

# **Overview Workshop Report on Participation, Age, Gender and Livelihoods**

**Viet Nam, China and India, October 2009**

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## **Workshop Participants**

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- Maan Bimbao, Executive Director of FishBase Information and Research Group (FIN), Philippines
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## **Local Research Teams**

### **Vietnam**

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### **China**

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Chen Fengbo – household behaviour analysis, economics, livelihoods  
Gao Min – environmental law  
Liu Yiming – resource economics, economic modelling  
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He Hongzhi – phytoplankton  
Li Huashou – agro-ecology, pollution  
Tong Xiaoli – aquatic insects, odonata

Zhao Zhuihong – f/w fish  
Jiang Baoguo – international law  
Zhuang Xueying – plant taxonomy  
Gan Lian – FW (fresh water) crab and shrimp  
Cui Ke – FW fish

## **India**

### **CDHI, Jalpaiguri, WB, India**

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### **CEMPD, WB, India**

Manik L. Bose, Director  
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## **Workshop Programme**

### **Day 1 - Morning**

- **Introductions:** HighARCS project and workshop aims
- **Participation and Power: Participatory development and research**

### *Afternoon*

- **Gender**

### **Day 2 - Morning**

- **Age: Children and Young People**

### *Afternoon*

- **Implications for the Research Process**
- **Gender and Age in Context**

### **Day 3 - Morning**

- **Livelihoods**
- **Participation, gender and age within and across research teams**

General issue in relation to gender and age: we are not trying to change gender and age equalities as that is not our job as researchers, but we are trying to understand the cultural context and the power relations that exist between men and women, and between adults and children. In particular we need to consider the impacts of our action plans for different groups of people such as men, women, girls and boys.

## **Questions to explore in the field in relation to gender, age and livelihoods**

This section considers questions which the research teams should consider whilst planning the research as well as questions to ask during fieldwork. These issues also highlight what should be included in the findings of the livelihoods report:

- Participation
- Gender Questions
- Age Questions
- Livelihoods Questions
- Methodological Issues
- Guidance on Working with Marginal Peoples

### **Participation**

Each research team needs to decide what level of participation to aim for, and how to go about achieving that. Where on the ladder of participation do you realistically think you can achieve? How will you reach this level of participation in practice?

- Importance of flexibility and informality of participatory approaches
- Difficulties of putting participation into practice: we need to record these challenges and processes in our field diaries (also useful data particularly when writing about the methodological issues)
- Motivations to participate: what would our research participants like to be done to improve their livelihoods and how should we go about facilitating that process? What questions would they like us to explore during the HighARCS project? What issues are most important for them so that we can explore these with different stakeholder groups.
- How to avoid power / status influencing group discussion?
- PRA techniques are critical – IUCN toolkit has some good guidance on this, making data collection easier – but more importantly facilitating joint assessment and analysis of the situation and empowering people to articulate their own situation
- We are all outsiders in relation to our research participants: we need to consider how to minimise the power differentials between the researchers and the participants so that the participants feel comfortable and able to express their views. The outsiders should have a role in facilitating local people to identify their problems and consider possible solutions (livelihood action planning). The teams need to develop PRA tools to enable this dialogue to develop.
- How do we enable the poorest of the poor and the most marginalised groups to participate in HighARCS?
- Participation means a number of things to different people. What level of participation can be realistically achieved?

### **Gender Questions**

What is the role of women? Be wary of standard responses (usually from adult males) that "women do not work, they just do the domestic tasks". Women are an important source of casual labour, often called upon in times of need so we must explore the

temporary and seasonal nature of their work. We also need to be aware of the range of tasks which they carry out for their household as they may often directly help their husbands with some of the fish or agricultural production. It is best to seek women's views directly rather than asking husbands to speak on their behalf as they will give their viewpoint which will probably differ from the wife's perception of her role.

- What is the nature of the gender relations between men and women in your fieldsite?
- What are the opportunities and constraints for women in relation to the use of aquatic resources?
- What are the gendered work patterns: productive work (paid work), reproductive work ie. domestic work and childcare (unpaid work), and community work (self-help groups, training etc)?
- Which women at the fieldsite are the poorest or most marginalised? (ie remembering to explore the diversity of different groups of women)

See also the Gender and Age Analysis Framework. These questions will need to be explored with men, women, girls and boys at each of the field sites.

