Participatory Methods and Tools for Extension

Trend Analysis

Objectives

- Learn how the community perceives change over time in various aspects of their lives from its members.
- Integrate significant changes in the village profile.
- Discuss village problems and any increase or decrease in the severity of the problems over the years rather that asking direct questions.
- Discuss interventions and measures that worked out or failed in the past and reason.
- Understand people's perception of the past and present and of the shape of things to come in the near or distant future with or without intervention.
- Produce a conductive environment for the present state of affairs to plan the possible interventions.

Local people understand things about the present situation and the changes that have taken place throughout the years.

Trend analysis is people's account of the past and can provide a good idea of the quantitative changes over time in different aspects of village life. This can include trends in yields, population, livestock population, the number of trees, area under cultivation, rainfall, etc. It helps to understand increases and decreases in each aspects over a period of time by charting broad movements/capturing trends in the local people's lives rather than precise shifts.

Process

The suggested steps in the process of trend analysis are as follows:

1. Select a group of local people who are interested in the exercise. Explain to them the purpose of the exercise.
2. Initiate a discussion on the present situation, and then move on to the aspects of your interest: ex. density of trees, grass, wild animals, collection of minor forest produce, income from forest, moisture content, etc.
3. Encourage participants to come up with a list of aspects related to village life, then help to select the most important ones.
4. Facilitate the selection of time landmarks across which the trends could be studied. Qualities of time landmarks:
    - Relevant to the topic of the study – to capture the change in all their details and diversity
    - Friendly to the participants so that they can relate to the years easily.
    - Encourage the participants to depict the selected landmark years on cards preferably by symbols of visuals.
5. Ask participants to make a matrix on the ground using chalk to represent the landmark years (top-bottom) and various aspects like density of trees, grass, wild animals, etc. (left-right).
6. With one aspect (ex. density of trees), ask participants to depict the situation today in the relevant cell using symbols, visuals, seeds, sticks, sand, etc. Encourage participants to do this with each time landmark.
7. Ask participants to explain the diagram and have a discussion on their findings. Ask them: "What are the major trends?" "What was the cause?" "What can be done and who can play a role in it?" "What can the participants and local peoples do themselves?" "What can they do with a little assistance from outside?"
8. Ask participants if they would like to make any changes or to add any new aspects to the matrix.
9. Copy the diagram onto a sheet of paper with details of the legend, the scoring system, the participants and facilitators, and the location and date.
10. Interview participants on the diagram, asking questions to gain clarity.
11. Triangulate the findings with other members of the community.

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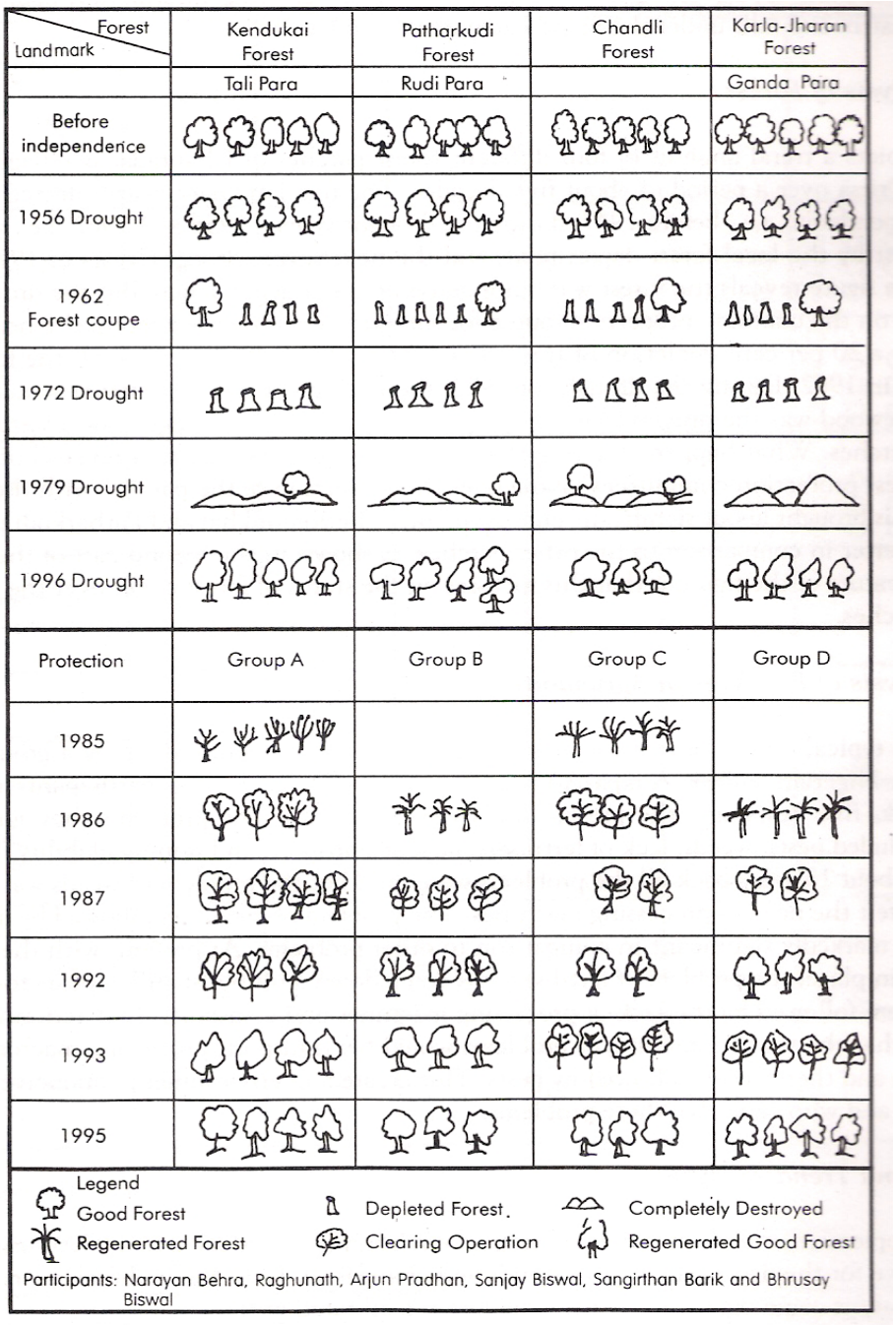
FEED THE FUTURE
The U.S. Government's Global Hunger & Food Security Initiative

Example of Trend Analysis: Figure 1. Trend analysis of Aukpa-Adoka, Nigeria (natural resources)



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