MODULE 26: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT: PROCESS AND METHODS - II

Module details	**Name**
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Learning Objectives	This module will enable the student to understand: 1. The various types of needs in the community. 2. Community assessment tools used to assess the problems of the community. 3. Community assessment tools used to assess the resources of the community 4. The steps and process followed while using these tools.

INTRODUCTION

Community assessment is an elaborate exercise and, as we have already discussed, encompasses all aspects of community life. In part one we gained an understanding of the importance of geographical characteristics and historical profiles for community assessment. This module is a continuation of the previous module. We will now try to understand the lifestyle patterns of the members of a community. Following this, we will study the problems and issues that are faced by the community people, and understand the process by which the resources available to the community can be identified.

The community worker must first carry out a need assessment to get a clear appreciation of the existing conditions and community needs to be able to plan suitable interventions. As we have seen, needs assessment is systematic process of asking the right questions, comparing responses, and making informed decisions about what to do next to improve human (or organizational) conditions and/or system/ institutional performance. We use various community assessment tools to understand community needs.

Needs are of four broad types:

1. **Normative Needs.** Existence of standards or criterion established by custom, authority or general consensus against which quantity or quality of a situation or condition is measured.
2. **Perceived Needs.** They are defined by what people think or feel about their needs. For example, seeking expert opinion is a perceived need.
3. **Expressed Needs.** They are needs defined by the number of people who have sought help. Expressed needs focus on circumstances in which feeling is translated to action.
4. **Relative Needs.** They show the gap between the level of services existing in one community and those in a similar community under similar situations. In relative needs, the concern is equity. For example; Infant mortality rate is compared in two communities and seen whether it is a relative need in one community as compared to the other.

For understanding the problems/ issues of the community

1. PROBLEM TREE. The problem analysis is the phase in which the negative aspects of a given situation are identified, establishing the cause and effect relationship between the observed problems. Problem trees do more than just identify the root causes of the problem. They provide a visual breakdown of problems into their symptoms as well as their causes, and furthermore create a visual output that can be understood by anyone. The process can be a useful method in building a community's awareness of the problem, how they and others contribute to the problem, and how these problems affect their lives. Like any other tree, the problem tree has three parts: a trunk, roots, and branches. The trunk is the main problem. The roots represent the causes of the core problem while the branches represent its effects.

1.1 A problem analysis includes the following:

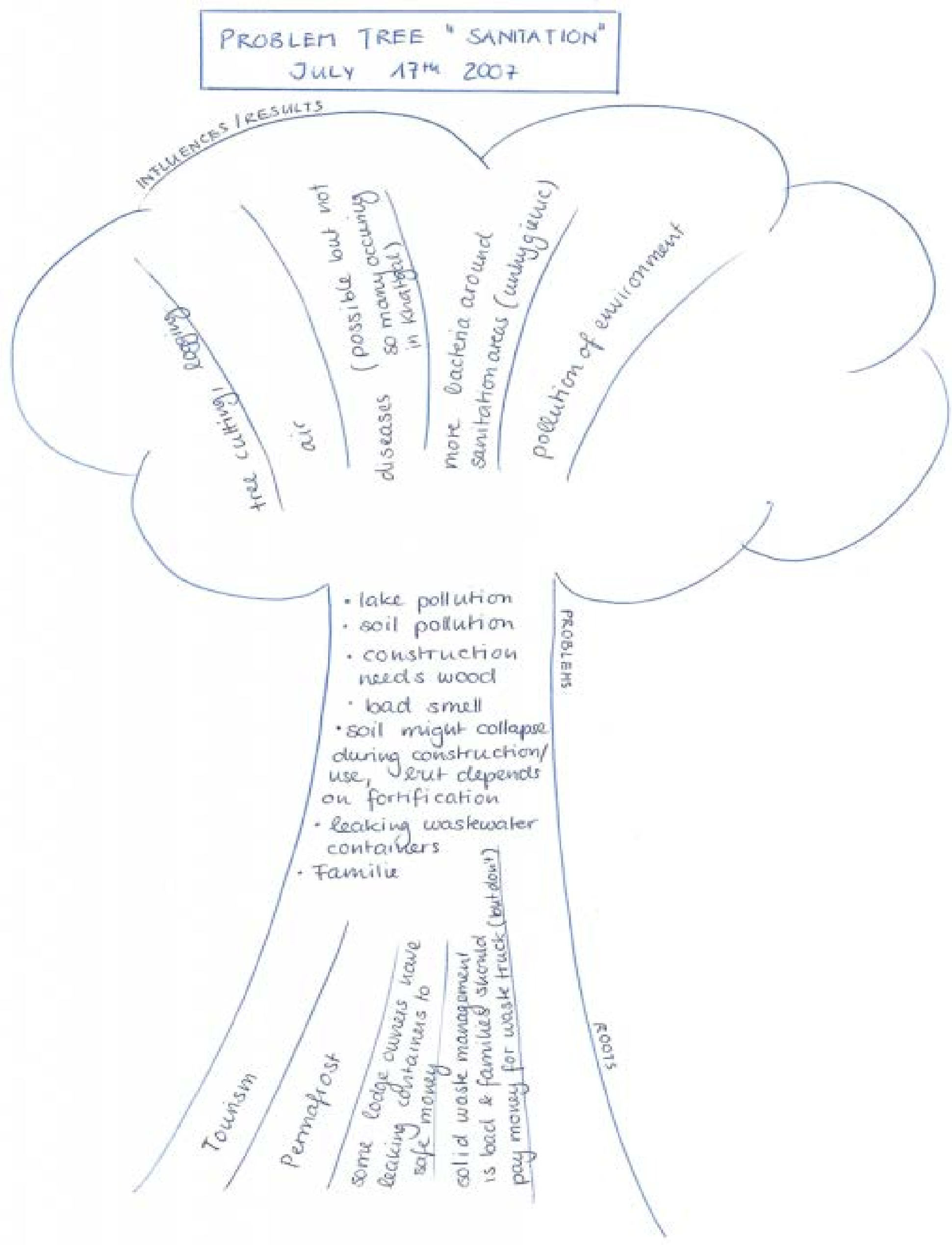
1. Definition of the framework and the subject of analysis.
2. Identification of problems faced by target groups and beneficiaries.
3. Visualisation of the problems in form of a diagram, called "problem tree" to help analyse and clarify cause-effect relationships.

