge International organised a successful one-day workshop for national government and non-government agencies to discuss the policy implications of its research and develop a joint action plan. Participants listened carefully to what older people said, responded to them and made clear commitments to action. Key elements were:

- *A draft research report was sent to all workshop participants.*
- *Proceedings opened with a brief overview of research objectives.*
- *The national director of social services made an inspiring presentation on the policy implications of ageing in South Africa.*
- *Research team members presented key findings and spoke about what they had learned.*
- *Older people from the research sites gave first-hand testimony and messages.*
- *Groups agreed action points and discussed how to make linkages across different government sectors, such as health and social development. They presented their action points to a panel of older people.*
- *Participants agreed and adopted resolutions on partnerships, participation and networking. They identified realistic actions that they could work on in the short and medium term.*
- *Workshop commitments and outcomes were included in the final research report, published immediately after the workshop.*

Participants should include:

- **Older people** Ask older people from your research sites to present first-hand testimony. For some, this will be the first time they have made direct contact with decision makers.
- **Research team members** Ask your researchers to present their findings, report on what they have learned and facilitate discussion sessions
- **Key stakeholders** Invite individuals from organisations you wish to influence, people who have supported or shown interest in your research, and individuals who can take action or influence other policy makers and people with authority.

Most workshops usually include:

- a short opening speech by a high-level key speaker, emphasising the importance of the research findings and lending legitimacy to them
- short presentations highlighting key findings
- presentations by advocates, including older people
- discussions about key policy implications or recommendations
- feedback from participants
- commitments to future action.

See *Example 14: Defining workshop outcomes, p78.*

Encouraging participants to plan and commit themselves to specific actions at the workshop should be a key goal of your advocacy strategy. Make sure that:

- Participants have time to agree realistic and practical actions to take forward.
- You identify how your own organisation might support them in taking action.
- You include workshop feedback and action points as an annex to your final research report.

Practical tips: Planning a dissemination workshop

- *Hold the workshop no later than six months after completing field research.*
- *During field research, identify community members to take part in the workshop.*
- *Send your draft final research report or a summary to all participants before the workshop.*
- *Include a workshop outline or agenda with the invitation.*
- *Arrange for a high-profile speaker, such as a government minister, to open the workshop.*
- *Send key media a press release beforehand and offer interviews with participants afterwards.*
- *Make sure key stakeholders can reach the workshop venue easily.*

How will older people take part?

Older people play a critical role in pinpointing what issues are important to them and what kinds of changes they want to see. Strengthening their capacity to advocate on the basis of experience is a key objective of participatory research.

Older people might take part in planning and implementing activities to influence policy and practice by:

- making presentations during national dissemination workshops
- giving interviews to the media
- recording their views and perceptions on video
- taking part in community feedback.

In planning for older people take part in a dissemination workshop, you should:

- explain the purpose and the structure of the workshop
- invite two or more people from each research community
- organise a meeting beforehand so older people can prepare
- arrange appropriate transport and accommodation
- make sure there are interpreters if necessary.

Case study: Older people speak out

During a national dissemination workshop in Ghana (1999), older people who had helped with the research spoke directly to participants about the issues it raised.

An older woman talked about livelihoods: 'Bush fires have caused a lot of problems for older people who farm cocoa. The government helped us for the first two years but now they have stopped. We are not government workers and have no pension. Cocoa is our livelihood, as well as yam and other crops. But we are not as strong as we were. Older people do many household chores such as looking after children, training them and keeping a good house.'

A paramount chief spoke about older people and government: 'Some of our older people didn't know they were entitled to free medical care. The research team told them this. Our older people told the team what they wanted and what the government and other agencies could do for them. Hope was revived that they could so something for themselves, and get loans to support agriculture, irrigation or gardening.'

A chief's representative spoke of older people's knowledge and experience: 'The research showed we took a lot of things for granted. We didn't realise that older people had so much experience. In the fishing community, for example, the older people know where to fish and which waters to avoid.'

Taking things forward

How will you continue to influence policy?

You can continue to influence policy – and get further value from your research – by building on the information, interest and contacts developed during your research project. Older people's participation will be central to this. Further activities might include:

- Additional publishing on issues raised by the research, for example, in local languages, or through articles in newspapers and journals.
- Supporting ongoing advocacy activities by older people's organisations, such as monitoring government and non-government organisations' progress on key action points, and taking part in relevant national and international meetings.
- Holding meetings with key stakeholders to review progress.

Lasting improvements for older people can be achieved when they take part in influencing policy development. They are their own best advocates. With the right kind of support, older people can:

- **Influence decision makers** For example, they could take part in national consultation meetings to develop Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers now required by the World Bank as a condition of funding in some of the world's poorest countries.
- **Take part in campaigns** For example, they could support work by other groups around issues that affect older people, such as poverty, children's education or community violence.
- **Increase their own visibility** For example, older people could argue they need to be taken into account in national HIV/AIDS programme planning and the distribution of international resources to reduce impacts.

Case study: Developing ongoing policy activities

After a national dissemination workshop to discuss research in South Africa (1998-99), HelpAge International's ongoing policy activities included:

- *A live interview about the research on prime-time national radio.*
- *Publication of leaflets on key issues for older people in local languages, plus a launch with high-level government, donor and non-government organisation representation.*
- *A review of commitments made at the dissemination workshop.*
- *An article published in a leading academic journal of gerontology.*
- *Participation in a region-wide World Health Organisation programme.*
- *Participation in an international research programme on chronic poverty.*
- *A successful joint campaign to get older people's pension rights reinstated in a province where they had been suspended as part of a government review.*

How will you measure impacts?

In the long term, the value of your research must be judged in terms of the change it creates for older people. This is not easy to measure, but a key step is to ensure that older people take part in advocacy activities and evaluating their impacts.

To build a picture of the effectiveness of your research, you should aim to:

- Think about indicators when planning your research.
- During fieldwork, ask older people what needs to happen locally and nationally and how this could be measured.
- Afterwards, ask partners and older people from your research sites for feedback.
- Develop new pilot programmes with older people in the research communities and support their advocacy activities.
- Conduct an impact review with agencies involved in the research.
- Keep communication channels open.
- Remember that advocacy is long term work.

Your research will impact on older people and their communities in different ways, and need different kinds of measurement. Depending on the capacity of your organisation, you might measure impacts at community and national levels by:

- **Revisiting research sites** You could repeat some of the visual exercises you used during research, such as maps and diagrams, compare the results, discuss any changes and their reasons with older people and community members, and plan further advocacy work with relevant organisations.
- **Monitoring government policy and practice** You could look at changes on the ground, for example in legislation affecting older people, or how services are delivered. To do this, you need to develop mechanisms for poor older people to record any changes they observe, hold meetings with them at regular intervals, and discuss the results with appropriate local and national government and non-government organisations.

Evaluating the impacts of your research will take time, energy and resources. But the process is critical to establishing the value of the investment already made, in terms of real change for older people.

It is also a key step to developing your organisation's longer-term capacity to influence complex policy processes through disseminating evidence effectively.

Case study: Carrying out an impact review

In 2000, a year after completing research in South Africa, HelpAge International reviewed its impacts on policy, practice and the lives of older people. Several groups took part: older people from one of the research sites, research team members, government representatives, and HelpAge International partner organisations.

The review consisted of workshops with the research team and partner organisations, and meetings with older people and government representatives.

Main findings were:

- *Some positive changes for older people had taken place – not necessarily as a direct result of the research. These included: nationwide government hearings on the abuse of older people; increased confidence among older people who had taken part; more information for older people at pension pay points; increased emphasis by non-government organisations on income-generation work for older people.*
- *Although government policies for older people had been developed, there was inadequate support for implementation in areas such as health services for older people. There had been no improvements in health services, but queuing time at pension pay points had been reduced.*
- *Research team members felt the research had changed their attitudes towards older people.*
- *Older people who had taken part in the research said that they felt that, during the national dissemination workshop, government officials had listened to them and understood. This had given them great hope for change in future.*

The government had taken forward some action points agreed to at the dissemination workshop. It had:

- *made a start on education activities about older people's rights*
- *begun the networking of social services databases*
- *distributed booklets on resources, services and contacts for older people*
- *built good public awareness of new national leaflets about services for older people with cancer and diabetes*
- *increased numbers of home visits made to older people by health staff in two provinces*
- *ensured family members were included on the health boards of two provinces.*

Non-government and community-based organisation had:

- *initiated education activities round older people's rights, including work with school children*
- *improved coordination with government on programmes for older people, especially to combat abuse.*

Section 4: Training and research tools

Introduction

This section contains a selection of practical tools, exercises and checklists to help you train your research team and share information effectively with older people, using participatory techniques. All have been field-tested and used by HelpAge International to support research.

It is designed to be used alongside *Section 1: Planning your research* and *Section 2: Carrying out your research*. It contains:

Exercises which explore attitudes to age

- What assumptions do we make about old age?
- How do we view older people?
- How do we feel about ageing?
- How do we define old age?
- What issues do older people face?

Listening and observation

- Listening skills checklist
- Observation skills checklist
- Guided walks

Semi-structured interviews

- Interview checklists

Visual tools

- Mapping
- Seasonal calendars
- Daily activities diagrams
- Trend lines
- Historical profiles
- Institutional diagrams
- Flow diagrams
- Livelihood analysis

Ranking and scoring

- Matrix ranking
- Wellbeing grouping

Use this sections as a source of ideas, and copy and adapt these exercises and tools for use in your own training and research activities. See *Further resources, p83,* for other sources of participatory exercises and tools.