### **Age Questions**

What is the role of children and young people? Be wary of standard responses (usually from adults) that "children do not work, they just help their parents". Children's "help" may involve many hours of hard work which is often not recognised by adults but in reality children's contribution may be substantial and very important for the survival of the household.

Children, like women, are an important source of casual labour, often called upon in times of need so we must explore the temporary and seasonal nature of their work. We also need to be aware of the range of tasks which they carry out for their household as they may often directly help their parents with some of the fish or agricultural production. It is best to seek children's views directly rather than asking adults (mothers or fathers) to speak on their behalf as they will give their viewpoint which will probably differ from the child's perception of their role. (Also related issues to explore such as health and education?)

*Intra-generational issues:* when exploring children's role in household livelihoods be sensitive to gender differences so ask about boys and girls. Remember that you will often be told about stereotypical gender norms (the expectations for girls and boys may differ strongly) but that often in practice these norms might not be rigidly adhered to. This is why it is often useful to try to observe what happens in households rather than only rely on what people tell you, as they might like to tell you what *should* happen but not what always really does happen in practice.

*Birth order:* also worth exploring the impact of birth order in relation to household livelihoods: are there differences between older and younger siblings? Eg. for inheritance, for household labour allocation, for education or migration, expectations for caring for older parents?

The following questions should be explored with children and young people mainly but adults might also be asked about some of them (ie. as well as asking children but not instead of asking children):

- When does a child stop being considered a child?
- When is someone considered to be a young person? What does it depend on?
- When do young people become adults? What is the criteria to be considered an adult?
- Importance of gender for children's everyday lives – eg. differences between girls and boys' work
- Importance of birth order – do older children and younger children have different responsibilities?
- Children's livelihoods and their work - ask children what they do everyday (on school days and at weekends) – ask them to describe in detail their daily lives and all the activities that they do. Do not just ask them about their 'work' because they might not consider certain activities to be 'work'
- Children's knowledge and use of aquatic resources
- Children's strategies for counter-acting adult power
- Is there an inter-generational gap between children, parents and grandparents? For example, is old knowledge (traditional values) being replaced by new knowledge (more modern ideas)? Is there a loss of traditional knowledge and skills (such as traditional handicrafts – children no longer knowing how to weave or make baskets for example).

### **Livelihoods Questions**

Sustainable Livelihood Practices: use the sustainable livelihood framework (see slides in the training pack) to ensure that data is generated on:

- the context of vulnerability: what makes the people at your fieldsite potentially vulnerable? What economic, natural and seasonal shocks may they face?
- 5 assets: what are the resources and capitals which your research participants have?
- what are the relevant policies and government structures? What are the social norms and cultural expectations that impact upon people's livelihoods?
- = livelihood strategies and outcomes (to what extent are households merely surviving or do they have more positive outcomes in terms of their well-being and happiness?)

Also consider the following:

- Differential access to aquatic resources - and management roles - of men/women/boys/girls (see also gender and age framework analysis)
- Differential resource knowledge - men/women/girls/boys
- The economic value of different livelihood strategies - including at different times of year
- The different technologies local people are using - e.g. fishing gears - it will tell as about their economic status etc.

**Migration:** who migrates? When? How long for? What type of jobs?

What type of migration: seasonal, temporary, permanent?

Are remittances sent back to the community? How is that migrant money used?

Does anybody migrate for education (ie. to go to secondary school)

Do girls migrate for marriage? (or boys?)

**Seasonality:** important to monitor differences in production systems (inputs, outputs and labour demand) at different points throughout the year, particularly differences which occur during the monsoon.

**Changes over time:** What are the key changes which have occurred over the past 50 years? Ask older people about change, especially in the last 20 years in relation to the use of aquatic resources. For example, when have new services been introduced to villages, eg. electricity, water pumps, improvements in housing, schools, etc. Who funded them and did the village also contribute funds or labour? What changes in infrastructure have taken place in relation to the fisheries: eg. new roads or new technologies been introduced? Have there been major changes in seed type, fertilisers used, species (eg. when was tilapia introduced?) etc.? For all of these changes, try to find out: when the change occurred and why (why at that particular time, who initiated the change?) and what has been the subsequent impact of that change on the management of the production system or on the household livelihoods.

**Future change:** what changes would they like to be introduced to improve either the production system or their livelihoods and living conditions? Eg. technical change and improvements, more infrastructure, change in equipment. For households: education, basic services, housing improvement, health etc

**Old and new knowledge** – what traditional skills are being lost as rural communities become more modernised? Are there generational tensions between children's new knowledge/skills and their parents' traditional skills/knowledge?

