

GATHERING BASELINE AND ENDLINE DATA



Gathering baseline and endline data is key to assessing the impacts of community land protection efforts.

Gathering baseline data is helpful for two reasons:

- 1. It allows facilitators to learn a great deal about a community before they begin working there**, and helps them understand how to best adapt the community land protection process to the community's pre-existing needs and challenges. For example, a facilitator may find out from a focus group discussion that a community has been involved in a boundary dispute with a neighboring community that has resulted in violence in the past. To proactively address the situation and prevent further violence, the facilitating organization might want to provide extra mediation training to staff and Community Land Mobilizers, or ask trusted local government officials to help mediate the dispute.
- 2. It creates a “before” picture of how the community was before the community land protection work began**, which can then be compared to the endline data (after it is collected) to see what changed as a result of the intervention.

Gathering endline data is useful for two reasons:

- 1. It helps facilitators know how to better support other communities in the future.** It can also indicate if the community needs additional support, which facilitators can provide if time and resources permit. For example, if the endline data show that community leaders are not properly managing money earned from fees and fines collected, facilitators may want to provide additional financial management training to community leaders and the Land Governance Council – and then add this more rigorous training into all future community land protection plans and activities.
- 2. It creates an “after” picture of the community at the end of the community land protection process**, which can then be compared to the baseline data to measure the changes, outcomes and impacts of the work. For example, if community members reported in the baseline that their leaders never consult them on questions of land use, but then report in the endline that now their leaders convene community-wide meetings to make land-related decisions as a group, then the data will show that the program promoted participatory decision-making processes on questions of land.

USING BASELINE AND ENDLINE DATA TO PROVE PROGRAM IMPACT

Before community land protection efforts began in Uganda, most participants in baseline women’s focus groups reported that they generally attended community meetings. However, more than half of the women explained that they were afraid to speak up at community meetings for fear of being belittled or mocked both by men and other women, or because shyness kept them from contributing their ideas. These women described how: “The leaders underlook us;” “The leaders say that women do not have important points to mention;” “We are considered inferior, [men think] that we have nothing useful to contribute;” “The men in this community demean us;” and “Sometimes they think that we don’t have points because we are women — the community leaders minimize us.” Notably, a few women explained that, “We speak freely because the men think we have weak ideas, so we speak out to prove them wrong.”

However, after being involved in the community land documentation process, women in endline focus group discussions consistently described feeling free to participate in community meetings, and that their opinions and ideas were taken seriously and included in their community’s decisions. In stark contrast to the pre-service focus groups, women explained: “Our opinions were used to make final decisions;” “At the end of the day, the written document represents our opinions, too;” “We feel our opinions were heard and used in the final decision;” “We were all considered the same [as the men] when giving views;” “When a community meeting is held and women also participate meaningfully, our ideas are respected;” and “Yes, we have the opportunity to participate and our opinions are always taken.”

OVERVIEW: COLLECTING BASELINE AND ENDLINE DATA

There are three ways to gather baseline and endline data:

- 1. Household “informant” surveys.** Household surveys involve going to *randomly-selected* families’ homes and interviewing one member of the family, usually for about one hour. During the interviews, researchers go through a long list of very specific questions (with a limited list of possible answers to choose from) that ask about the individuals’ personal experiences related to community governance of land and natural resources, as well as information about the family’s health, well-being, livelihood, land use practices, religion, ethnicity and financial situation. This information is useful because it can show the impact of the community land protection work at the household level. People may also be more willing to tell the truth if they are interviewed alone in private. It is usually best to interview at least 20 randomly-selected people per community.
- 2. Key informant interviews.** Key informant interviews are one-on-one discussions with community leaders or other community members who have extensive knowledge and understanding of the community’s land and natural resource situation (community population, size of the land, natural resources located on the land, who is currently in charge of land governance, description of all existing land conflicts, relations with neighbors, etc.) Key informant interviews can help facilitators to document factual information about a community, as well as leaders’ reflections on community land and natural resource issues.
- 3. Focus groups discussions.** Focus group discussions are facilitated group conversations in which community members discuss among themselves what is happening in their community related to land and natural resource use, management and governance. When leading a focus group discussion, facilitators usually gather around 15 people who share a similar characteristic (youth, women, elders, practitioners of a particular livelihood, etc.), then ask them a series of open-ended questions. Focus group discussions are a very fast and efficient way to hear many community members’ views on a given topic (for example, about how people use and manage common areas like shared forests and grazing lands). Focus group discussions create a space for a rich exchange of ideas and opinions: listening to each other’s answers may stimulate participants’ memories, thoughts and reflections and foster empowerment and education as they learn from one another. They are also useful because it is difficult for people to lie in front of other community members who would challenge them on incorrect information.