Exercises which explore attitudes to age

The following exercises can be used to train your research team, or to raise awareness among policy makers or communities about attitudes towards ageing and older people. When introducing them, remind participants that our views are influenced by our own age and experience of older people, and by society's attitudes towards old age.

What assumptions do we make about old age?

Purpose To help participants to think about how they categorise people by age.

Key steps

- Ask participants to line up in order of age, with the youngest person at one end and the oldest at the other end. They should do this without talking.
- When everyone is in line, ask participants to talk to each other, find out each other's age and, if necessary, rearrange themselves.
- Then ask everyone to sit down and discuss the exercise. Was the line accurate the first time? Why? Why not? How did they categorise people by age? What assumptions did they make? How reliable are these assumptions?

How do we view older people?

Purpose To encourage participants to think about images of older people.
Materials Ask participants to bring examples of pictures of older people in newspapers, posters, photographs or magazines.

Key steps

- Ask each participant to spend one or two minutes looking at the pictures he or she has brought. Do the pictures show a positive, neutral or negative image of old age? Who are they aimed at?
- Ask each participant to show the pictures to the group and explain what he or she thinks about them.
- Facilitate a group discussion. What are the similarities and differences between the pictures? What image is most common? Are there any gender differences? Do the images reflect reality?

How do we feel about ageing?

Purpose To help participants explore feelings about themselves in old age.

Key steps

- Explain that the exercise will help participants think about themselves in the future. Say you will guide their thoughts.
- Ask them to sit comfortably, relax, take deep breaths, and close their eyes.
- Use the following text as your basis, and talking slowly with pauses, guide participants to visualise themselves as older people:

Let your mind go blank. Imagine you are in the future and you are 80 years of age (choose an age that is considered very old in your society). Picture yourself in your mind. Imagine what you look like, what you are wearing. Now focus on how you feel. How do you feel physically? What parts of your body do you feel most? How do you feel emotionally? What are you thinking about?

Now concentrate on your immediate environment. What do you see immediately around you? Where are you? Are you inside or outside? What are you doing? Are you with others or alone? If you are not alone, picture the people or person you are with and what they are doing. Now picture the wider environment. Are you in a city, town, or village? By the sea? Are there buildings, people or animals? What noises can your hear? What can you smell?

Now slowly return to the present. Keep your eyes shut and become conscious of your physical body, your presence here in this room and others around you. When you feel ready, open your eyes. Move if your feel like it.

- Then ask the group to divide into pairs and to discuss their visualisations with each other.
- Bring everyone back together and ask volunteers to tell the group about their visions.
- Facilitate a group discussion. Did participants feel the same or differently? Did they feel positive or anxious about old age? What have they learned from the exercise?

How do we define old age?

Purpose To help participants think about society's attitudes towards old age.
Materials An outline map of the country or region.

Key steps

- Display the map and ask participants to mark where they come from with a pen.
- Using the map, group participants by the country, region or district they come from.
- Ask each group to think of a well-known proverb or saying about old age from their place of origin, and to prepare a short 2-3 minute mime to convey this proverb or saying.
- Ask each group to perform their mime and other participants to guess its meaning.
- Facilitate a group discussion. Are there similarities and differences between countries, regions or districts? Why is this? Are the proverbs and sayings positive, negative or both?

What issues do older people face?

Purpose To explore issues facing older people and to show the value of visual representation.
Materials Large sheets of paper and pens.

Key steps

- Divide participants into smaller groups by gender, geographical area, professional background, or other shared characteristics.
- Give each small group a large sheet of paper and a pen.
- Explain that you would like each group to discuss the issues old people face today. Ask them to identify the four most important issues and show these visually (without using writing) on the sheet of paper.
- Bring participants back together, and ask each group in turn to show their visual representation and explain to the others what it represents. Encourage the others to ask questions about the diagram. Continue until each diagram has been explained.
- Facilitate a group discussion. Did all the groups identify the same issues and priorities? Why? Why not? Would older people agree with their analysis? How could they find out?
- Discuss using visual representations to generate discussion. How did the groups participate in creating the diagrams? How well were they able to integrate different ideas within the group in the diagram? How would the process have been different if older people and local people had taken part?

Listening and observation

Listening is the most important skill needed for participatory research. It is an active process and should involve as much effort and concentration as speaking. Good listening encourages more open communication, and produces better quality research.

The observation of interactions and relationships between people – how people behave – is also a key skill for participatory research. Observation helps us to grasp the underlying meaning of what people say in discussions, and to understand the reality of their daily lives better.

Listening skills checklist

Use this checklist during training or field research to ensure that good listening is taking place:

- **Prepare** Get ready to concentrate, mentally and physically.
- **Consider the person you are talking to** Think about how your appearance and manner may influence what a person says to you. Think about what he or she may want from the conversation. Identify the main message from what the person says. Look out for repeated points.
- **Notice non-verbal signs** Movement, eye contact and pauses can tell us a great deal about what a person speaking is feeling and about what is not being said.
- **Allow enough time** Give people enough time to think about what they want to say, and to say it. Do not rush or interrupt them.
- **Show acceptance** Always respect the views of the person you are listening to. Do not express judgements about what they say. Demonstrate interest and encourage them to speak by using socially appropriate body language.
- **Check your understanding** Ask for clarification if you are not sure what a person is trying to say. Repeat what they say and summarise main points, to check you have understood correctly. Ask if there is anything else they would like to say.

Observation skills checklist

Use these questions to improve your observation skills:

- **During group discussions** How do people relate to each other? Who dominates, who is silent? What causes the most enthusiasm, agreement or disagreement?
- **While observing activities** Who in the group performs which tasks? Are their roles based on age, gender or other criteria? What is the purpose of the activity? Who benefits from it? How long does it last? How often is it performed? What makes the activity easier or more difficult for different members of the group?

Guided walks

Guided walks – or transect walks – involve walking through the community with an individual or group of people who live there, to observe and talk about things of local importance. They can help you learn more about issues people have mentioned during interviews or mapping. You can use guided walks to find out, for example, how far people have to go to fetch water or fuel or to get to the

health centre, and what that journey is like. They help show your willingness to experience at least some aspects of people's lives. The skills of observation and listening are very important to this process.

Key steps

- Identify local people willing to walk with you through the community.
- Talk with them about what you want to find out, for example, where older people live.
- Walk through the community with your local guides.
- Observe, ask and listen. Take the opportunity to talk to other people along the way, and to ask about any problems or issues that are important.
- Draw diagrams or make notes to record important information, for example, about land use or water sources.

Practical tip: Working with older people

- ***Observe physical capacity*** *The ageing process can reduce our physical and mental capacities. Notice and be prepared to respond to any problems older people may experience, for example, in seeing, hearing, walking or sitting for long periods.*

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews – conversations based on a set of guideline questions – are a key technique in participatory research, and a powerful way of learning about the views of older people. They can be carried out with:

- **Individuals** A number of older people can be interviewed separately on the same topic to obtain a range of perceptions and feelings. Try to include those who are least likely to be consulted. Individual interviews should last no longer than 45-60 minutes.
- **Groups** Groups of older people – generally not more than 12 participants – can be interviewed together. You can use group interviews – which should last no longer than 90 minutes – to obtain different views on the same issue from, for example, older women and older men.
- **Key informants** These are people with special knowledge of a subject or community, such as health workers, religious authorities or village leaders.

Practical tips: Asking questions

- *Start your discussion with open questions, such as: I would like to hear about… Please would you tell us about… Open questions let people decide what and how much they want to say, and can generate detailed information and views.*
- *Follow up open questions with helper questions, such as: When do these problems affect you most? What do you think are the causes? Helper questions are good for finding out about facts and opinions in more detail.*
- *Avoid closed questions, for example: Is there a lot of violence here? Closed questions discourage people from speaking their own words and shut down discussion.*

Interview checklists

To conduct semi-structured interviews, you will need a team of two to three researchers – including an interviewer, an observer and a recorder. Make sure they speak the local language, or are accompanied by an interpreter. Use these checklists to guide the process:

Before the interview

- Make sure your team is clear about the aims of the activity.
- Discuss and select participants.
- Agree how you will introduce and explain the process to participants.
- Prepare a checklist of open questions to guide the interview.
- Seek permission to conduct the interview.

During the interview

- Make appropriate greetings.
- Explain why you are conducting the interview.
- Ask permission to take brief notes.

- Do not interrupt participants or other team members.
- Do not hurry people. Give them time.
- Look out for non-verbal signs and body language.
- Summarise and check the main points.
- Give feedback and thank participants.
- Explain what will happen next.

After the interview

- Agree and record main points.
- Collate information with other teams if applicable.
- List issues for further enquiry.
- Reflect on the process. What helped or made it difficult? How could it be improved next time?

Visual tools

Visual tools – such as maps, diagrams, seasonal calendars and daily activity charts – are an important element of participatory research. They enable older people to explore complex relationships and link issues in ways not possible through verbal methods alone, generating a deeper analysis of local issues and providing further insights into issues which have emerged in discussion.