**Youth transitions** from childhood to adulthood are likely to be changing: more education now

### **Livelihoods methods (summary):**

Develop tools to generate data on gender, age and daily livelihoods:

- seek detailed accounts of their everyday lives
- what are the key problems?
- what are their suggestions for solutions? What could be done to improve their lives?
- changes over time in relation to livelihoods and use of aquatic resources
- migration

At the start of the livelihoods report it will be useful to have a section on the cultural and social aspects of each field site, for example information on the people (ethnicity and caste), religion, marriage practices (eg dowry, age of marriage etc), rituals and customs. It will also be useful to highlight key social norms and cultural expectations regarding gender and age for each country.

### **Methodological Issues**

The aim is to develop participatory methods to generate data on livelihoods and to seek men, women, girls and boys' perspectives.

*Issues of interpretation:* Do you need an interpreter for fieldwork?

It is important to develop relationships with them. How will you find them and work with them? Some funding might be needed to pay for their time

It can be difficult when you ask a question sometimes there are lengthy discussions from the participants but shorter translations from the interpreter – it can be difficult to understand all the details. Consequently it is worth having a lengthy discussion between researcher and interpreter after the interview to ensure all details are captured in the fieldnotes.

*Ethical issues:*

*Negotiating access and seeking informed consent:* tell them about the project and what you will do with the data – then opportunity for them to raise questions – then they enter the process with full knowledge

Consider producing a local short version of the HighARCS brochure with lots of pictures – based on longer project brochure already developed. Translate it into the local language(s) and ensure it is written in accessible language/terminology focusing on the most important points which the participants need to know (ie not too long or detailed, very visual).

*Confidentiality:* will individual and community names be changed? Also being careful not to tell other households about their situation that the data will be private within the research team

*Expectations* about what the project can deliver: We should not promise something we cannot deliver. We need to be careful to ensure that the local participants know that this is a research project and not a development project – we do not have lots of funding to make material improvements to their lives, but by understanding their situation, and working together with a range of stakeholders, HighARCS hopes to be able to explore opportunities (via the LAPs, CAPs and PAPs) which will improve their livelihoods and the conservation of aquatic resources. We need to make sure that we do not raise people's expectations unrealistically – HighARCS is an academic investigation rather than a development project with large funds for material change. Nevertheless we hope the study will lead to some small-scale changes which can be implemented and improve people's lives.

*Sensitivity* (how you behave) – for example, they may not want to participate and we have to respect that.

Be wary about using untrained students to collect data or untrained interpreters as they may not be sensitive to the social and cultural issues of working in the field. For example, everyone should always ask permission before taking photographs, and never continue to take a photo if they do not want you to. Where possible try to give copies of photos back to participants (small token of thanks for them giving up their time to talk to us). We need to build up good, trusting relationships in the field, so all people going to the fieldsite must be respectful and sensitive to local concerns, cultural issues and social norms.

*Fieldwork:* interviewing skills: be sensitive about the type of questions of asked (sensitive topics need to be asked carefully, and we need to be aware of what the sensitive issues are)

Important to pick up on non-verbal clues and if they are not happy about discussing a particular issue then best not to keep pushing for an answer  
Being respectful and ensuring that they are comfortable with our questions is important

*Time and location of interviews:* think carefully about the appropriate time to conduct your focus groups and interviews – when is convenient for them? How will you negotiate a private space to talk? What is a good size for your focus groups? (perhaps 6-8 participants?). It is possible to access children through the local school? (during classtime as a large classroom group or ask if a small group can come out of a lesson, or at lunchtime or after school?)

*Impact of the researcher:* Who will do interviews with men, women and children – best to draw on the skills and preferences of the research team as it is more effective if the researcher feels comfortable doing the fieldwork: if you're not happy your participants will not be comfortable.

*Practicalities of where to stay in the field:* How to negotiate somewhere to live and eat during the fieldwork? The ideal is if researchers can live in the community and get to know people, building trust and relationships over time.

*Payments/incentives/gifts:* What are the current practices and expectations regarding payment and incentives? What is appropriate for a participatory HighARCS project? Decisions should be made about what to give, how much and when?

