PLAN VIVO
For nature, climate and communities

PARTICIPATORY TOOLS FOR USE IN PLAN VIVO PROJECTS V1.0

CREDITS & CONTRIBUTORS

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Using This Toolkit

This toolkit is a guide for developing a Plan Vivo project. It is designed as an accompaniment to the Plan Vivo Carbon Standard (PV Climate) and should be read with the Standard if the project is seeking Plan Vivo registration. Some of these tools may also be used under the Plan Vivo Biodiversity Standard (PV Nature), though reference should be made to the PV Nature project requirements and methodology.

Please Note: From time to time, the Plan Vivo Foundation may update this manual. Please make sure you are using the latest version.

If you are interested in developing a Plan Vivo project or think your existing activities could be eligible for registration, please contact the Plan Vivo Foundation. The Plan Vivo Standards and supporting materials can be accessed via the website (www.planvivo.org), or by contacting the Plan Vivo Foundation: info@planvivofoundation.org

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1. SKILLS FOR USING PARTICIPATORY TOOLS

Using the tools shown in this guidance manual effectively to develop and manage the project and to generate and analyse the information needed to meet the Plan Vivo Standards requires certain skill areas and competencies (shown in table below). These skills and competencies are needed within the Project Coordinator team, and Project Coordinators need to ensure that systems and mechanisms are in place to develop and share these skills over the project period and, if necessary, to bring them in from outside.

Project validators and verifiers also need to have the appropriate skills and competencies in order to use some of these participatory tools during validation and verification stages in the project cycle. These requirements should be reflected in their Terms of Reference and considered during the validator/verifier selection process.

Skills & Competencies for Using Participatory Tools

Skill/Competency	Why this is needed	Noteworthy comments
Understanding of social processes	To be able to identify vulnerable, marginal or socially excluded groups in the project area. To understand how local communities function.	
Familiarity with local context	To be able to interpret socio-economic information based on existing local knowledge. To be able to make relevant suggestions and understand local issues and problems.	Local people will have these skills/competencies. Project teams should include local persons to ensure this.
Experience of working with communities in a participatory way	To be able to deliver the participatory tools effectively. To be able to use the tools flexibly and to modify them as per the local situation.	This will largely come through experience. Therefore, experienced facilitators/trainers will be needed to ensure this.

Skills & Competencies for Using Participatory Tools

Skill/Competency	Why this is needed	Noteworthy comments
Communication skills (especially non-technical oral communication)	To be able to generate a participatory and informal atmosphere. To be able to encourage participants to become actively involved. To be able to ask open and relevant questions and to probe effectively and politely.	
Group facilitation skills	To be able to conduct and facilitate group meetings and to use the participatory tools to achieve the intended outcome. To manage any conflicts that may arise during discussions. To create opportunities for all participants to voice their views and for them to be listened to (especially those who are most frequently excluded).	Experienced facilitators or trainers in participatory methods will be required to do this. Note that 'traditional' teachers/trainers using a largely one-way communication style may not be appropriate. Also, skills and understanding of adult learning processes are important.
Gender and diversity awareness	To be able to identify ways of involving socially excluded groups (by modifying and adapting the tools). To generate disaggregated information about the impact of the project on different socio-economic or social groups. To be able to effectively involve women in the Plan Vivo process and to be sensitive to gender specific socio-economic or livelihoods issues.	

Skills & Competencies for Using Participatory Tools

Skill/Competency	Why this is needed	Noteworthy comments
Observation skills	To be able to notice and observe social interactions during discussions/meetings. To be able to analyse and act on these observations in a socio-economic context.	
Organisational skills	To ensure the tools are planned, and conducted in an effective way.	This could be provided within the Project Coordinator team to ensure that there is good communication with local people beforehand and that logistics (venue, materials, refreshments, transport, and timings are in place).

2. USING THE TOOLS

This next section describes general points about using participatory tools in a village context.

Timing & Seasonal Aspects

When working with rural people using these participatory tools, be aware that certain seasons or certain times of day may be more suitable than others. For example, it is usually best to avoid certain agricultural seasons because people may be too busy to participate in meetings. During daytime some people may be working in their fields, during evenings women may be busy with household tasks. Often, early morning is the best time to conduct these participatory tools, but check with local people first to find out what would be best for them. Avoid taking up too much of busy people's time. As a facilitator you should always adjust your plans accordingly rather than expecting people to fit in with your own schedule.

Planning & Preparation

Before starting work in a village environment, plan carefully so that you are clear what you want to achieve and how to do this. It is essential to avoid wasting people's time. Once you have made a plan, discuss it with local leaders before implementing it to make sure that they agree.