1.2 Steps involved in performing a problem tree analysis:

Creating a problem tree should ideally be undertaken as a participatory group event using visual techniques, such as flipcharts or colour cards in which the identified stakeholders can write their individual problem statements. It is recommended that a workshop should involve not more than 25 participants to provide for a fruitful learning environment.

1. The first step of such workshops should be an open brainstorming about the problems that stakeholders consider to be a priority.
2. From the problems identified, an individual "starter" problem should be selected. In consultation with the participants, a hierarchy of causes and effects should be established: problems which are directly causing the starter problem are put below and problems which are direct effects of the starter problem are put above.
3. All problems are sorted in the same way (using the guiding question "what causes that?". Once all the problems are in place, these should relate to cause-effect arrows, clearly showing key links.
4. After this process, the problem tree should be reviewed and validated by the participants. Once completed, the problem tree represents a summary picture of the existing negative situation.

Image1. A problem tree



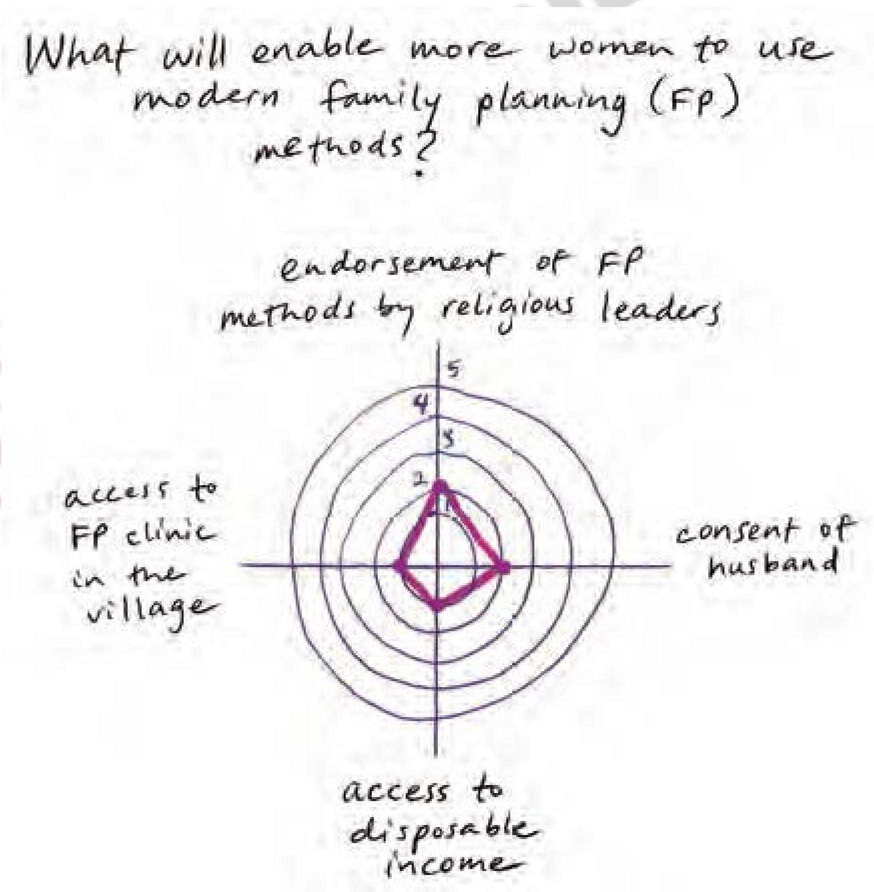
2. **Cobweb analysis.** This exercise helps participants visualize an issue, break it down into smaller pieces, and work on solutions together.