#### *Range of methods*

- informal interviews – “chatting” to people and writing up notes afterwards
- PRA tools – participatory techniques
- Focus groups
- Household interviews – with who? Men, women, girls, boys?
- Semi-structured individual interviews: key informant interviews
- Case studies: on particular livelihoods, change from past to present
- Observation and fieldnotes – detailed notes of all that you observe in the field
- Participant observation: learning by doing and sharing experiences with participants
- Field diary: with our own reflections on the research process

*Use of field diaries:* to record the challenges, difficulties and problems of the research process, in particular reflecting on how you feel about conducting the research and living in the communities, and how your research participants are responding to you and the research project.

*Recording and analysing qualitative data:* where possible try to use direct quotations from the participants themselves (translated into English, if possible keep original language in the footnotes). Consequently we need to collect a detailed record of what people say and discuss during interviews and focus groups. In focus group situations it is useful if one person ask questions and facilitates the discussion whilst others record what they are hearing. Later the results of PRA tools can be recorded (as a visual diagram is developed) during the focus group it is more important to capture the discussion in the notes.



Can leave copies of participatory tools on returning to the field next time if the participants would like a copy.

Can use electronic digital recorders in some cases – but probably not appropriate in rural locations where it may detract from the discussion and raise suspicion

*Limitations:* be open, honest and transparent about the weaknesses or limitations of your approach. The funders, the European Commission (EC) in this case, like to hear about the challenges and difficulties that the research teams faced in their work. The EC recognises that doing participatory research is very difficult in practice and are keen for research teams to acknowledge and describe the problems they have faced. Some challenges will have been resolved but some difficulties cannot be resolved and it is ok to highlight these. We should not only talk about our successes but also the things that did not work, reflecting on why that might be the case and what maybe could be done differently in future research.

### **Guidance on Working with Marginal Peoples**

Working with different ethnic and marginal groups (including indigenous and tribal peoples) can be a rewarding but challenging task. Full cultural sensitivity and awareness is needed at all times. Prior to entering a tribal community, endeavour to find out all you can about its culture beforehand. This includes cultural norms and taboos, accepted (and indeed offensive) behaviours, sensitive subjects, dress codes and social protocol. People often like to talk about themselves and teach outsiders about their way of life, so once you enter the community make sure you talk to the community head/leader(s) about what they expect of you. You are entering their culture so ensure you behave, dress and act in the accepted way. This will facilitate social acceptance and rapport-building, and subsequently your research in the long-term.

Try to understand the social hierarchy that exists within the community, who you should address when first entering the community and who you should seek permission from in each household. If you have a village guide and/or translator make sure he/she also understands all of the norms, taboos and accepted behaviours (for instance, in Indonesia and India you should always take your shoes off before entering somebody's house, and in Indonesia you should never show the soles of your feet to someone). Cultural taboos can seem quite unusual and strange to outsiders, but they are very important to the community and can jeopardise your community relations if you do not follow them.

At the same time, it is vital to understand cultural practices and behaviours that may contribute to land and resource management. There is extensive evidence from across the world that many practices developed for cultural reasons (and are thus commonplace within communities) are often contributing to resource protection. In fact, the majority of Protected Areas across the world have gained their status and maintained their biodiversity as a consequence of the cultural practices of indigenous and tribal groups living nearby. For instance, Yellowstone National Park stemmed from Aawahneechee Indians periodically burning the land. Sacred groves in India and believed to be sacred sites which should be used only for religious ceremonies, and as a consequence of low extraction levels, retain high levels of biodiversity. *Tambu* in

Papua New Guinea are areas of coastal waters that are only fished for ceremonies and celebrations. All of these cultural designations and the related practices have resulted in high levels of biodiversity. For this reason, we often find that areas containing high biological diversity are also areas that contain the high cultural diversity (e.g. number of different cultural groups).

In the sites you are working in, you are likely to come across one or more cultural groups that are distinct from your own. It is vital to work towards understanding any practices, beliefs and knowledge systems that relate people to the land. The knowledge base upon which these practices and skills are based is often passed through the generations and is constantly evolving all the time. It is important to understand not just what aquatic resources are used for physically (e.g. consumption and sale), but we need to understand what role they play spiritually and culturally. There may be areas of the landscape that are used for ceremonial purposes or certain animal species that are sacred and used in birth or marriage ceremonies. In Indonesia, the *Bajo* (sea gypsies) believe that the waves represent their ancestors and that practicing unsustainable fishing techniques leads to punishment from their ancestors, such as a bad fish catch or poor weather conditions.