Visual methods have many advantages. They:

- Enable everyone to take part as equals, especially people who do not read or write or who are weaker and poorer.
- Allow people to represent complex things simply and in their own way.
- Provide a clear focus for debate and discussion.
- Help people analyse information carefully, and compare their views with others.
- Are flexible. New information and perspectives can be added.

Visual exercises can be used with groups and individuals. In groups, they often lead to lively debate, and help highlight differences and similarities between the views of different people clearly. For example, the same issue can be discussed separately with women and men, or older and younger people.

You can also use maps, diagrams and other visual records when feeding back research findings to the community, in your final report, and in wider dissemination and advocacy. Visual exercises can also be re-run during monitoring and evaluation, to see what changes have occurred since the first visual record was made.

When using visual tools, the research team should act primarily as facilitators, allowing local people to become investigators. They should stand back and allow participants to get on with the exercise, observing but not directing.

The following exercises are some of the most commonly used visual tools. Use the key steps given as guidelines only – you will find that you develop your own best ways of working. Do things the way you feel is most appropriate, and expect to vary your approach as you gain experience and confidence.

Practical tips: Using visual exercises

- *Remember the most important outcome is not the map or diagram being created, but the discussion that takes place in creating it. Diagrams tell us things about the people who construct them.*
- *There are many ways to represent information visually, and each group you work with will have different perspectives on issues. Be inventive.*
- *Make use of local materials that people are familiar with.*
- *Maps and diagrams belong to local people, so copy them accurately at the end of the discussion, and record the date, location, participants and what the map or diagram represents.*

Mapping

Mapping – making visual representations of where things are or what kinds of movements take place within a community – is a good tool to begin with. It is straightforward to use, and less sensitive than some other exercises.

Resource maps show information such as where people live, which households have older people, or where the water points and roads are. Mobility maps show information such as how people move to and from fields, markets and schools, and can log migration patterns. Maps made by different groups within the community can highlight different perceptions, concerns and types of movement.

Maps made up on the ground using materials at hand, such as sticks and leaves, can be adapted and changed during discussion.

Key steps

- Find different groups of local people willing to take part.
- Choose a suitable place and materials to draw a map.
- Explain why you are there and what you are interested in. Start with simple questions such as: I do not know this place well, can you show me…?
- Let people make the map themselves. Be patient. Do not interfere.
- Observe how people work together, and what causes excitement or disagreement.
- Try to ensure everyone in the group takes part in the exercise.
- When the map is complete, ask the group to explain it to you.
- Ask questions and discuss issues the map raises, for example: Has it always looked like this? What has changed most?
- Copy the map accurately. You could photograph it.
- Crosscheck by repeating the mapping with other groups.
- Discuss the exercise with participants and decide together what to investigate next.

Seasonal calendars

Seasonal calendars – diagrams which show seasonal patterns and changes at different points in the year or across years – can generate strong discussion and analysis.

Seasonal calendars help show what factors affect people's lives and when, and the times they are under most pressure. For example, they can show changes in rainfall and farming activities, or identify patterns in work, illness or the availability of food and cash. Historical calendars show the same kinds of seasonal patterns and changes over several years. Calendars made by different groups enable you to compare perceptions.

You can use calendars to explore the relationship between different factors. For example, plotting seasonal patterns of food shortage and plenty, along with patterns of disease prevalence and patterns of cash flow, has revealed important insights into older people's ability to access healthcare when they most need it.

A seasonal calendar can be drawn on a large sheet of paper or on the ground using local materials. For example, quantities of rainfall can be shown using seeds, leaves, stones or other small objects. You can also use sticks broken into different lengths to show magnitude.

Key steps

- Select different groups of people, such as men, women and older people.
- Find a suitable place and materials to create a seasonal calendar.
- Ask participants when their year starts, how many seasons and months there are in a year, and what these are called. Do not impose your own ideas.
- Ask them to mark the year, seasons and months on their calendar.
- Encourage them to add detail to the calendar. For example, if you want to find out about rainfall patterns, ask: Which are the wettest months? Which are the driest months?
- Allow them to add things that they think are important, and to explain why.
- If you are making a historical calendar, ask people to tell you about changes over time.
- Discuss the calendar and any issues it raises.

Daily activity diagrams

Daily activity diagrams – visual representations showing how people spend a typical day – help researchers understand patterns and compare daily routines across different groups in the community.

They are especially useful for facilitating discussion about gender roles and the contributions of older people in the household and community. Older people can demonstrate how their lives have changed over time by constructing a diagram representing a point in their lives in the past and comparing this with the present. This can lead to discussion about causes or factors influencing change.

Key steps

- Select different groups of people, such as younger women, older women, or older men.
- Find a suitable place for drawing a diagram.
- Mark a line across the ground to represent a day. Ask participants what units of time they use to track the progress of a day (for example: morning, afternoon and evening; position of the sun).
- Ask them to mark these units on the line.
- Encourage them to add details. Allow them to add things they think are important and explain why.
- Discuss the diagram and any issues it raises.

Trend lines

Trend lines – lines drawn to show how things have changed over a period of time – can illustrate information on a wide range of topics, such as shifts in land use and income, changes in patterns of disease and access to health services, or alterations in population size.

Older people are particularly good sources of information on trends, and working with different age groups can generate valuable shared learning within the community. You can use trend lines to reveal different views about the same situation. You can compare different types of trends, for example, changes in land use and migration patterns, and probe the relationships between them.

Key steps

- Identify the topic – such as crop yields or prices – and the time period people want to discuss.
- Ask participants to draw a horizontal line starting from an agreed time in the past.
- Ask them to mark out a vertical line with appropriate units such as crop yields or price per bag.
- Ask them to mark up a trend line for the current year.
- Ask them to add information for other memorable years.
- Discuss the trend line. Ask why things were different in particular years.

Historical profiles

Historical profiles – visual representations of key events over a period of time – show how the past affects the present in a community They are useful tools for starting interviews and discussions. The period of time under discussion could be an individual's life history, or a recent run of years.

Older people's individual histories can reveal factors which determined choices made in the past, and provide a wealth of information about their skills and experiences that may be valuable resources in the present.

Key steps

- In the same way as for trend lines, decide what time period you want to find out about.
- Ask participants to draw a horizontal line starting from an agreed time in the past.
- Ask them to mark on the line any significant events that have taken place during this period, such as crop failure, war, building of clinic or road.
- Encourage them to give more detailed information.
- Try to find out how these events affected their lives at the time and how they affect their lives now.

Institutional diagrams

Institutional diagrams – visual representations which show how organisations or individuals influence people's lives – are a useful tool to show the relative significance of different actors on a community.

They show important organisations and individuals close to the centre point of the diagram, less important ones further away. These can be represented by different sized objects – such as fruits or stones – placed on the ground, or differently sized circles drawn on a large sheet of paper. Through institutional diagrams, groups and individuals can reveal their different perceptions about the role of institutions in their lives.

Older people have used these diagrams to highlight local institutions providing important types of support to them and their communities. They have also analysed the relationships between these and other institutions.

Key steps

- Ask participants to identify the key organisations and individuals which affect their lives.
- Ask them to show the most important ones as large objects or circles.
- Ask them to place these objects or circles at a distances from the centre of the diagram as follows:
  - separate: no contact
  - touching: information passes between them
  - small overlap: cooperation in decision-making
  - large overlap: considerable contact in decision-making.
- Or ask them to draw circles of different sizes and to use lines and arrows to show the relationships between them.
- Discuss the diagram and any issues arising from it.

Flow diagrams

Flow diagrams show causes, effects, and relationships. For example, a flow diagram could show the relationships between old age, security and livelihood. They can also show the impacts of an event, policy or programme on people's lives, for example the impact of new health policy on older people's wellbeing.

Key steps

To explore links and relationships:

- Pinpoint what issues or system people want to analyse.
- Discuss the issues or system with groups of older people or individual older people. Encourage participants to select symbols to represent them.
- Encourage participants to identify the causes and effects of the issues they have identified.
- Ask them to draw lines and arrows to show the links and relationships between issues.
- Use open questions and helper questions to obtain more detailed information and take notes of what people say.

To analyse impact:

- Pinpoint the event or policy people wish to analyse.
- Ask participants to represent the impacts and consequences, both positive and negative, of the event.
- Ask participants to link consequences, using arrows to indicate the direction of flow.
- Encourage participants to identify further effects and to group them into subsets if possible.

Livelihood analysis

Livelihood analysis – in which people analyse and quantify different sources of income and support – is a useful tool for finding out about sources of cash and non-cash income, expenditure and use of resources. It can help us understand how older people make resource decisions, their livelihood strategies, and how household resources are acquired and shared among members.

Key steps

- Identify a participant willing to talk about how his or her household is managed.
- Ask who lives in the household.
- Ask the participant to talk about livelihood resources (for example, community-owned resources, own produce, fuel, cash income) and to create symbols to represent them.
- Give the participant a number of beans. Explain that these represent all the types of non-cash and cash resources coming into the household. A round number between 50 and 100 beans is large enough to enable participants to distribute them among items to show relative proportions. Ask him or her to show how much comes from each source by placing the beans next to the symbols.
- Record the number of beans placed next to each symbol. The distribution of the beans can also be represented as a pie chart – a circle with segments representing proportions of the total number of beans.
- Then ask the participant to explain how household resources are used or spent and to identify symbols for each area of expenditure or use.
- Again, give the participant the same number of beans. Explain that these represent all the household resources and income. Ask him or her to show how much is used on each area of expenditure by placing the beans next to the symbols.
- Record the number of beans placed next to each symbol.
- To understand how different household members control and use income source or materials, this exercise can be done with different members of the household, including older people. Alternatively, older people can be asked to analyse the resources brought in and used by other members of their household.