2.1 Steps followed for conducting a cobweb analysis:

1. Ask the participants to identify an issue or a subject that they would like to explore.

2. Ask participants to identify the factors/ indicators they think contribute to the issue.
3. Once you have arrived at a set of indicators, the next step would be to draw a pivotal point on a large paper or on the ground.
4. Draw as many arms/ spokes from the centre as the number of indicators identified.
5. Allocate an indicator to each of the arms.
6. Each arm will have a scoring scale (say from 0-5, where 0 indicates the lowest and 5 the highest).
7. Allocate a score on each indicator as felt by the participants.
8. Join these scores to complete the diagram

Image2. A Cobweb Analysis of use of Family Planning Methods



3. **Force field analysis.** This technique is used to visually identify and analyze the forces affecting a problem situation to bring about a positive change. It helps to thoroughly dissect a problem and provides opportunities to the participants to view the problem-web.

3.1 Steps to follow for conducting a force field analysis:

1. Write the problem that you want to discuss with the group of participants on a sheet of a paper.

2. Ask the participants to visualize the problem situation in a state of temporary equilibrium with two sets of opposing forces (one exacerbating it and the other trying to improve it) acting on it. Ask them to list one set of forces first, followed by the other.

3. Ask the participants to write down or depict the forces identified on small cards in bold letters.

4. Keep the sheet of paper with the problem written on it at the centre and draw a line across it. Spread the cards with restraining forces below the line and those with driving forces above the line.

5. Ask them to look at the cards and see if they would like to make any changes.

6. Next, ask the participants to assign weights to each of the forces by placing each force card at varying distances from the problem-line or present status line in such a way that the distance denotes the strength of the force. The longer the distance, the greater the perceived effect of the force on the problem.

7. Once they are satisfied with the diagram, ask them to discuss how they can bring about a change in the situation. Which of the driving forces can be reinforced and which restraining forces can be diminished?

4. Matrix ranking. Matrix ranking helps community people to set priorities. Matrix ranking is concerned with ranking of a range of criteria against a range of comparable items. The range of comparable items on which ranking takes place can relate to a group of relevant items as selected by local community members. Ranking can be undertaken with key informants or group of people who represent a good mixture of interests. It can also be gender-based to determine relative preferences of men and women.

4.1 Significance of matrix ranking

The method of matrix ranking is an important method for group decision-making and planning on comparable items as indicated below.

1. It presents an overall picture of group or individual preferences of selected items against comparable criteria.
2. Through matrix scoring method, communities can prioritise items based on such criteria.
3. Such prioritized items by community can be linked directly to action plans.
4. The method can reflect a causal analysis of group or individual preferences, priorities, likes and dislikes.
5. It is easy to change/revise scores when such matrix scoring takes place on the ground.

4.2 Steps followed in conducting a matrix ranking

1. Ask the participants to identify and prepare a list of issues (i.e. problems) to be ranked.

2. Prepare a matrix on a large sheet of paper or blackboard. Indicate the issues on the left side of the matrix.

3. Facilitate the comparison of issues with one another. The first issue listed on the left side of the matrix will be compared with all the other issues listed. Repeat the process until all the issues have been covered.

4. Note the number of times each problem was preferred. Make a summary of the references and rank them accordingly.

5. Encourage discussions while the exercise is being conducted to enhance probing and cross checking of information. Ask the villagers' reasons for their choices and note these reasons.