All of these elements contribute to the management of natural resources by communities. It is imperative to work towards understanding these management systems (and the knowledge systems they are based upon), as many of the practices employed are often highly sustainable, proven by the survival of the resources and human communities through to the present day. These systems are now educating conservationists in other parts of the world who are looking for sustainable management solutions, and in some regions, schemes have been set up to compensate local communities for their contributions towards sustainable resource management. These are termed PES schemes, or Payment for Ecosystem Services, which is where the beneficiaries of ecosystem services (such as clean water or high fish populations) are paid pre-agreed sums of money to encourage the continuation of traditional practices that contribute towards the sustainable management of natural resources. For these reasons, it will be imperative to understand the cultural contributions to aquatic resource management at all sites chosen for study in the HighARCS project.

### **Other issues to consider:**

#### **Terminology:**

**Fishermen and fisherwomen:** long terminology so perhaps best to all use similar term such as fishers or fisherfolk. Recently in other projects the term fisherfolks was shortened to 'fishers'. It might be useful if all three teams use the same terms in the reports?

However, when the fishers have different skills we might need to differentiate between fishermen and fisherwomen, such as women are more likely to glean the fish or sell the fish so then we would write about fisherwomen as opposed to fishermen.

**Sustainable livelihoods practices:** this might be a useful term to use to describe our research participant's activities which enable them to survive and cope within their context of vulnerability.

**LITERATURE:** important to do brief literature reviews of other relevant work which is useful for HighARCS. For example, it would be helpful to have a review on how children's knowledge and learning is being used in schools for conserving the environment. We need to remember to link our findings from HighARCS to other relevant literature in other areas of the world. Consequently the reading materials below might be a useful point of departure for developing literature reviews.

### **Working with Stirling-based researcher**

Social scientist: participation, gender, age and livelihoods

Role of researcher – how will he/she work with local partners?

- Ideally they should help to standardise tools and interview guides which can be used across the 3 countries (and 5 sites)
- Key role in communication between the 5 sites and stimulating the use of the researchers forum

#### **Your needs: how can they help you?**

See individual country workshop reports for further details, but key role includes:

- Helping with design of interviews, focus groups and PRA tools
- Helping with qualitative data analysis
- Field visits – participating in fieldwork, ideally living at the field site, within a rural community, for several weeks accompanied by one or two of the local researchers. Conducting focus-groups with local research teams.
- Helping write up the livelihood report and LAPs
- Sharing experiences from across the different field sites: communication role.

#### **Their needs: what help they need from you**

- Translation: working with the team and for fieldwork
- Supervision and guidance
- Cheap accommodation: their budget is limited, they will be paying own living costs in Asia (ie. they will not stay in hotels for 9 months)
- Office space: access to desk space
- Involvement in team meetings

### **Next Step (October to February):**

- 1) Team meeting to discuss issues emerging from this workshop (which will be outlined in the overview workshop report)
- 2) Develop interview guide and focus group tool (take one aspect of the Livelihoods analysis)
- 3) Pilot study – try it out in the field. Keep a field diary of the process of doing this – what worked and what worked less well, the challenges and difficulties. Send a small report on this to us before the workshop. In the field ask the participants what issues and questions they would like HighARCS to explore over the next few months. So during the trial focus group, ask the participants what issues are important to them and what questions they would like us to explore with stakeholders that are key concerns in their lives.
- 4) Training workshop 2 – present your methods and findings from this pilot study to us, we will give detailed feedback and discuss as a group. In particular present the challenges and problems that you faced, and reflect on the difficulties of implementing ‘participation’ in practice. Also attempt some preliminary analysis of this qualitative data according to gender/age/livelihoods.
- 5) Interview tools will be developed and finalised along with the help of the Stirling-based researcher who will be working in Vietnam at that time. Ideally there will be a standardisation of tools used across the 3 countries (with some adaptation to local context)

## Reading Materials

### Participation:

A very useful tool to help you plan your research in the field is the following document on Participatory Action Research. It could help guide the research team through a series of questions around the practicalities and methods required for conducting this kind of fieldwork:

Haughton, F. *Participatory Action Research Template*, The Praxis Project, [www.thepraxisproject.org](http://www.thepraxisproject.org)

McGee, R. (2002) 'Participating in Development', in Kothari, U. and Minogue, M. (eds) *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Palgrave. (photocopy in the workshop training pack)