Ranking and scoring

Ranking – putting things in order of priority – helps us understand how different groups perceive advantages and disadvantages. Scoring – indicating preference or weight – helps us understand why different groups of people hold particular preferences.

Ranking and scoring methods can be used to explore people's decisions about types of health provision, income earning activities, or types of produce grown. Methods of ranking are particularly useful because:

- Ranking enables people to discuss sensitive areas, such as an individual's level of income or wealth, without causing offence, because people are more willing to provide comparisons than hard figures.
- It is easier to get agreement on rankings than on absolute measurements.

Practical tips: Using ranking and scoring

- *Let people rank things in their own way, and allow them enough time to do it.*
- *Use people's own units of measurement.*
- *Use people's own names for whatever is to be ranked or scored.*
- *Probe the reasons for the order of the ranking or scores produced.*

Matrix ranking and scoring

Matrix ranking and scoring helps us understand what criteria people use when choosing certain options and why they make certain decisions.

Reasons for choices often differ from group to group. Women and men, older and younger people are likely to use different criteria, so it is important to carry out matrix ranking and scoring with different groups in the community.

Key steps

- Decide with participants what things they want to rank, such as health services or types of crops cultivated.
- Ask them to list all items in this category that are relevant to them.
- For each one, ask: What is good about it? What else? What is bad? What else?
- Encourage them to list positive and negative criteria identified. Make negative criteria positive, for example, long distance becomes short distance. All criteria must be consistent before asking people to score them, so that they do not give high scores to both negative and positive criteria.
- Ask participants to draw a matrix with items along one axis and the criteria along the other.
- Encourage participants to decide how well criterion is met for each item, for example, how well is the criterion 'low cost' met by various types of health service? For each criterion, ask: Which item is best? Which is next best? Which is worst?

- Ask participants to score each box of the matrix by placing counters such as seeds or stones on the matrix. There are many ways of doing this. They may score each box out of a given number, for example five or ten. They may prefer to 'free score' with no limit placed on the number of seeds per box. Another method is to allocate a much larger amount of seeds for each criterion, and ask participants to share these between the items to show the degree to which items fulfil each criterion.
- When the group are clear about the scoring, allow them to construct the matrix themselves. Observe any disagreements and how these are resolved.
- When the group are satisfied with the completed matrix, help them to analyse the scores. Ask them to count up the total scores along the rows and columns to see which item fulfils the criteria best.
- Check these findings. Sometimes the item with the highest score is not the true preference of the group and there may be an important reason that was not in their list of criteria. Ask the group: Which criteria are most important? If they could only have one item, which would they choose? Why?

Wellbeing grouping

Wellbeing grouping – in which individuals identify how advantaged or disadvantaged they feel in relation to others – can help us understand how different groups of people perceive wellbeing, which groups they feel have wellbeing or lack wellbeing, and why.

Wellbeing ranking exercises can be used with older people to identify the most vulnerable groups of older people (and other groups), and help them probe the nature of social exclusion. In many communities, older women, especially widowed or single women, have been found to be among the least well off according to local definitions.

Wellbeing grouping can be used to group all households in a locality or community according to perceptions of wellbeing or wealth of a range of informants. The following exercise can be used to understand general categories of wellbeing, their features and which categories different groups fall into.

Key steps

- Draw a line and identify which end shows possessing wellbeing and lacking wellbeing.
- Ask participants to describe the characteristics of these two extremes.
- Ask them individually where they would place themselves on the line.
- Probe for reasons. Look for factors such as lack of education or low self-esteem, as well as more obvious factors such as access to cash or land.
- Ask participants to identify any other groups in the community between each end.
- Ask for characteristics of these extra groups and probe for details.
- Continue until there are several clearly defined categories.
- Check the definitions and clarify anything you are not sure about.
- Discuss the wellbeing grouping and any issues it raises.
- Cross-check findings by facilitating the exercise with different groups and individuals.

Section 5: Practical examples

Introduction

This section contains examples of real materials developed and field-tested by HelpAge International and its members during recent participatory research projects, including forms, job descriptions, charts and checklists.

All the examples given are cross-referenced to processes described in *Section 1: Planning your research, Section 2: Carrying out your research*, and *Section 3: Using your research*.

It contains:

These examples can be copied or adapted for use in your own research activities, or used as examples in training.

Example 1: Using a project outline to win support

This one-page project outline was circulated at initial meetings with key stakeholders, such as government officials, about HelpAge International's planned research in Ghana (1998-99). It proved an effective tool to focus discussion and win practical support, including the loan of staff for the research team.

Project outline: Researching the contributions of older people

Introduction
Worldwide, populations are ageing rapidly. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of people over 65 is expected to increase by 93 per cent between 2000 and 2020. The percentage of older women will continue to grow, with important economic and social implications.

The research will draw directly on the views and experiences of poor older people to present a picture of their livelihoods and the dynamic ways in which they contribute to family and community. By capturing the detailed realities of their lives, it will help shape policies which support their needs and contributions.

Aims and objectives
The overall purpose of the research is to contribute to responsiveness of policies and services to the needs and capabilities of poor and disadvantaged older people in Africa. Its objectives are:

- To identify the livelihood strategies, perceptions of wellbeing and contributions of older people to family and community.
- To influence social policy discussion and decision making on issues which concern older people.
- To develop methodologies which enhance older people's participation in decisions which affect their lives.

Context
HelpAge International is a worldwide network of member organisations working to improve the lives of poor and disadvantaged older people. Members in Ghana and South Africa will take part in a first 18-month phase of the research in Africa, supported by funding from the UK government's Department for International Development.

HelpAge International member HelpAge Ghana will manage the research in Ghana. HelpAge International will provide overall management and support for the research activities and will disseminate findings throughout the HelpAge International network. Findings will also be used in each country and contribute to national objectives and activities on ageing.

Methodology
Written materials and reports will provide contextual material for the research. Participatory research exercises will provide qualitative information and give a voice to older people. Field research will be based on a mixture of methods. Techniques such as semi-structured interviews and participant observation will produce qualitative information. Visual methods, such as diagrams, will record and facilitate analysis on the spot.

The methodology will ensure that of older people (the primary stakeholders) take part in data gathering exercises and subsequent activities. The success of the research will depend on key secondary stakeholders, such as government departments, academics, non-government organisations and local institutions, helping to fine tune design, formulate objectives, implement findings and follow on with advocacy and policy work. Opportunities may present themselves for this research to contribute to Ghana's national plans for 1999 the International Year of Older Persons.

Example 2: Using an interview checklist to map perceptions

This interview checklist was used to guide discussions with government officials, non-government organisations and academics prior to HelpAge International research in Ghana (1998-99). The information gathered helped with research planning, and the views recorded were later compared with those of older people.

Interview checklist

We expect our discussion with you to last about 40 to 60 minutes.

I would be grateful for your views on what you feel are the main issues and problems facing older people, particularly poor older people, in Ghana today:

- How would you define older persons in Ghana?
- What are the conditions that make life most difficult for older people in Ghana today?
- Which older people so you feel are the most poor and disadvantaged?
- Why do you feel they are poor and disadvantaged?

I would like to know about current policies in Ghana affecting older people and your views on them:

- Which policies currently address issues of ageing and in which ways?
- How do older people benefit from these policies?
- Which policies if any do you feel affect older people negatively?
- How are older people affected by these policies?
- What are the most important policy issues for older people in Ghana?
- What do you feel are the priority areas for policy to address the needs of older people in future ?

I would be grateful for your views on services for older people:

- What are the main services currently most used by older people in Ghana?
- Which services do you feel they gain from most?
- How do they utilise these services?
- What do you feel are the barriers for older people in accessing or benefiting from this provision?
- Which services do you feel should be changed or developed to benefit older people?
- How would you change them?
- What kinds of services do you feel should be developed in future to meet the needs of older people?

Finally, would you tell me what kind of research you feel would assist in the development of policy and services for older people in Ghana today?

Thank you for your time.

Example 3: Recruiting a project coordinator

This is the start of a job description for a locally recruited coordinator for a programme of participatory research in Nepal (2000-01). It lays out clearly the tasks and qualifications required.

Job description

Job title: Project coordinator, Nepal research project

General tasks

- To work closely with HelpAge International, Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) and the Research steering committee to design and implement the research project successfully.
- To establish and manage the research team and necessary logistics in undertaking the project effectively.

Specific tasks

- To prepare a concept paper on the research project and arrange presentation meetings with potential donors within the country.
- To manage the recruitment of a participatory research facilitator.
- To organise an orientation workshop in Kathmandu for the research team, steering committee, non-government organisations and other stakeholders.
- To convene steering committee meetings as required to ensure their input at all stages of the project.
- To gather existing research materials and reports on older people and policy in Nepal.
- Together with the participatory training facilitator and HelpAge international, to organise workshops including two-week training for the research team, a synthesis workshop at the end of field research, and a national dissemination workshop.
- To help draft research findings and to produce and circulate a final report in Nepali and English.
- To initiate and support follow-up actions, including network development, and policy and programme development based on findings in Nepal.
- To monitor and report on budgets.