6. At the end of the exercise, briefly discuss, analyze, and summarize the results together with the people

5. **Dream mapping.** Dream Mapping is a diagram for manifesting dreams into reality. A Dream Map is a way of capturing your deepest hopes and offering them up to the Universe in physical form. A community worker uses the dream mapping technique with various groups in the community to understand their different perspectives and expectations from life.

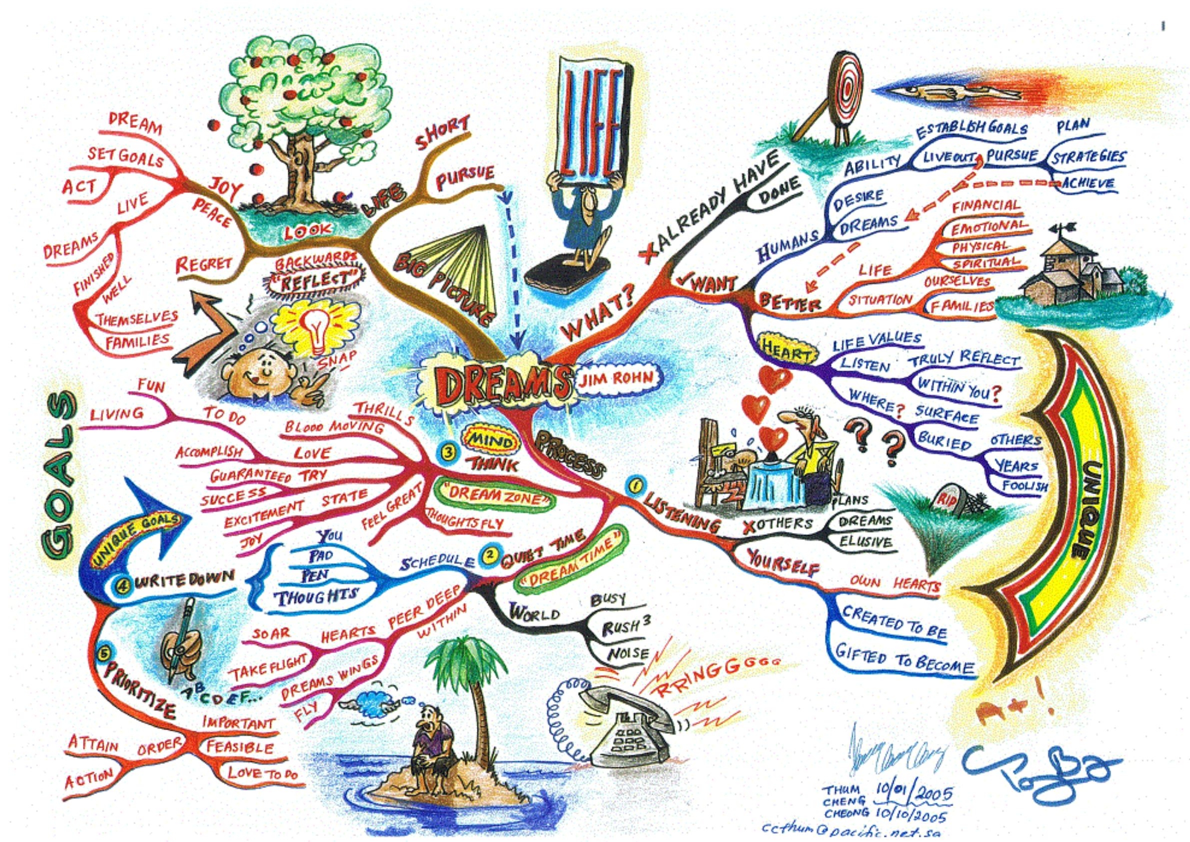
5.1 A dream map can be used for the following purposes:

1. Arriving at the dreams, aspirations, and feelings of deprivation and the perspective of the local people about their own development.
2. Understanding the risks, vulnerabilities, strengths, etc. of the local people.
3. Arriving at the areas where people want change.
4. Planning interventions to arrive at the dream state.
5. Monitoring the progress made against the standards or goals set.

