



# TOOL 7

## HISTORICAL TIMELINE



The mangroves of the Tahiry Honko project, located in Madagascar.  
Credit: Louise Gardner / Blue Ventures.





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## HISTORICAL TIMELINE

### What is the **purpose** of historical timeline?

- To understand and illustrate the causes and trends of environmental degradation and socio-economic change (from the perspective of local people) and different stakeholder groups in the community.

### Plan Vivo Carbon Standard (PV Climate) **requirement?**

- Recommended - especially during preparation of the project theory of change and if a project is being developed in a new area by less familiar project coordinators.

### When to use this tool?

- During PIN and/or PDD preparation when the theory of change is being discussed.

### Why is this tool required?

A historical timeline is a simple qualitative, exploratory and participatory tool that can be adapted depending on the type of project and local context. It is used to understand the history of a village or community and the natural resources they use, and particularly, to give a history of natural resource degradation and loss. It helps the project developer to understand the problem that the project aims to address, and therefore contributes to the development of the theory of change for the project.

- The timeline for the origins and key developments in the community.
- Social and livelihood changes over time and an understanding of the socio-cultural context of existing livelihood activities.
- Changes in land use, land tenure and land cover.

It also provides an opportunity for younger people in the village to learn about their village history, and if documented and printed, means the village will have a written account.

## Who should participate?

People who know the village history, who are often (but not always) more elderly members of the community, alongside other community leaders. Including both men and women in the discussion is vital. Ideally between 8-12 people should participate.

## How to use the tool?

This is a simple tool that benefits from some semi-structured questions to help prompt people into describing different events and areas of interest for a project. In many cases it might be difficult to put dates on events, so establishing locally relevant time periods is a key first step – these can include local leadership at the time, or political events. An indicative process might be:

- ☐ Introduce the exercise and explain its aims. Allow participants to introduce themselves individually.
- ☐ Ask a few introductory questions to get the ball rolling: e.g.
  - How did the village get its name?
  - Who were the first people to arrive in the village?
  - When did they arrive?
  - Why did they settle here?
  - What happened next?
- ☐ During this process the facilitator should work directly with participants to ask questions whilst a note-taker can create a village timeline on a flipchart or board. This can be done by drawing a horizontal line on a flipchart or on the floor and adding pictures, dates and notes along it to represent the events and dates that participants describe. Use post-it notes to help you to be flexible, as these can be moved around during discussions until an agreement is reached.
- ☐ It is important to establish the timeline early on (from village origin to present day) and have this marked on the flipchart, prior to investigating other themes.
- ☐ Once the timeline has a structure to it, additional themes can be added based on the discussions.
  - **Land use and land cover:** How did people use the environment around their village when they first arrived? What was the vegetation like around the village when the first people came here? What about

wildlife? How did this change over time?

- **Development and infrastructure:** How did the village infrastructure e.g. wells; schools; key public buildings, get developed, when, and by whom?
- **Demographics:** How has the population changed over time? At what times have migrants entered the village or community and why?
- **Key livelihood activities:** how have agriculture and natural resource-based livelihoods evolved over time?
- It may not be possible to fix actual dates for events - but they can be placed within periods or historical events with which participants are familiar e.g. “before the great earthquake”

- ☐ At the end of the discussion, explain that this will be documented and then verified.
- ☐ Verify the details with the people involved (cross-check). The best way to do this is to get one of the participants to present the whole diagram to the others.
- ☐ Take photographs of the main outputs (see examples below).

## A. Example of a village timeline showing key forest-related events in a village in Bhutan

Past	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	Present
Cooking on open fire	1962 Road opened busses and truck reaching Tshapay	1976 Community School established (only 4 houses in Ajayna, not many students)	1984 Forest road constructed	1990 Improved cattle breeds (jersey) introduced	Gas, stoved, electrical equipment and more literacy
			1987 Water taps constructed	1994 Improved sanitation (toilet construction)	
			1988 Apple orchards established	1998 Electricity supply	
More trees and water	More cattle (local breeds)		1988 First crop damage by wild boar	1998 Community plantation established	School upgraded to Junior High School, more students and more houses
			1989 Improved pastures introduce		
			Migration from Ha Goenpa to near by road		
Dependent on pack animals for transport			Less trees and water (1986)		

## B. Example of a historical timeline exploring key climate events in Mozambique

CHRONOLOGIE HISTORIQUE KOUKOU HOMO	
ANNEE	EVENEMENTS
2004-2005	Secheresse et Famine: "Sayim Aki," Chikaral Tchijawo
2002	Fouage du puits cimenté du village
1999	- Installation sur le site actuel du village Création de l'école
1995	Délimitation des frontières du village
1984/1985	Secheresse et Famine Distribution gratuite de vivres Karakao
1973	Secheresse avec perte massive d'animaux: "Kakabawo"
1965	Secheresse et Famine: "Taballé" Arrivée du colon "Mai bouje" Création du village de Kougo

## C. Example of a historical timeline in a fictional village