Experience

- At least 5 years' development work in a non-government organisation.
- Research experience with understanding of participatory methods, data analysis and report writing.
- Degree-level qualification, preferably in social sciences.
- Mature understanding of development issues.

Aptitudes and skills

- Excellent writing skills.
- Ability to analyse information and present clear summaries in English and Nepali.
- Good interpersonal skills, including the ability to interact with a range of people at all levels.
- Good organisational and administrative skills.
- Familiarity with budgets, financial accounting and reporting.
- Ability and willingness to travel within the country.

Example 4: Agreeing a memorandum of understanding

This memorandum of understanding was agreed at the start of HelpAge International research into the situation of older people in Nepal (2000). It ensured that both partners were clear about aims, processes and commitments.

Memorandum of understanding

Parties involved
HelpAge International and its regional development centre in Chiang Mai, Thailand, and the Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN) agree to this memorandum of understanding.

Background
Ageing issues have not really caught the attention of the government or civil society organisations in Nepal. Yet many credible and capable non-government organisations are now showing an interest in supporting older people as part of their work. HelpAge International and NEPAN wish to undertake a participatory research project into the contributions, capacities and concerns of disadvantaged older people in Nepal and to feed this knowledge and information into policy and programme development.

Objectives

- To assess the situation of older people in Nepal, with older people.
- To enable older people to participate and influence policy and action.
- To foster the growth of a Nepalese network of organisations working with older people.

Outline of process

- Identify partners and stakeholders.
- Form an advisory steering group of partners and stakeholders.
- Identify research team.
- Select and visit sites.
- Train research team.
- Collect data and create site reports.
- Feed back information at community, village and district committee levels.
- Hold synthesis workshops.
- Draft report.
- Hold national dissemination workshop.
- Translate, produce and disseminate final report.
- Press for implementation and follow-up.

Timescale
The research project will last for a minimum of 10 months and a maximum of 12 months, starting 1 July 2000 and ending not later than 30 June 2001. HelpAge International can extend this timescale only after a careful review of the whole process at the end of the twelfth month.

Funding
HelpAge International will provide £10,000 at the start of the project. Any extra funds required will be raised from in-country sources by the Non-government organisation consultative forum, Research steering committee and HelpAge International.

Management
A Project coordinator, recruited jointly by HelpAge International and NEPAN, with advice from the Research steering committee, will manage the project. NEPAN will oversee the budget, which will be managed on a day-to-day basis by the Project coordinator.

Role of HelpAge International
HelpAge International will:

- Offer technical support throughout the project.
- Ensure quality and professional standards of research.
- Review progress periodically with the project coordinator.
- Review progress periodically with the Research steering committee.
- Deal with any management problems.

The Programme development adviser, based at HelpAge International's regional development centre, will act as first point of contact. The Research and training manager and the Organisational development coordinator, based at HelpAge International's London office, will provide technical inputs in the form of training, resource material, and feedback.

Role of NEPAN
NEPAN will:

- Provide office space.
- Supply all necessary logistical support to the research team.
- Manage the Project coordinator on a day-to-day basis.
- Convene regular briefing sessions with the Consultative forum.

The National coordinator, based in NEPAN offices, will act as first point of contact.

Disbursement of funds
HelpAge International will disburse the grants on a quarterly basis, after satisfying itself on progress made in the preceding quarter. The fund management rests with NEPAN, through the Project coordinator. Any funding secured from in-country sources will be credited to NEPAN under a separate account, which will be administered by NEPAN National coordinator, Project coordinator and a member designated by the Research steering committee.

Outputs
The final report containing the research findings and analysis and another document outlining the process of the research will form the main outputs.

Ownership of outputs
NEPAN and HelpAge International will own the reports and information collected. They will be named as authors of the documents. HelpAge International will be responsible for publication.

Ownership of equipment
If an in-country network of agencies committed to ageing concerns in Nepal has come into existence by the end of the project, it will receive the equipment and furniture purchased for the purpose of the project. Otherwise, these items will be owned by NEPAN.

Dissemination
HelpAge International, NEPAN, the Research steering committee and the Consultative forum will develop mechanisms to disseminate research findings and follow up work at the end of the project period.

Review
This Memorandum of understanding will be reviewed jointly by HelpAge International and NEPAN six months after it is signed and executed by both the parties, and amended as required.

Disputes
In the event of a dispute, either side may invite the Regional representative of HelpAge International's Regional development centre to advise. In the event of any legal questions arising, these will be dealt with in accordance with the laws of Thailand.

Signed (for NEPAN)

Name:

Position:

Date:

Signed (for HelpAge International)

Name:

Position:

Date:

Example 5: Using a stakeholder analysis chart

This stakeholder analysis chart was used while planning HelpAge International research in Ghana (1998-99). It helped identify stakeholder groups and pinpoint current and potential roles in a clear visual format.

Stakeholders	**Role in research design and funding**	**Role in research planning**	**Role in research implementation**	**Role in research dissemination and follow up**
Older people, especially poor older people		Support pre-planning meetings	Central to data gathering, analysis and feedback	Give feedback Take part in national dissemination workshop Support media coverage Lead advocacy longer term?
Ghanaian government ministries and other bodies		Help set objectives and advise on research design. Help form research team	Take part in research team	Hold press conference Hold national dissemination workshop
Centre for Social Policy Studies dissemination		Advise on research methods and questions	Take part in research team	Take part in national workshop Lead ongoing policy work with Ghanaian Department of Welfare
National House of Chiefs and secretariat		Help set objectives	Act as key informants	Give local feedback Take forward local development plans
HelpAge Ghana and affiliates	Design budget	Support all activities	Manage and take part in in research team	Help coordinate and take part in dissemination and publishing activities
Community-based organisations and non-government organisations		Provide facilitator Offer consultation	Take part in research team?	Take part in dissemination workshops
HelpAge International	Write proposals Ensure funding	Work with HelpAge Ghana	Support and take part in training and fieldwork	Disseminate findings through HelpAge International network and beyond Publish findings
Academic organisations in Ghana		Help set objectives Advise on research design		Take part in dissemination workshops and publicise findings
International non-government organisations		Discuss Consult		Take part in dissemination workshops and publicise findings
International donor agencies		Share information		Take part in dissemination workshops Help fund proposals
UK Government Department for International Development	Advise on research Provide funding	Advise Consult	Advise?	Take part in UK workshop Shape donor policy on older people.

Example 6: Recruiting a participatory facilitator

This is the start of the job description used to recruit the key post of facilitator during the planning stage of HelpAge International research in Ghana and South Africa (1998-99), clarifying key tasks and skills.

Job description

Job title: Participatory learning and action (PLA) facilitator, Ghana and South Africa

Job purpose
To help HelpAge International implement an 18-month participatory research project into the contributions of older people to development in Africa. The postholder will work closely with the Training and research manager in London and partners in Ghana and South Africa to implement a programme of participatory research in both African countries.

Key tasks

- To contribute to the design and planning of research team training.
- Together with partner organisations, to organise training workshops and recruit a local trainer in Ghana and South Africa.
- To facilitate training for a research team and field research activities in both countries.
- To help research teams to collate research findings, write site reports, and plan and implement community feedback.
- With partner organisations, to organise a one-day national dissemination workshop for government and NGO participants, highlighting key findings and policy implications.
- In consultation with HelpAge international and partners in Ghana and South Africa, to write up results, and contribute to research up-dates, briefing papers and reports for dissemination.
- To assist partners in budget management, ensuring financial reports are received according to agreed systems.

Qualifications and experience

- At least four years' experience in designing and facilitating PLA training workshops and carrying out field research in Africa.
- Participatory policy research experience in Africa.
- Data analysis and report writing skills.
- First-degree or higher-level study, preferably in social sciences.
- Mature understanding of development issues.
- Ghanaian or South African languages and English.

Attitudes and skills

- Excellent interpersonal and team work skills, including the ability to communicate with a range of people and organisations.
- Ability to analyse information and present clear summaries in English.
- Good organisational and administrative skills.
- Ability to use word processor and spreadsheet, familiarity with budgets and financial reporting.
- Ability and willingness to travel extensively.

Example 7: Preparing a timeframe

This timeframe was prepared to support HelpAge International research in Africa (1998-99). It gave a useful overview of what needed to happen when, who was responsible, and what kinds of workloads there would be at different stages in the project.