5.2 Steps followed in conducting a dream mapping:

1. Explain the purpose of the exercise to the participants and ask them to draw a map depicting the present situation
2. Later ask them to discuss amongst themselves how they would like their situation to be if they had a choice and then to draw what they dream of. Seek clarifications and ask questions to help you make sense of their maps.
3. Once the reality and dream maps are made, keep them in front and initiate a discussion among the participants. The main points for discussion can include:
    a) Present situation - problems and their causes.
    b) The aspired state and the ways of realizing it; the actors who could help or hinder its realization.
    c) Factors affecting realization of their dreams.
    d) Their own role in the realization of their dreams.
4. Ask them to list indicators against which the realization of their dreams can be monitored. Similarly, help them establish time intervals for monitoring the progress.
5. Note down the points of discussions. In the end, copy the map on a paper with relevant details

Image3. A Dream map



6. **COMMUNITY CAFÉ.** A community cafe creates the atmosphere of a restaurant or cafe in which small groups of people from the community discuss issues raised by facilitators. It can be both an entertaining event and a unique way to learn about a community by engaging stakeholders in a direct dialogue. Each table has a "host," or facilitator, who guides discussions on a certain topic. Participants move from table to table after a certain amount of time. As each issue is discussed, major ideas are recorded by the hosts, who report the most common ideas from their discussions to head facilitator.

6.1 Objectives of a community café:

1. Engage community stakeholders in meaningful discussions about their community.
2. Identify the key issues that a community faces.

6.2 Steps followed for setting up a community café:

1. Before participants arrive, make sure your food, tables, and hosts are in place.
2. Greet participants as they arrive, encourage them to get food and drink, and seat them at discussion tables.
3. Once everyone has arrived, introduce yourself and explain the purpose of your assessment and the procedures for the discussions.
4. Have the table hosts start their discussions, taking notes and facilitating the discussion.
5. Every 20 minutes, have participants switch tables to discuss a different issue or topic. Before the discussion begins, have each table host summarize the main points from the previous group's discussion. Continue the process until everyone has discussed each topic.
6. Ask each host to share with the entire group a summary of the major ideas discussed at his or her table.
7. Thank participants for attending.
8. Meet briefly with all the hosts to discuss what they learned and observed. Collect the notes from each table and summarize the major themes.
9. Send your summary report to participants after the event.

For understanding the resources available in the community

1. RESOURCE MAPPING. A resource map helps us to understand the various resources available in the community. Through this map, the community worker can explain to the people how to optimally utilize available resources for their development. Community resource mapping is best used as a system-building process by different groups at various stages of their interventions to align resources and policies in relation to specific system goals, strategies, and expected outcomes. The community resource mapping process acknowledges that individuals, organizations, and local institutions all have the capacity to create real change in their communities. When combined with community information, resource maps can provide a comprehensive picture of a community's vision, goals, projects, and infrastructure.

1.1 A resource map can help in the following:

1. Identifying new resources
2. Ensuring that all groups have access to the resources they need
3. Avoiding duplication of services and resources
4. Cultivating new partnerships and relationships
5. Providing information across agencies
6. Encouraging collaboration

2. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS. When a community worker takes up a project, he/she must identify the various stakeholders who are likely to be affected by the project. This is called stakeholder analysis. Bryson (1999) defines a stakeholder as '*any person, group or organisation that can place a claim on an organization's attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output*'. The community development process consists of donors, target beneficiaries, partner agencies, government and non-governmental organizations. These entities are the main stakeholders in any programme.

A stakeholder analysis can be understood through the following image. It shows the various stakeholders in the issue of school attendance along with their importance and influence on the project.

Image4. A Stakeholder analysis grid

Stakeholder Analysis: List

Example: School Attendance

Stake-holders	Key Interests	Importance to Project	Influence on project	Participation
School Age Children	Get work	The target group	Small – they do what they are told	Engaged at various stages
Parents	Child's future	Have authority over the children	High – control children	Maybe small
Teachers	Their job, role, status	High – implementers?	Medium – depends on approach	May be high

Health Unlimited

3. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ANALYSIS. This process includes analyses of the capacity of various community institutions to support community building and development. These include schools, hospitals, banks, NGOs, etc. which have a significant role to play in the lives of community people. The role and working of institutions depend on the various structural and institutional factors. Structural factors are beyond the influence of individuals and short-term decision making.

3.1 The following factors are often considered important in institutional capacity analysis:

1. The history of state formation, the authoritative resources and legitimacy of the state, and the relation between the economic structures and the state structures.
2. Natural and human resources, social and ethnic structures, demographic changes, regional influences, long lasting pandemics.