### Gender:

Batchelor, CH et al. (2005) *Water, Households and Rural Livelihoods: A Guide to Local Water Management*, Delft, The Netherlands: IRC International Water and Sanitation Centre. <http://www.nri.org/whirl>

CAP-NET (2006) *Why Gender Matters: A Tutorial for Water Managers*, Delft, The Netherlands: International Network for Capacity Building in Integrated Water Resources Management, & Gender and Water Alliance.  
Available online at: <http://cap-net.org> and <http://www.genderandwateralliance.org>

Gender in EU-Funded Research: Gender and Environment  
[http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html)

Momsen, J. (2004) *Gender and Development*, London: Routledge. (photocopy in the workshop training pack)

### Children and Young People:

Ansell, N. (2005) *Children, Youth and Development*, London: Routledge. (photocopy in the workshop training pack)

*Children, Youth and Environments* Online Journal: <http://colorado.edu/journals/cye>

*Young Lives*: <http://www.younglives.org.uk>

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty tracking the changing lives of 12,000 children in Ethiopia, India (in the state of Andhra Pradesh), Peru and Vietnam over a 15-year period. The website presents findings from the project, including children's views of their own experiences.

## **Livelihoods:**

Springate-Baginski, O., Allen, D. and Darwall, W. (2009) *An Integrated Wetland Assessment Toolkit: A Guide to Good Practice*, Cambridge: IUCN.

The full document is available as a PDF download at:

<http://www.iucn.org/species/UIWAToolkit>

The chapter on livelihoods can also be downloaded from:

[http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iwa\\_toolkit\\_chapter\\_4\\_lowres.pdf](http://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/iwa_toolkit_chapter_4_lowres.pdf)

Bunting, S. (2008) Assessing the stakeholder Delphi for facilitating interactive participation and consensus building for sustainable aquaculture development. *Society & Natural Resources*. (ask Stuart to send you a copy)

Chong, J. (2005) Valuing the role of aquatic resources in livelihoods: Economic aspects of community wetland management in Stoeng Treng Ramsar Site, Cambodia. IUCN Water, Nature and Economic Technical Paper No. 3. Colombo: IUCN Ecosystems and Livelihoods Group Asia.

*Ecology & Society* Online Journal: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/>

FAO and IUCN (2003) The role and nutritional value of aquatic resources in the livelihoods of rural people: A participatory assessment in Attapeu Province, Lao PDR. Bangkok: FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

IMM (2008) Sustainable Livelihoods Enhancement and Diversification (SLED): A Manual for Practitioners. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Colombo, Sri Lanka; CORDIO, Kalmar, Sweden; and ICRAN, Cambridge, UK.

Morse, W. C., J. L. Schedlbauer, S. E. Sesnie, B. Finegan, C. A. Harvey, S. J. Hollenhorst, K. L. Kavanagh, D. Stoian, and J. D. Wulfhorst. 2009. Consequences of environmental service payments for forest retention and recruitment in a Costa Rican biological corridor. *Ecology and Society* **14**(1): 23.

Pilgrim, S., Smith, D.J. & Pretty, J. (2007) A cross-regional assessment of the factors affecting ecoliteracy: Implications for policy and practice. *Ecol Appl* **17**(6): 1742-1751.

Pilgrim, S., Cullen, L., Smith, D.J. & Pretty, J. (2008) Ecological knowledge is lost in wealthier communities and countries. *Env Sci Tech* **42**(4): 1004-1009.

## Appendix 1: Qualitative Research

The following are some general notes in relation to conducting qualitative research, in particular emphasising the open-ended nature of qualitative research which is different to quantitative research. These ideas will be followed up and discussed in more detail at the Training Workshop 2.

### Introducing the project to research participants

The research teams will need to decide how to verbally introduce the project at the field sites: how to express the aims and potential benefits of the project without promising too much to the participants that we might not be able to deliver. Issues to consider:

- Will you provide an information leaflet in local dialect/language?
- Towards the end of the project will you give a copy of the key findings back to participants? If so, in what format?
- Ethical issues: will any information which is given by the participants be confidential, and if so, how will the team ensure that it is? Will you change everyone's name and/or the name of the community so that it will be anonymous?