Activities	People responsible	Apr–Jun 1998	Jul-Sep 1998	Oct-Dec 1998	Jan-Mar 1999	Apr-Jun 1999	Jul-Sep 1999
Recruit academic mentor Recruit PLA Coordinator	HelpAge International staff TRM	■					
Establish advisory group	TRM	■	■				■
Hold advisory group meetings	DD, TRM		■				
Plan PLAs in Ghana and South Africa	TRM, PC		■				
Visit fieldwork countries to help organise PLA team members, fieldwork sites and background material Meet with policy makers	TRM, PC		■				
Recruit PLA facilitators for Ghana and South Africa	TRM, PC, partners		■				
Prepare PLAs	TRM, PC, partners		■	■			
10-day training followed by 10-15 day PLA and feedback in three sites in Ghana and South Africa	PC, TRM		■	■	■		
Hold policy workshops in-country	PC, TRM					■	
Liase with academic mentor in UK	TRM (PC when possible)	■	■	■	■	■	■
Keep up-to-date with literature and draw on experience within the HelpAge International network	TRM	■	■	■	■	■	■
Research news, briefing papers and other relevant reports	TRM: other HelpAge International staff	■	■	■	■	■	■
Prepare reports and Phase 2 proposals for key donor: the UK government's Department of International Development	TRM						■

Key
DD = Director of Development, PC = PLA Coordinator, PLA = Participatory learning and analysis, TRM = Training and research manager, HelpAge International

Shaded areas: main periods of activity

Example 8: Using a training workshop timetable

This timetable was created for a residential training workshop held before HelpAge International research in Ghana (1998-99). It gave a clear overview of activities during the workshop, and could be modified as training proceeded to respond to new team needs.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Days 6 & 7
Research objectives Ageing and development Perceptions of ageing Policy discussion	Introducing Participatory Action and Learning (PLA) Gender analysis Listening and communication skills	Mapping Guided walk in community Team building Trend lines; Ranking and scoring (1) Historical time lines	Daily activity charts Seasonality diagrams Working in the community Ranking and scoring (2)	Field guide (1) Questions checklists Preparation for field work *Fieldwork* Perceptions of old age	Rest
Day 8	**Day 9**	**Day 10**	**Day 11**	**Day 12**	**Days 13 & 14**
Review of Day 5 fieldwork Wellbeing analysis Discussion of livelihoods Institutional analysis Flow diagrams	Review: research objectives and methods Recording; field report writing Field guide (2) Preparation for fieldwork	Team sharing of fieldwork plans *Fieldwork* Discussions round health and livelihood strategies Report writing Presentation of team reports	Review of draft field guide (3) Community profiles for first 2 research sites Preparation and transport plans field research	Prepare for travel and six weeks' fieldwork	

Example 9: Agreeing a field research guide

These are the main headings of a field research guide agreed by researchers during a training workshop before research in Ghana (1998-99). The guide ensured that team members worked consistently with each other, even when operating in separate groups, and provided a clear framework within which to assemble and analyse research findings.

Field research guide

Key themes for investigation

- Definitions of old age, by older people and others.
- Wellbeing, poverty and vulnerability amongst older people.
- Older people's livelihood strategies.
- Older people's contributions to family and community.
- Support systems for older people.
- Health status of older people.
- Services and access to services for older people.

Principal research targets

- Older women and men.
- Locally identified disadvantaged rural and urban older people.
- Older female heads of households.

Viewpoints sought

- Different categories of locally identified poor older women and men, including:
  – older people with disabilities or handicaps
  – widows and widowers
  – carers of older people (providing physical or financial or other support)
  – pensioners.
- Children and family members of disadvantaged or handicapped older people.
- Service providers (private and public), social service providers, churches, non-government organisations, traditional healers, bone setters, spiritual leaders.
- Local planners, community leaders and decentralised branches of government.
- Identified local institutions and associations.

Key areas of investigation matched with research tools

- **Definitions of old age, by older people and others**

  Research tools: Semi-structured interviews with older men and women; scoring techniques for criteria of old age.

- **Wellbeing, poverty and vulnerability amongst older people**

  Research tools: Wellbeing ranking (women and men); flow diagrams (women and men).

- **Older people's livelihood strategies**

  Research tools: Daily activity chart (women and men); scoring and ranking according to the criteria given above (women and men); livelihood analysis diagram and scoring (pie chart); flow diagram (women and men); seasonal analysis diagrams (women and men).

- **Older people's contributions to family and community**

  Research tools: Daily activity diagrams (women and men); ranking of activities; seasonal diagrams; historical time lines; ranking and scoring.

- **Support systems for older people**

  Research tools: Institutional diagrams; ranking and scoring of groups and individuals on nature of support (according to criteria given by participants).

- **Health status of older people**

  Research tools: Seasonal diagram; flow diagram for causes and effects; ranking and scoring; pairwise ranking; matrix ranking of services.

- **Services and access to services for older people**

  Research tools: Institutional analysis (women and men); social map; ranking and scoring of adequacy, quantity and quality of provision, distribution; matrix ranking of criteria such as affordability, physical accessibility, distance; pairwise ranking.

Example 10: Matching research questions and methods

This table was drawn up during research in South Africa and Ghana (1998-99) to match main themes of enquiry and possible research methods. It gave a clear overview for reference while planning daily activities.

Research questions	Research methods
Perceptions of wellbeing Older people's perceptions and definitions of wealth, poverty and wellbeing. Local terminologies and descriptions. Gender differences in perceptions.	■ Semi-structured interviews ■ Social mapping ■ Wellbeing ranking of criteria and indicators
Livelihood strategies Older people's livelihood activities. Gender analysis of access to resources, consumption and expenditure. Seasonal variations, changes in strategy over time, times of crisis. Coping and adaptive strategies.	■ Livelihood analysis diagramming ■ Resource mapping ■ Seasonal calendars ■ Trend lines and analysis ■ Semi-structured interviews
Contributions of older people Living arrangements, family composition, relationships and responsibilities. Daily activities (men and women). Perceptions of role in household and/or community. Skills and social capital. Views on how to sustain desired contributions.	■ Daily routine diagramming ■ Institutional analysis ■ Semi-structured interviews ■ Focus group interviews
Support and services Family and community support structures, and perceptions of change in these. Role of local institutions, individuals, non-government and government bodies in service provision. Gender perceptions of access to services (health, credit, and education).	■ Institutional analysis ■ Matrix ranking of service criteria ■ Semi-structured interviews ■ Focus group discussions
Health Priority local issues in the areas of health and nutrition. Perceptions of ill health, causes, seasonality and treatment (women and men). Knowledge, skills and role in healthcare. Healthcare strategies. Views on provision, preference, access and improvement of services.	■ Semi-structured interviews ■ Matrix ranking – diseases, services/strategies ■ Focus group interviews
Access to services Older people's perceptions of key issues in gaining access to services and support. Views on priorities for policy and practical support for older people in reducing poverty and improving wellbeing.	■ Included in above discussions and analysis ■ Semi-structured interviews ❖Focus group interviews

Example 11: Using a preparation and recording sheet

HelpAge members and partners in Tanzania, Mozambique, Ghana and South Africa have used variations of the following sheet in training and field research.

Field research preparation and recording sheet

Date of research:

Location:

Team members:

Participants (e.g. group of six older women):

Introduction (e.g. purpose of discussion, what will be done with information):

Main themes of enquiry:

Question checklist and/or visual methods used:

Main findings:

Observations (e.g. areas of dispute and agreement, dominating views, gender differences):

Issues for follow-up:

Example12: Synthesising site reports

These notes summarise activities at a five-day synthesis workshop held at the end of fieldwork for HelpAge International research in Ghana (1998-99). The researchers worked together to collate findings from three different research sites, and identified key findings to take forward into a final report.

Notes on synthesis workshop: Ghana 1999

Background

- During fieldwork, six site reports had been produced, for two research sites in each of three districts.
- Site reports were structured under the seven key themes for investigation agreed by the research team before field research.
- The team had split into two small groups. Each group researched one site in each district, so that site reports from different groups could be checked against each other.

Synthesis process

- At the start of the workshop, copies of all six site reports were given to every team member.
- Working in the same small groups used during fieldwork, team members studied all seven themes for investigation.
- They looked at findings under the theme in each site report, asking:
  - Which findings were the same for all the different sites?
  - Which findings were different across different sites?
  - Were any of the similarities or differences linked to cultural, gender or geographical variations?
- Each small group noted key points on a flipchart, plus linked site report reference.
- The groups shared these notes with each other, and pulled together an agreed set of key points to take forward into the final report.

Daily timetable

Day	Theme for investigation	Notes
1	1	Both groups studying the same theme across all six site reports, noting key points and references, then sharing findings at the end of the day
2	2	
3	3 and 4	Each group studying a different theme and presenting it for whole team discussion at the end of the day
4	5 and 6	
5	7	

Notes

- When the first theme for investigation had been discussed, the teams began to see more and more links and cross-references between themes. As discussion went on, team members helped each other to pinpoint and illustrate main points for the final report.
- Both small groups worked on the same theme for the first and second days. On the remaining days, they took different themes. They were still able to crosscheck findings because both small groups had visited all the sites at different points during fieldwork.

Example 13: Using the media to raise public awareness

This is the edited transcript of a radio interview with HelpAge International's Programme director in South Africa on a popular national radio programme, after the completion of research into older people's contributions. It shows important areas of debate and discussion can reach a wider audience through the media.

PM Live: Interview transcript

Interviewer: What did your research find? Isn't it sometimes a misconception that older people aren't worth very much in our communities?

Thembi Mapetla: Older people want to make it known that they do a lot for their communities, especially in caring for children. Families often depend on older people's pensions, which are used to pay for food, school fees and clothing. Older women are often helping raise grandchildren. We found older people defined old age as an increasing dependence on other people – not chronological age. Health is also an important factor. In South Africa, older people often lack proper access to healthcare – for example, transport can be a problem. When they get to health institutions, they find there is no medication. Or they are not examined because staff assume they are suffering from old age instead of specific diseases.

Interviewer: How wide was your survey?