When to gather the data? It is best to gather the baseline data once the facilitating organization has been introduced to the community and has started to build trust, but before undertaking community land protection activities (ideally somewhere around the “Introducing the Community Land Protection Process to Communities,” and the “Community Visioning” activity, but before establishing Terms of Engagement, and electing Community Land Mobilizers and an Interim Coordinating Committee). This will help ensure that the baseline data is truly a “before” picture. It is best to gather the endline data after “Community Exit.” Ideally, facilitators should wait at least a month to do the endline after exiting a community.

Choosing the best data collection strategy. If a facilitating organization has time and resources, it is best to do household informant surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews during both the baseline and the endline. However, household informant surveys are often quite costly and can require several weeks of intensive research, so they may not always be within the planned budget.¹ With limited time and funding, however, a facilitating organization can still undertake key informant interviews and focus group discussions: a team of three researchers/facilitators can very easily go to a community for one or two days and hold at least three focus group discussions and three key informant interviews. For example, in one day, three researchers could each hold one key informant interview in the morning, and one focus group discussion in the afternoon.

Who should collect the data? It is best to find a **team of independent researchers** to gather baseline and endline data. Data gathered by people unrelated to the facilitating organization is generally considered to be more rigorous, scientific and impartial: researchers have no personal agenda or stake in what the data end up showing. Indeed, facilitating organizations will likely have a bias toward gathering data that show that the intervention had very positive impacts. Moreover, if facilitators are the ones gathering the data, community members might be more willing to lie to tell the facilitators what they think the facilitators want to hear. To avoid this, it may be possible to find college students or PhD candidates who might want to gather the baseline and endline data. However, because of the very political nature of land issues, facilitators should accompany any independent researchers to the community and introduce them. At the very least, while facilitators can gather the baseline data themselves, they should work hard to find independent researchers to gather endline data.

HOW TO CREATE HIGH QUALITY KEY INFORMANT AND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRES?

Facilitators should create baseline and endline questionnaires and “field test” them (with support staff, neighbors, family members, etc.) before starting research in any community. The most efficient way to come up with good questionnaires is to:

1. Go through the list of desired impacts and outcomes of the community land protection process (improved local land governance, land conflict resolution, stronger rights for women and members of minority groups, more sustainable natural resources use, etc.) and think of every piece of information that might help show impact.
2. Next, sort the questions into three (or two) groups: a household survey questionnaire (if possible); a focus group discussion questionnaire; and a questionnaire for key informant interviews.
3. Then, go through the lists of questions and see if anything is missing and should be added or deleted, if the questionnaires are too long.

Remember that the baseline and endline surveys should have *the same exact list of questions*, because that is the only way to see “before” and “after” changes. It is possible to add additional questions to the endline, but make sure to ask all of the same questions from the baseline.

Sometimes it is good to put the same question on all of the questionnaires, to cross-check to see if the information gathered is accurate. For example, facilities might ask the same question to both “key informant” leaders and focus group discussion members. If the leaders report information that is significantly different from information gathered in the focus groups, it may mean that key informants are potentially misrepresenting the truth or are out of touch with the larger community’s interests and perceptions.

If during a “field test” of the questions, a question just doesn’t provoke good or useful answers, facilitating organizations may want to look at that question and figure out how to change it so that it gathers useful information. It is best to only begin research in communities after making very sure that the list of questions to be asked will bring in data that are useful and will show impact.

1. For this reason, this Guide does not go into detail concerning how to conduct household surveys.

SAMPLE BASELINE AND ENDLINE QUESTIONS

Enforcement of rules:

- Do your community leaders enforce rules related to land and natural resources? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)
- Are there penalties for people that break the rules? (Answers: Yes, No, Unknown)
- Are these penalties enforced? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)
- Endline only: Do local government officials support your community to enforce your new by-laws? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

Equal treatment of all community members by leaders.

- Do certain people in your community get treated differently by leaders, as related to land and natural resource use? (Answers: No: all people are treated the same, Yes: better treatment for elites, Yes: worse treatment for poor people, Yes: better treatment for family members/relatives, Yes: worse treatment for minorities/outsidars, Yes: worse treatment for women, Yes, worse treatment for youth)
- Do your local leaders make decisions or take action to protect the land rights of women, elderly, orphans, members of minority groups, the poor, etc.? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

Transparent financial management.