### Conducting fieldwork

- **Building rapport:**
  - try to begin with informal friendly chat and try to make your research participants feel comfortable and at ease
  - it is helpful to have a clear and concise introduction to the project which can be used when meeting new participants/interviewees
  - to build trust and rapport you may need to think about the language you use (keep it clear and simple), your body language (follow their example, sit how and where they sit), your appearance/dress
  - at the end of the interview thank them for their time and round off with some general conversation
- **Observations**
  - during the interview observe the research setting, take a mental note of the surroundings, eg. what is their house like, what are the walls/roof/flouring made of, do they have electricity or a TV. If there is something unusual, ask what it is for.
  - after the interview when out of sight write your observations of what the interview was like, the interview setting, anything else which you did not have a chance to write notes about. Remember: everything is potentially important, even though it might not seem important at the time, it is best to record all your observations and all interactions no matter how trivial they may seem.
  - participant observation: where possible try to participate in village/fishery life as participation will increase your understanding of what their livelihoods are like. So if you have a chance to take part in village activities then accept as it will broaden your perception of their livelihoods, and remember to write up these events fully in your field notes.

- informal interviews: often when you are in the field you will have general conversations with a range of different people, these "chats" are "informal interviews" and are an important source of field data. You will need to develop your memory skills and to try to scribble key words afterwards to help remind you of the detail of these interactions. You can also use these occasions to explore particular issues in a very informal way to increase your understanding of certain aspects of their lives

- **Reporting**

- write up your fieldnotes as soon as possible after returning from the field because the longer you leave it, then the less detailed your notes will be
- have a summarised section where you highlight the key points and why they are important
- try to organise your fieldnotes according to particular themes/topics
- field diary: always have a section in your fieldnotes for your observations and personal comments about the research process (for example, this could be at the back of your fieldnote book)

## **Interviewing**

- **Suppression of own views:** it can be very difficult but as a researcher we must try to conceal our views and not impose our perceptions in the interview situation. The key goal of interviewing is to explore the interviewee's views in-depth whether we agree with them or not. We should try to remain impartial, keeping a professional manner which does not reveal our own private thoughts and feelings. In particular, if we disagree with their answers we should not show this but we should further explore their reasons and explanations for why they feel this way. Your mannerisms and facial expression should not convey that you strongly disagree with them or that you do not believe what they are saying. Even though they may criticise us or say controversial things, this data is very important as it reflects their views of the situation. This may be the case for some of the stakeholder interviews who have different interests in relation to the use of aquatic resources.
- **Encourage them to explain their views fully:** we should make our research participants feel that we are listening seriously to what they have to say and that we are really interested in their perceptions of the situation. Try to look as though you are listening hard and are interested (eg by nodding and other encouraging signals which will hopefully encourage them to continue talking). Try to maintain eye contact as much as possible, be an attentive listener and try to encourage them to continue talking.
- **Probe and seek further explanations:** when they give an answer to a question, explore their response more fully by asking 'probing questions' such as: "That's really interesting, could you tell me a bit more about that?" Be aware of the overall project aims so that if other relevant details emerge in the interviews you know what information is important to probe and explore further.

Pick up on words/concepts that they use and ask for their understanding of them, do not assume that you know what they mean, eg: "It is interesting that you are



talking about 'work culture', could you tell me more about what exactly you mean by it?"

Overfamiliarity: because you are part of the same culture and already know a lot about the situation you should try not to make too many assumptions that you know what they mean. Always ask them what they mean as sometimes their understanding may differ from yours. You need to try to be curious about everything and not take anything for granted. Eg: "I'm not quite sure what you mean by 'flexible transport' could you explain what you mean by that?"

**Flexible use of questions:** try to have the key sections of the interview in your head so that you can move flexibly between the questions. In qualitative research it is fine to ask the questions in a different order and follow the flow of the conversation. Check at the end that you have covered all of the main areas.

**Notetaking:** learn to write notes quickly, create your own shorthand for common words, try to write but maintain eye contact at same time. Write key words to remind you of things that you have observed during the interview.

**Awareness of difficulties:** field work is difficult to do well: it can be tiring, hard to remember everything, it is difficult to build rapport with a range of different people. Interviewing is also very hard to do well: to listen, make notes, keep eye contact, think ahead of the next question, but probe important points, not asking leading questions, being sensitive to their responses.

You should feel able to express your concerns and talk about any difficulties you are having. Talk to the other researchers via the researcher forum on the HighARCS website and share your field experiences in particular highlighting any difficulties or concerns. Think about what research skills you would like to develop and feel able to ask for help or support if it is needed.