A team of trainers prepare to deliver training to smallholder farmers as part of the Upper Tana Nairobi Water Fund project, Kenya. Credit: Plan Vivo Foundation.

Logistics & Venue

Although you will not normally be paying people to attend village meetings and participatory exercises, you should ensure that participants receive some hospitality (snacks, food, drinks, etc.) to improve the chances of meaningful participation. You will need to budget for this and make any necessary preparations. Always avoid alcohol!

In some contexts attending a meeting can mean a person abandoning a whole day's activities and can thus act as a major barrier to participation of women or more vulnerable individuals or families e.g. daily paid labourers. In other cases people may have to travel some distance to attend. Make preparations appropriate to the local context and culture and ensure equitable practices are applied between individuals, groups and villages.

If possible, visit the venue or location beforehand and check if it is suitable. You can often make use of a community building or even a suitable meeting spot outdoors (but plan for an alternative in case of rain etc). Make sure that toilet facilities for participants are available close by.

Check and organise the seating arrangements in advance. It is often necessary to rearrange existing seating to create a more informal and participatory atmosphere. A semi-circle of participants sitting around the facilitator is usually the most effective way to do this. All participants should be offered the same seating i.e. all on chairs/benches, or all on the ground. Avoid using a stage, lectern, desk or anything that comes between you (facilitator) and participants.

If you are planning to have separate small group discussions, plan in advance where these will take place within or nearby the main meeting location. For small group discussions, separate small tables are often helpful for the groups to sit around and work at.

Refreshments provided at a community meeting in Navaralagi village, Fiji, part of the Drawa Rainforest Conservation project. Credit: Plan Vivo Foundation.

Materials

When you go to the village to conduct these participatory tools, make sure that you bring all the necessary equipment and materials with you. Don't assume that any materials will be available in the village. In general, supplies of the following items are always required and should be brought along at all times:

- Large sheets of paper (poster size);
- Thick marker pens (various colours) for writing on posters;
- A selection of other pens for writing on cards etc.;
- Sticky tape or pins for attaching posters to the walls and for fastening cards;
- Flash cards in different colours (as an alternative, large size post-its can be used)

Try to avoid using IT or other electronic equipment (e.g. no laptops/powerpoint; recording equipment; microphones or speakers) - especially when working in a village environment. The aim of all the tools is for participants to engage in discussions and carry out simple exercises, not to listen to lectures or presentations. However, phones/cameras should be made available for taking pictures to record the discussions and especially for taking photographs of the outputs of different tools (such as posters or diagrams).

Registering/Naming Participants

At the start of any session involving villagers make sure that everyone has had an opportunity to introduce themselves. If there are a large number of participants, this may take some time, but it is important. Ask someone to write down everyone's names. Also, remember to introduce yourself and other members of your team. Keep the list of names because you can use this later to show the validator the level of participation. Keeping a list like this also helps to encourage a sense of ownership over the whole process – people may be keen to show that they have contributed and that they took part in the discussions.

Sequencing of tools

Use the participatory tools carefully. It may be necessary to spread them over several days to avoid taking up too much time on a single day. Generally, it is best not to try to do more than 1 or 2 participatory exercises in one day. Remember that one tool may build on the findings/ results of another, so it is important to use them in a logical sequence. Be aware that on different occasions different people may participate so you will usually need to have a recap at the start of each new session.

Numbers of Participants

Participatory tools are designed to be used in groups. Up to 20 people can be effectively involved in one session (depending on the type of activity) although for larger groups (e.g. more than 10 people) it will be more effective to split participants into smaller sub-groups. With large numbers of people it becomes very difficult to ensure that everyone participates fully and the sessions tend to become more formal. Some of the tools will require smaller numbers of participants e.g. Tool 14 - Semi-Structured Interview.

Facilitating Group Discussions

The most important skills needed for using the participatory tools are facilitation and communication. This means having the skills to lead a session with a group of people whilst also ensuring that as far as possible everyone gets an opportunity to participate and contribute. It also means steering discussions and information gathering in groups to obtain the types of information and ideas that you need. Often in larger groups people may start to depend on a spokesperson and may become unwilling to express their own ideas. In some social groups and cultures having a spokesperson is normal, and people are confident enough to add their ideas or opinions when they feel they have not been articulated well by others. Knowing when and how to engage people in discussion is an essential and learned skill.