Thembi: It covered four areas: two in Natal, one in Northern Province and one in Guateng. We wanted to make sure we listened to the voice of older persons in several different environments.

Interviewer: Is the voice of older people being heard here in South Africa?

Thembi: In our research, the voices of older people really came out, because we asked older people themselves how they viewed the situation and what they wanted to say.

Interviewer: So apart from the media, who does this research go to now?

Thembi: It will go to policy makers, so that when they make policies they take into account what the older people are saying, and to service providers, to encourage them to provide services which fit with older people's needs.

Interviewer: What did you find hurt older people most about the misconceptions about them?

Thembi: Older people told us that what hurt them most was lack of dignity – in the eyes of society, and when they are fighting for services. They were unhappy with their meagre pensions. Apartheid policies, especially the Land Act, removed and resettled people to different areas. Older people in rural areas lost their land and livestock – not being able to farm really hurt them. They also dislike it when service providers and policy makers decide on their behalf instead of asking them what they want.

Interviewer: Now judging from the areas that you said you covered, your research was mainly concerned with black older people. But aren't there also problems for older people in poorer white communities?

Thembi: Yes, there are, although apartheid policies made sure that more black people are poor than white people.

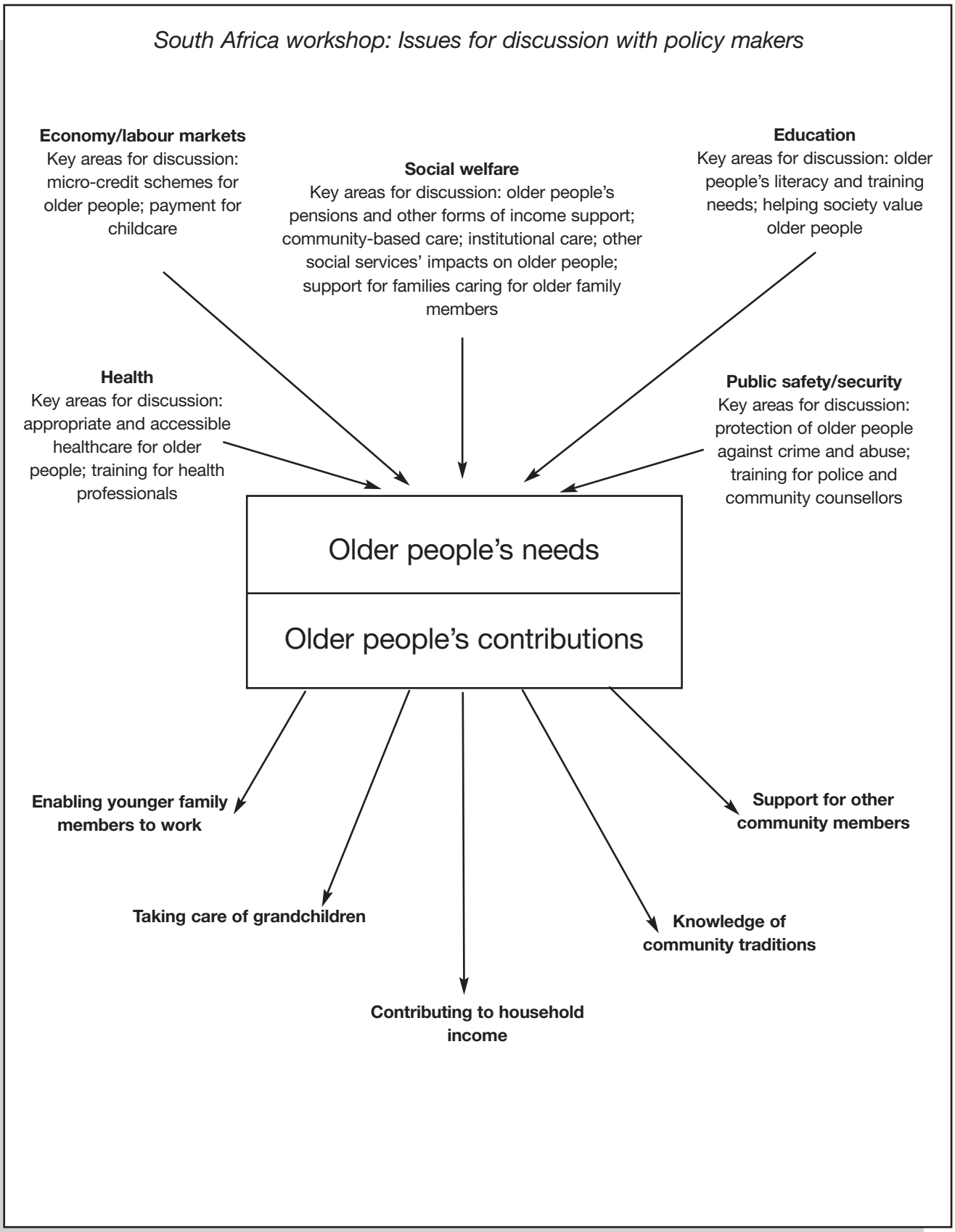
Interviewer: Do you think that your study is going to change attitudes and minds here?

Thembi: I believe so. I am a service provider and I have certainly learned from the research. And at the dissemination workshop we held, there were policy makers from the South Africa's Department of Welfare who really want to take the issues forward.

Interviewer: Thanks very much, Thembi Mapetla.

Example 14: Defining workshop outcomes

At the end of a dissemination workshop in South Africa (1999), a diagram was drawn up to show clearly older people's needs in relation to key areas of government responsibility, and their contributions to society in return. Copies were given to the participants for future reference planning and discussion with policy makers.



Glossary of terms

An a-z overview of key terms relating to participatory research as they appear in Sections 1, 2 and 3 of this sourcebook, where they appear in ***bold italic*** on first usage.

Advisory group A group of experts or influential individuals, normally assembled at the planning stage of research, who can help clarify your research objectives, advise on methods and processes, and communicate key findings to other individuals and organisations which can act on them.

Advocacy The systematic and planned communication of key research findings to stakeholders and target audiences, with the aim of influencing policy and practice in ways that create positive change.

Background research Investigation into what information is already available on the topics you plan to investigate, conducted during the planning stage of your research. Used to help clarify research objectives and avoid duplicating information.

Community profile Compilation of key economic, social, cultural and environmental information about a research community, normally put together before fieldwork. Helps researchers refine key areas of enquiry and develop a shared understanding of the communities they will be working with.

Daily activities plan A practical summary of what will happen when, and who will be involved, in the course of field research. Generally put together one or two days before research takes place, to make full use of recent findings and contacts made.

Dissemination The process of sharing research findings with different target audiences, through workshops, publishing activities, discussions with individuals, and the media, wherever possible using direct evidence or testimony from participants. *See Example 13, Using the media to raise public awareness, p77.*

Dissemination workshop Formal gathering of key stakeholders, generally lasting a day, to learn about your research findings, discuss their implications for policy and practice, and commit themselves to future actions on the basis of those findings. *See Example 14: Defining workshop outcomes, p78.*

Field research The process of enabling individuals, groups and key informants within the research community to conduct their own analysis, using a wide range of participatory techniques including interviews and visual tools. *See Example 10: Matching research questions and methods, p74.*

Field research guide Summary of research objectives, key themes and questions, key informants and research methods, agreed before field activities begin, generally during the training workshop for researchers. *See Example 9: Agreeing a field research guide, p72.*

Final report Formal published report on research findings and their implications, used in national and international dissemination and advocacy activities, and based on your research team's discussion and analysis of findings from all research sites at the synthesis workshop.

Indicators Systematic measurements of impact which enable you to assess whether or not you have achieved the purpose and objectives you have defined for your research. Indicators can range from perceived changes in services perceived by older people, to national reports or policy statements. They can be identified and monitored by different groups of stakeholders, but most importantly by older people themselves.

Key informants People or groups whose viewpoints and knowledge will be critical to the achievement of your research objectives.

Memorandum of understanding A formal written agreement used when several organisations are involved in taking forward a research project, summarising respective roles and responsibilities, and signed by all partners. *See Example 4, Agreeing a memorandum of understanding, p65.*

Objectives The specific goals you need to meet in order to achieve the overall aim or purpose you have defined for your research project.

Participatory facilitator The person who trains research team members, leads the field research team, helps them record and analyse findings, and prepares the final report. *See Example 6: Recruiting a participatory facilitator, p69.*

Participatory research A general term for investigations using principles, approaches and methods that enable local people to conduct their own analysis and that involve personal and institutional change.

Preparation and recording sheet Standardised sheet used to plan and record discussions during fieldwork, and which informs the basis of site reports. *See Example 11: Using a preparation and recording sheet, p75.*

Preparatory visit Visit made to the research community before field research, to inform people about the aims, processes and timing of the research, win their support and agreement, and gather further information from them to feed into a community profile.

Project coordinator The person responsible for day-to-day management of tasks in the course of a participatory research project, such as making sure activities are carried out as planned, and monitoring budgets. *See Example 3, Recruiting a project coordinator, p65.*

Project outline One-page summary of the context, purpose and methods of a planned research project, used to brief and gain the support of key stakeholders before research begins. *See Example 1: Using a project outline to win support, p62.*

Purpose Brief statement of the core aim of your research, summarising the overall change that you want to achieve, and often requested in research funding proposals.