3. Globalisation, geopolitics, global trade and investment regimes, migration, urbanisation.
4. Institutional factors considered important to institutional analysis include:
5. Norms for exertion of power and authority, from the family level to the state level, including gender aspects of the power distribution.
6. Socially embedded norms for what government authorities should and should not do, and of how public management should be performed ("how we do things here").
7. The status and rank accorded to "carriers of public authority", be it elders, teachers, doctors, clerics, ministers or presidents.
8. Norms governing reciprocity in exchanges of e.g. favours and gifts.
9. The norms governing how formalised, official laws and rules are considered and used compared to informal sets of rules.

4. ASSET INVENTORY. An asset inventory is a technique for collecting information about a community through observation. It is similar to a shopkeeper taking stock of merchandise but, here, instead of cataloguing products in a store, community members catalogue assets in their community. It works best when conducted at a community meeting or gathering.

4.1 The Objectives of asset inventory analysis are:

1. Identifying community assets that members of the community think are important to community development.
2. Understanding why people believe these assets are important.

4.2 Steps followed in carrying out an asset inventory:

1. Introduce yourself and explain the purpose of your assessment.
2. Randomly divide participants into groups of four to six.
3. Ask each group to take a few minutes for introductions and to choose a team leader who will keep track of time.
4. Give participants a brief overview of the activity. Explain that they will be walking around the community to identify items they think are important to the community. If necessary, provide examples of community assets. Be sure to explain that each group member should identify at least one item.
5. Distribute the activity materials to participants.
6. Have group leaders take their teams out into the community to identify assets.

7. After groups return, ask them to discuss their findings among themselves. Visit each group during the discussion period to monitor its progress and answer questions.
8. Ask each group to develop a list of 5 to 10 assets they think are most important to the development of the community.
9. Invite group leaders to briefly share their lists and explain choices. Record the lists on a chalkboard or dry-erase board.
10. Discuss the assets that groups had in common. Why these items were considered important? Did any groups identify different items? If yes, why were these items chosen?
11. Collect all the lists and keep them for reference when evaluating your asset inventory.

5. WEALTH RANKING. Wealth ranking is a method that determines the economic attributes of households in a community. It shows information on the relative wealth and well being of the households in a community. It helps in determining the social and economic status of the household in a community. Wealth ranking involves a group of individuals ranking their entire community. The PRA facilitators introduce the technique using local terms for wealth and poverty. They encourage participants to first discuss how they define these terms and how they would describe a poor household or a rich household (that is, their criteria for assessing a household's relative wealth). The method of wealth ranking is conducted with a few selected key informants (include people of various economic strata) within the village. The results can also help in assessing efforts targeted at particular groups, such as the very poorest households.

5.1 Steps followed in conducting a wealth ranking:

1. Prepare cards approximately 3" x 5" in size. Allot one card to each household.
2. Ask the informants to rank the households as rich, average or poor according to the criteria that they have developed.
3. When all the cards have been sorted, ask the respondent to review the piles to make sure that the households have been classified correctly.
4. After each exercise, make a list of households classified under each pile.
5. The facilitators can use the stratification as a basis for sampling households for subsequent interviews.

6. Repeat the process with 3-5 key groups of informants. Then, compute the average score for each household by adding all the scores given by the group of informants, which will be divided by the number of informants.
7. Categorize the households into rich, average and poor (or into whatever categories that will emerge). The closeness of resulting average scores will determine the number of groupings which should however not exceed the number of piles given by the key informants.
8. Be able to identify wealth indicators or the differences and features/ description of the households in each category or grouping.
9. Take notes of the processes, particularly the difficulties encountered. Also note new learning taking place in conducting the wealth ranking exercise.

Image5. Wealth ranking

Rich household	**Average household**	**Poor household**
House w/ iron roofing	**House w/ wooden roofing**	**House w/ grass roofing**
House w/ wooden wall	**House w/ bamboo wall**	**House w/ dried leaves wall**
Own a rice mill	**Own a paddled boat**	**Own 1-2 buffaloes**
Own a motor boat	**Own 5-10 buffaloes**	**Own 1-2 cows**
Own 10 cows or more	**Own 5-10 cows**	**Own 1ha or less**
Own 10 buffaloes or more	**Own 2-3 ha rice paddy**	
Own 3 ha of rice paddy or more		

SUMMARY

It is a well established fact that sound and well-planned and well-executed information gathering is a necessary prerequisite for a successful project. These activities must continue throughout the time that the project is under implementation and if required, even beyond. This module gives detailed information on the tools used for identifying the problems/ issues of the community and the resources available therein. The module also explains the objectives of each tool and the steps that must be followed for conducting these assessment tools.