

Tools for Participatory Research

There is a wealth of participation research tools developed by community development activists throughout the world. The community development worker seeking to promote participatory research is really only limited by his/her own imagination. The most participatory tools would be, moreover, created by those for whom the potential interventions are meant to serve. The professional community researcher, in such a scenario, would be a facilitator and educator - one who works with stakeholder groups to assist in the design of research tools to be "owned" by the group.

It would be naïve, however, to suggest that stakeholder groups everywhere have the capacity, resources, or time to design research tools to meet their needs. Moreover, indigenous groups are typically not in positions of power and, hence, need to construct evidence that convinces others and not just themselves. The professional community researcher, then, takes on the role of a "culture broker", interpreting for indigenous groups the reasoning used by groups in power to make decisions in order to help the former couch evidence in terms that the latter find convincing.

In following sections are provided examples of some participatory research tools that communities can employ to achieve insiders' views on issues that affect them as well as solutions that might work for them. (A note: by "insiders" we mean ordinary people, not the elite. Sometimes ordinary people are called "outsiders" since they are outside of realms of influence.)