Working with Sub-Groups

If there are many people present, or if there are different socio-economic or other divisions in the community, a good technique is to divide participants into smaller groups and get them to work on exercises separately. At the end, each sub-group is given an opportunity to share their results with the whole group. For example, you might want to have women's and men's sub-groups or groups based around tribes/castes, or occupation e.g. farmer/non-farmer. This is a good technique to empower and give voice to socially disadvantaged groups and also to compare and contrast the ideas and information between different groups.

Drawing/Writing

Many of the tools result in information being produced and written down or drawn. Be aware that in many rural areas illiteracy levels can be high and some people may not be able to read and write. Consider ways to address this e.g. by using drawings/pictures rather than text so that everyone can understand. A good picture or diagram can often be used as an alternative to a written explanation. When writing - be aware of local languages and use these wherever necessary for proper understanding.

Indigenous women's group, Vietnam. Credit: Peter Branney.

Photographs

Photographs can often be used to illustrate an important point. They can also be used for monitoring and recording – for example, photographs showing participants at meetings, photographs showing a particular environmental issue or socio-economic activity. You can include photographs in your Project Design Document (PDD) if you wish.

Recording & Writing Up

Keep records of all the participatory tools you use and if necessary write up session notes later. For example, you may wish to do a well-being ranking exercise. At the end of the session, write down the number of households falling into different categories and use photographs of the outputs of the tools to illustrate specific points. Always remember to date any materials produced so that you can build up a record of when different tools were used.

Ownership of 'Outputs/Deliverables'

Each tool results in a particular type of output or deliverable - usually this is a flipchart paper with writing or a picture on it. These products are the property of the village and should remain at the village – they should not be taken away. Encourage people to display them in a communal building or another prominent place. If you need to make a copy for yourself, take a photograph.

Recording Outputs of Participatory Tools

The following standard information should be collected and recorded at every village or group meeting or every time a participatory tool is used. This will provide evidence of participatory design and implementation and will show that FPIC principles were applied. The information will also assist the validator and verifier in their respective roles. It will also help to provide continuity for local participants since often different people will turn up for different meetings. It shows clearly who was involved in different meetings, and how. This should be included in your PDD.

Key information to be recorded includes:

- Name of village
- Name of facilitator/ note-taker
- Where the meeting took place
- Date and time
- Participant list (names), total number of men and women
- Criteria for selection of the participants
- Notes from the facilitator on the quality of the method and meeting
- Any meeting outputs (deliverables) - this includes photographs

Positionality of a Project Developer/Coordinator

Most Plan Vivo-certified projects are developed in the Global South (Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Pacific). Project developers and coordinators must be aware of their positionality, meaning their world view and the position they adopt in the social and political context of the project region. Positionality affects both how projects are developed (e.g. a project developer

may have certain ideas about what interventions would most benefit project participants before consulting with them) and the dynamics between project developers and participants, and therefore the outcomes of the project. The project developer's world view, or 'where they are coming from', includes certain assumptions which may be based on values and beliefs that are shaped by political allegiance, religious faith, gender, sexuality, historical and geographical location, ethnicity, race, social class, and status, (dis)abilities etc.

Even if a project developer is from the Global South, in which case some of the access and relational aspects may be addressed, class and educational differences (i.e. material, social, political power differences) remain markers of difference. Developing and implementing projects in the Global South requires being attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalisation and local realities.

Considerations around Positionality

- Analysing and articulating positionality in relation to the project's participants is important before entering the field.
- Building rapport through informal conversations is important in negotiating positionality. Engaging in some social and cultural activities can be helpful to better understand the culture and society.
- The role of being the facilitator is important for initial introductions, but the project developer/coordinator must be willing to treat local peoples as equals. Learning some specific terminologies, keeping simple dress and lifestyle, showing interests in local culture, festivals and daily activities can help to build rapport.
- Understanding social stratification is important to identify socially excluded communities, lower caste and class groups, gendered groups, elderly people, people with disabilities and tribal and nomadic people, and interact with them accordingly.
- Project coordinators/developers must make sure that personal opinions do not influence or dominate the participants' opinions or decision-making.

3. USING PARTICIPATORY TOOLS WITH DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

Rural communities contain many different sub-groups, and it is important to engage each one in the project development process, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups. This section identifies some different groups that are likely to exist in project communities, and discusses useful tools for engaging them.

1 WOMEN

Characteristics

- Women and men, and boys and girls, may have differing priorities, needs, activities and responsibilities.
- Women are not a homogeneous group, and different considerations apply to women across class, caste, age, ethnicity, individual's household position, and family composition.