Research team A group of people, preferably from a range of educational and professional backgrounds, recruited to carry out participatory research. Key tasks include taking part in initial training, field research activities, writing up site reports, analysing findings at the synthesis workshop, and disseminating findings at community feedback sessions and national dissemination workshops.

Research sites Locations where field research takes place. One or more sites are selected, using agreed criteria. Differences between sites may have important implications for policy development.

Semi-structured interviews Discussions with key informants, based round a checklist of questions you prepare beforehand. *See Example 2: Using an interview checklist to map perceptions, p63.*

Site report A written summary of key findings from a particular site made by researchers at the end of activities at that site, based on notes completed after discussions with individuals and groups. At the end of fieldwork, site reports are analysed and synthesised to form the basis of a final report. *See Example 12: Synthesising site reports p76.*

Stakeholders People and groups affected by the outcome, or able to affect the outcome, of your research. They should be involved in helping you plan, monitor and review your research; disseminating and publicising key findings; helping bring about change; and evaluating the longer term impacts of your research activities.

Stakeholder analysis A chart, generally drawn up while planning research, which identifies all the key stakeholders of your research project, and what they will be able to contribute to the planning, implementation and dissemination stages of your research. *See Example 5: Using a stakeholder analysis chart, p68.*

Synthesis The ongoing process of putting together, summarising and analysing findings during field research (using preparation and recording sheets); immediately after field research (in the form of site reports); and at the end of the research project (by writing a final report).

Synthesis workshop A meeting, generally lasting several days and held shortly after the end of fieldwork, in which the whole research team discusses, analyses and agrees key findings from site reports. A key task is to agree the main headings and related evidence for a final report.

Target audiences Key people and organisations you wish to influence to act on the basis of your research findings. Many of these will be identified as stakeholders at the start of your research. They may include older people's organisations, government decision-makers, non-government organisations, and the media.

Timeframe Chart which lays out how long different activities take, and when, and helps pinpoint budgetary requirements. *See Example 7, Preparing a timeframe, p70.*

Training workshop Training session for your research team, held before fieldwork begins, which aims to consolidate and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes they will need during field research; to agree key processes; and to share information. *See Example 8: Using a training workshop timetable, p71.*

Further resources

A selection of useful practical materials, documented experiences, contacts and networks around the world, relating to participatory research, ageing and development.

Publications

A rough guide to PPAs: An introduction to theory and practice
Norton, A, Bird, B, Brock, K, Kakande, M, and Turk, C. London: Overseas Development Institute (ODI), 2001
Participatory poverty assessments (PPAs) aim to improve the effectiveness of poverty reduction actions by including the views of poor people in analysis. This booklet provides practical guidance on designing and managing PPAs to ensure they influence policy.
Available from ODI, 111 Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JD, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399 Email: odi@odi.org.uk Website: www.odi.org.uk

Participation in poverty reduction strategies
McGee, R, Norton, A. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies (IDS), 2000
Reviews a wide range of participatory approaches to national policy development and highlights the challenges in developing participatory, country-owned strategies for poverty reduction.
Available from IDS Publications Office, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK
Fax: +44 (0) 1273 691647 Email: idsbooksatsussex.ac.uk
Website: www.ids.ac.uk/ids/publicat

Participatory Learning and Action: a Trainer's Guide
Pretty, J, Guijt, I, Thompson, J and Scoones, I. London: IIED, 1995
Comprehensive, user-friendly guide for new and experienced trainers in the use of participatory learning and action (PLA) methods, designed for use by researchers, practitioners, policy makers, community-based workers or community members. Spanish and English.
Available from Earthprint, PO Box 119, Stevenage, Herts SG1 4TP, UK
Fax: +44 (0) 1438 748844 Email: orders@earthprint.com Website: www.earthprint.com

PLA notes
International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)
Informal series, published three times a year, to enable people using participatory methods from around the world to share practical experiences, reflections and innovations.
Available from IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street , London WC1H ODD, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 7388 2826 Email: planotes@iied.org Website: www.iied.org

Whose reality counts? Putting the last first
Chambers, R. London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997
The author explains the methodological revolution brought by participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and shows how the approach can empower poor people to express and analyse complex realities which challenge the assumptions made by development professionals and those with power. He argues that personal, professional and institutional change is required if poor people are to be equal partners in future development agendas.
Available from IT Publications, 102 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 7436 2013 Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk Website:
www.developmentbookshop.com

Whose voice? Participatory research and policy change
Holland, J and Blackburn, J (eds). London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1997
Shows how poor people can influence and change policy through participatory (PRA) methods and practices. Contains case studies of how to use participatory research techniques to influence policy, along with examples of the approach in action and evidence of its impacts.
Available from IT Publications, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH, UK
Fax: +44 (0)20 7436 2013 Email: orders@itpubs.org.uk Website:
www.developmentbookshop.com

Websites

www.eldis.org
The Eldis website provides a gateway to a wide range of development information, including summaries and texts of the latest development research publications, and lists of books and articles on participation. Useful links to international participation networks and other resource centres. The participation pages can be reached through the alphabetical site map.

www.helpage.org
HelpAge International's website, with news and resources on issues facing older people in developing countries, including poverty, HIV/AIDS, gender, violence, rights, care and emergencies, plus contact information for HelpAge International's worldwide network of international offices and members. The policy and research section has downloadable reports from recent participatory research conducted with older people.

www.iadb.org
The Inter-American Development Bank website, with a resource book on participation, in Spanish and English, under the civil society heading. The resource book contains case studies from Latin America and the Caribbean, and reviews a range of methods.

www.ids.ac.uk/participation
Website of the Participation Group at the University of Sussex's Institute of Development Studies (IDS), which works to support participatory approaches to development. Includes a directory of participation networks worldwide, a bibliography (with abstracts) of documents held at the group's resource centre, a list of training events, and useful links to other sites.

www.iied.org
The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) website, with new resources, articles and abstracts on participation. The participatory learning and action (PLA) page is under resource centre heading.

www.worldbank.org/participation
The World Bank's website, including manuals and tools on participation, a guide to participation in poverty reduction strategy processes, and the Bank's own practical guide, the Participation Sourcebook.

HelpAge International resources

Participatory research reports

Capacity and Connection: a study of ageing in Mozambique (2001) Report on the vulnerability, contributions and support strategies of older people in rural communities in Mozambique.
Free. Available from HelpAge International Mozambique Programme, CP 4112, Maputo, Mozambique.
Tel: +258 1 415816. Email: haimoz@virconn.com

Participatory Rural Appraisal of Older People: Understanding the situation of older people in the Lao PDR (2001) A study conducted in six rural villages of Vientiane province in an attempt to gain insight into the lives of older people.
Free.

The Situation of Poor Older People in Vietnam: Participatory research (2001) Research report presenting information about poor older people's situation, their important but often unacknowledged contributions, and their concerns and experience of poverty and exclusion.
Free.

Uncertainty Rules our Lives: The situation of older people in Bangladesh (2000) Report on research carried out with poor and vulnerable older people in Bangladesh to enable them to express their concerns, assess their needs and explain the condition of their lives.
Free.

Summaries of the above three reports are available at www.helpage.org. Full texts from HelpAge International Asia/Pacific Regional Development Centre, c/o Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand. Tel: +66 53 894805. Email: hai@helpageasia.com. Website: www.helpageasia.com

Contributions of older persons to development: Ghana (1999) Using participatory methods to draw directly on the views and experiences of older people to provide insights into issues affecting them, this research demonstrates the dynamic ways in which they contribute to family and community life.
Free.

Contributions of older persons to development: South Africa (1999) An in-depth study of South Africa's older population, describing the role they play in society and the social and economic contribution they can make to family and community life.
Free.

Strengthening Village and Neighbourhood Organisations: Safety networks for the vulnerable (2000) Research using participatory tools to analyse the situation of the elderly in four villages in the Karagwe District of Tanzania.
Free. Available from HelpAge International Tanzania Programme, 194 Chato Street, Regent Estate, PO Box 9846, Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Tel: +255 22 2774796. Email: haitz@africaonline.co.tz

Regular publications

Ageways A journal exchanging practical information on ageing and agecare issues, particularly good practice developed in the HelpAge International network. Free to carers, health workers, members of older people's groups and project staff working with or for older people in developing countries and East and Central Europe. Published three times a year in English and Spanish (***Horizontes***).
Free. Also published in Ukrainian and Russian. Contact: Viktor Mishchenko, Ukrainian Fund for Charity and Health, Artyoma Street 55 'b, Kiev 252053, Ukraine. Tel: +380 44 219 1 418

Ageing and Development A regular briefing which aims to raise awareness of the contribution, needs and rights of older people and to promote the development of laws and policies that will bring a lasting improvement to the quality of life of disadvantaged older people. Free to policy makers, programme planners and researchers concerned with development and poverty eradication.
Published three times a year in English and Spanish (*Tercera Edad y Desarrollo*). Free.

Unless otherwise stated, all the above can be ordered from: Publications orders, HelpAge International, PO Box 32832 London N1 9ZN, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7278 7778. Email: cdobbing@helpage.org or order at www.helpage.org

Visit our website

www.helpage.org gives details of all our publications, provides regularly updated news features and describes a variety of practical and advocacy work carried out by HelpAge International staff, members and partners around the world.