Issues & considerations

- The patriarchal nature of societies may make it difficult to interview mixed gender groups.
- Facilitators need to consider meeting at an appropriate time and place and avoid late evening hours.
- Facilitators need to negotiate power and privileges while meeting women from lower caste/ class backgrounds.
- When engaging with women, it may be best to participate in day-to-day activities to build initial rapport with different stakeholders.
- Facilitators need to identify appropriate moderators to engage with different groups of women, making them comfortable to respond.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Stakeholder analysis
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Social mapping
- Engaging with disadvantaged groups

2 SMALLHOLDER FARMERS

Characteristics

- Smallholder farmers tend to have small landholdings producing smaller volumes of mostly subsistence agriculture.
- Usually, they are considered a part of the informal economy because they may not be registered, tend to be excluded from aspects of labour legislation, lack social protection and have limited records.
- They may be dependent on family labour or hired labour.
- They are often vulnerable in supply chains and have less exposure to urban or international markets.
- Many Plan Vivo-certified projects work with smallholder farmers.

Issues & considerations

- Smallholder farmers may be unable to articulate needs due to lacking information and knowledge about projects or policies.
- Facilitators need to consider negotiating power relations between small, medium and big landowners.
- Engaging smallholders in a large group of big landowners could lead to silencing their voices.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Stakeholder analysis
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Social mapping

3 INDIGENOUS, TRIBAL OR NOMADIC PEOPLE

Characteristics

- Self-identify themselves as indigenous groups of a particular region, strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources.
- Generally, they have a distinct social, economic or political system, distinct language, culture and beliefs.
- They form non-dominant groups of society.
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities.
- Lack of political representation.

Issues & considerations

- Free, prior informed consent (FPIC) and ethical considerations are important.
- It may be difficult for facilitators or project developers to build initial rapport due to distinctive language, culture and socio-political systems.
- The lack of cultural similarity with other stakeholders in a village may make it difficult to approach indigenous groups with traditional methods.
- Rights to resources and strategies to mitigate climate change vulnerabilities may be in conflict with state sponsored strategies.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Stakeholder analysis
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Social mapping (to understand their rights of natural resources, territorial identification, place of location, etc).

4 LANDLESS OR LOWER CASTE PEOPLE

Characteristics

- Socially marginalised people who are landless and mostly working as labourers on other agricultural fields.
- As Plan Vivo projects are land-based, it is important to ensure that landless people are not excluded or disadvantaged through the project.

Local specificities are important, for example:

- In South Asian societies, the caste system forms a rigid social stratification, in which ultimate lineage or parental position or profession determines For small group discussions, separate small tables are often helpful for the groups to sit around and work at. responsibilities.

  In many African countries, colonial and post-colonial structures have made low-income groups people landless.

Issues & considerations

- Facilitators need to identify and locate this group in a village and engage with them at an appropriate time and place.
- An important consideration is whether there is a history of suppression and social ostracisation.
- Facilitators need to find rapport-building techniques without wasting time as most landless people may be daily-wage labourers.
- Facilitators need to be sensitive about the use of terms and power dynamics;
- Engaging with lower caste women could be a sensitive issue to deal with due to history of oppression by both insider (local elites, upper caste) and colonial rulers.
- There may be a lack of response in front of elite landlords or upper caste people.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Stakeholder analysis
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Participant observation
- Social mapping (to understand their rights of natural resources, territorial identification, place of location, etc)

5 DISABLED COMMUNITY

Characteristics

- The disabled community or people with special needs may sometimes be invisible.
- Community welfare records, village heads and nearby NGOs may be contacted to get their records and meet them for some specific projects related questions and queries.

Issues & considerations

- Finding methods to obtain prior informed consent is crucial.
- Engaging at an appropriate time and place is important. Special attention must be paid to care, and ethical considerations must be made by the project developer, if required.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Semi-structured interviews
- Engaging with disadvantaged groups

6 MIGRANTS, REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

Characteristics

- 'Refugee', 'asylum seeker' and 'migrant' are used to describe people who are on the move, who have left their countries and have crossed borders.
- Some migrants leave their country because they want to work, study or join family.
- Others feel they must leave because of poverty, political unrest, gang violence, natural disasters or other serious circumstances that exist there.
- 'Asylum seekers' refer to those who have not yet been granted asylum in the country they are in, so may have limited rights.
- Internal migration within a country also happens because of some of the issues mentioned above.

Issues & considerations

- Facilitators need to recognise and understand any history of oppression, insecurity and livelihood challenges makes them more vulnerable.
- There may be difficulties of initial rapport-building and trust among new people, members of a group, place or project.
- Engaging at an appropriate time and place.
- Appropriate use of language, assimilation with their cultural background, and understanding of daily challenges.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions

7 YOUTH & REVERSE MIGRANTS

Characteristics

- Younger generation between 18 to 35 who have either stayed inside the village or migrated outside, or who have returned after moving to cities for work and education (reverse migrants).
- Their information and knowledge are crucial to understanding the current challenges in rural development, agriculture and village economy in general.

Issues & considerations

- Usually there are no main challenges involved in engaging with youth, unless they have migrated to outside cities and cannot be contacted for an in-person interview.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions

8 ELDERLY PEOPLE

Characteristics

- Older generations are usually above 65+ who have lived in a village for a long time and are aware of the village's social and political life, territorial boundaries, social segregation and spread of natural resources, etc.

Issues & considerations

- Identifying and approaching elderly people may be easy but sometimes they may not be able to advise better due to (deteriorating) health conditions, memory loss, lack of information and low elderly population in a village.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus group discussions
- Social mapping
- Engaging with disadvantaged groups

9 LGBTQIA+ PEOPLE

Characteristics

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people exist everywhere and must be taken into account in project design.
- In different areas, people may not identify as 'LGBTQIA+', 'queer' or other identities commonly used in the Global North, and project developers should not assign these identities if people do not themselves identify this way.
- People have many different ways of identifying based on local specificities, e.g. hijras in South Asia (transgender, intersex people and eunuchs).
- LGBTQIA+ people often face social marginalisation and discrimination, leaving them less access to housing, employment and healthcare.

Issues & considerations

- Due to discrimination, LGBTQIA+ people may not be open about their gender identity and sexuality, and particular care should be taken not to 'out' anybody against their will.
- LGBTQIA+ people often face violence and discrimination within rural societies.
- There are many intersections within LGBTQIA+ communities, with some groups (e.g. transgender people) being at particular risk.

Appropriate tools for engaging

- Engaging with disadvantaged groups

Smallholder farmers in the Trees for Global Benefits project, Uganda.
Credit: ECOTRUST

4. TOOLS IN THE PLAN VIVO PROCESS

	Key activity/ outcome	Participatory approach or tool used*	Required?
PIN	FPIC	Community meeting**	**Required**
PIN	Education about the proposed project	Community meeting	**Required**
PIN	Environmental and Social Risk Assessment	Plan Vivo's Environmental and Social Risk Management Procedures	**Required**
PIN	Determining roles and responsibilities of community and project coordinator	Local institution mapping	**Recommended**
PDD	Stakeholder analysis	Stakeholder analysis Local institution mapping Social mapping Focus group discussion	**Required** **Recommended** **Recommended** **Recommended**
PDD	Developing a land management plan	Resource mapping Assessment and Utilisation of forest and tree products Assessment and Utilisation of marine and water resources	**Recommended** **Recommended** (depending on project type) **Recommended** (depending on project type)

Developing a benefit-sharing mechanism	Social mapping Community meeting Focus group discussion Semi-structured interview	**Recommended** **Required** Optional Optional
Setting a socio-economic baseline	Participatory well-being assessment Social mapping Focus group discussion Semi-structured interview	**Strongly recommended** **Recommended** Optional Optional
Project intervention and Theory of Change development	Problem analysis Visioning Climate vulnerability assessment/mapping Historical timeline	**Recommended** **Recommended** Optional **Recommended**
	Seasonal Calendar Resource mapping Assessment and Utilisation of forest and tree products Assessment and Utilisation of marine and water resources Community meeting Engaging with disadvantaged groups	Optional **Recommended** **Recommended** (depending on project type) **Recommended** (depending on project type) **Required** Optional

PDD	Environmental and Social Risk Assessment	Plan Vivo's Environmental and Social Risk Management Procedures	Dependent on outcome of E&S risk screening
	Project Agreement development	Community meeting	**Recommended**
ANNUAL REPORTING	Ongoing project governance	Public hearing	**Strongly recommended** (PV requirement 5.1.1)
	Reporting financial decisions to community	Public audit Community meeting	**Recommended** **Recommended**
	Monitoring	Community meeting Focus group discussion Semi-structured interview Engaging with disadvantaged groups	**Recommended** Optional Optional Optional

*Focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews and community meetings can be used throughout the project design and implementation process to ensure that the community members' inputs are prioritised at all times.

**In case it is not in the culture for communities to come together to meet (e.g. in some nomadic societies), community meetings are not required where the project coordinator can show that they are engaging with a wide range of community members in a more culturally appropriate way.