- Does your community generate revenue or make money from its land and natural resources? (Answers: Yes, No, Unknown)
- If yes, how much money did your community make in the past year? (Answers: Amount: ___/Unknown)
- Do your community leaders regularly update the community on how much money has been generated and how it is used? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)
- On a scale of 1-5, how transparently and fairly do your leaders manage community money? (1 2 3 4 5)
- Do your community leaders consult with community members about how to spend funds raised from the use of community lands and natural resources? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)

Sustainable natural resource management

- Does your community have a practice of replanting or replenishing resources that people use? (For example, every time you cut a tree, plant a tree?) (Answers: Yes, No, Unknown)
 - If yes, on a scale of 1 to 5, how often do people live out this rule? (1 2 3 4 5)
- Does your community have a portion of its land that is reserved for the use of all community members, and cannot be used exclusively by certain families/people or investment? (Answers: Yes, No, Unknown)
- Does your community have rules and/or practices for keeping water sources clean and unpolluted? (Answers: Yes, No, Unknown)
 - If yes, how often are these rules/practices followed by community members? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)
- Does your community have rules and/or practices for making sure that there are enough animals to hunt and fish to fish, now and for future generations ? (Answers: Yes, No, Unknown)
 - If yes, how often are these rules/practices followed by community members? (Answers: All the time, Most the time, Sometimes, Rarely, Never)
- Endline only: What is a good rule from the past that your community created to support sustainable land and natural resource management? _____ (Record all answers given)
- Endline only: What is a new rule that your community created to support sustainable land and natural resource management? _____ (Record all answers given)

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND FACILITATE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS?

- 1. Identify potential key informants.** Potential key informants will vary by community and facilitators should not conduct interviews until they have an understanding of the power dynamics within the community. All key informants should have a comprehensive knowledge of land and natural resource issues in the community and ideally hold a leadership position (either as a state or customary leader, as a respected elder, as a manager of key communal resources, or as a member of the community's customary tribunal, etc.).
- 2. Decide how many key informant interviews to conduct.** Key informant interviews can take several hours to complete. It is best to conduct at least three key informant interviews per community to ensure that facilitators gather enough data to compare the information and arrive at accurate answers. For example, if one leader estimates the size of the community's land to be 10,000 hectares, and another leader estimates the community's land to be 50,000 hectares, facilitators will need to find at least one more key informant to help provide clarity. Facilitators should conduct as many key informant interviews as possible, given time and resource constraints.
- 3. Determine how and where to conduct key informant interviews.** Facilitators should get a sense of community dynamics before deciding where to hold key informant interviews. If leaders are untrusted, or if community members are suspicious that outsiders are plotting to grab their lands, or if leaders often make decisions without consulting the community, facilitators may want to consider conducting interviews in a very public place, in front of the community, where anyone who wants to can listen in. If a facilitating organization has already built trust in the community and key informants have publicly supported community land protection efforts, facilitators may be able to carry out the interviews in private.
- 4. Facilitate the interview.** Facilitators should have a separate discussion with each key informant. Facilitators should not rush through the questionnaire – valuable data and perspectives often emerge from side discussions that do not necessarily directly address a specific question. **Facilitators should take notes on everything that is said in key informant interviews**, even if it does not answer a question. Although it is possible to for a single facilitator to conduct key informant interviews, it may be best for one facilitator to ask questions to the key informant and another to take notes and/or complete the questionnaire. When possible,

record direct quotations in the notes – these may be helpful when writing reports on the project's impact.

- 5. Close the interview.** Key informant interviews are an opportunity to build trust and goodwill between the facilitating organization and local leaders. After completing the interview, the facilitator should close by thanking the key informant for his or her time, then take a moment to explain how the leader's participation in/support for all community land protection activities will be essential to the community's success.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AND FACILITATE SUCCESSFUL FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

Facilitating organizations should plan in advance how to convene and moderate focus group discussions and ensure that facilitators are well trained to facilitate the discussions. The following strategies may support successful focus group discussions:

- 1. Inform communities in advance about planned focus group discussions and explain why they are necessary.** Facilitators can explain that focus group discussions are useful to:
 - Help facilitators understand conditions in the community before and after the community land protection process so that they can assess the program's impacts.
 - Help facilitators understand how to best support the community through potential challenges that may arise in the course of the community land protection process.
- 2. Schedule focus group discussions in advance, allowing roughly three hours per group.** Facilitators should plan for each focus group discussion to last for two or three hours. To save time, facilitators should work with community members to select participants in advance so that they can begin the discussions on time. Since people's time is valuable, facilitators should consider providing participants with snacks, soft drinks, or small amounts of key commodities to compensate them for their time.
- 3. Choose diverse participants.** At the very least, facilitators should hold baseline and endline focus group discussions with: 1) men and male leaders, 2) women and female leaders, and 3) youth. Facilitators should take care to actively identify and include people from marginalized groups to ensure that their voices and experiences inform the data. Strategies for participant selection include:

- Random selection of volunteers: If many community members are eager to participate in focus group discussions, facilitators can randomly choose participants who volunteer in a public meeting. Names can also be randomly drawn from a hat.
- Leaders select participants: If community leaders support the land protection process and are well trusted by community members, local leaders can nominate focus group participants themselves. However, this strategy is likely to include a disproportionate number of leaders' friends and family members, and may not reflect the full range of community opinion.
- Nomination in a large community meeting: Community members can nominate people they think would make good participants. Nominees should be people who are knowledgeable about the community's lands and natural resources, known for their ability to respectfully share their opinions, and willing to volunteer several hours of their time.
- Members of an existing group: Sometimes an existing group such as a women's group, youth group, or existing land committee can be an ideal pool from which to invite participants.

4. Ensure that every focus group discussion has two facilitators. Experience has shown that it is challenging for a single staff member to actively facilitate focus group discussions *and* take accurate notes at the same time. Facilitating organizations can recruit volunteers or university students to take notes during focus groups if they do not have enough field staff to send two facilitators to each community.

One of the most positive parts of focus group discussions is that they enable community members to express individual opinions, engage in group deliberations, and potentially agree about answers to important questions. In some focus groups, the facilitator will need to play an active role to ensure that all participants are able to share their views and to move the discussion forward when participants get caught up in disagreements and debates.

5. Open the discussion and ask the group to set ground rules.

First, facilitators should invite everyone to introduce themselves. Then, facilitators should ask participants to volunteer the ground rules. Ground rules may include rules like: "Respect everyone's opinion;" "Give everyone a chance to answer each question;" and "Listen to one another – no interrupting." The facilitator should try to make all participants feel as comfortable as possible for the duration of the discussion.

6. Begin asking questions, and ensure that all focus group discussion participants have an opportunity to speak.

Focus group discussions require skillful facilitation to ensure that more vocal individuals do not answer all the questions and dominate the discussion. Facilitators should also be alert for complex power dynamics in the group – for example: are more wealthy/powerful women silencing less powerful/less wealthy women? If several people are talking too much, the facilitator should actively call on quieter participants and ask them to share their views. Subtleties of power relations may influence the discussion and effectively silence some participants; facilitators should gracefully ensure that all are able to speak freely.

7. Allow for discussion and disagreement: As participants feel more comfortable in the focus group setting, spirited debates and disagreements may arise. Facilitators should encourage such debate and not try to stop it. After all participants have had an opportunity to express their views, facilitators may want to summarize what has been said and encourage the group to arrive at a few main conclusions. If community members are unable to come to agreement on how to best answer a question, facilitators should try to determine why consensus was not possible. Does one group member feel that his rights are threatened by the community land protection process? Does another community member have a different background or livelihood than the other group members that is causing her to disagree? Facilitators should describe such debates in detail on the baseline or endline questionnaire and include an analysis of why they think community members were unable to agree.

8. Conclude the discussion: Facilitators should observe the group closely and actively move the discussion along if they sense that participants are getting tired or want to leave. And the end of the discussion, facilitators should thank participants and explain the next steps of the community land protection process.

HOW TO RECORD AND USE DATA FROM KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS?

Recording data from key informant interviews and focus group discussions can be challenging. Facilitators should take extensive notes of everything that is said, and, if possible, record focus group discussions on their phones or on tape recorders. Facilitators should make a special effort to capture:

- **Quotations:** Recording the exact words that key informants and/or focus group participants can be very powerful, especially when assessing the impact of community land protection efforts. (As an example of how powerful quotations can be, see the box on women's participation in community land governance at the beginning of this chapter.)
- **Disagreements:** Focus group participants may not always agree on answers to facilitators questions. If there is disagreement, it is important for facilitators to records all of the disagreeing opinions and analyze the roots of the debate.
- **Observations:** Facilitators should note when focus group participants or key informants avoid directly answering questions, appear nervous during discussions, or have especially strong reactions to certain questions.

After gathering the data. After undertaking focus group discussions and key informant interviews, facilitators should look at the data and analyze it, together with all relevant staff members of the facilitating organization. During these discussions, facilitators can discuss any surprising information that they may have uncovered and discuss how they might handle challenging situations that arise. Then, facilitators may want to:

- **Publish the findings** in a short paper, report or an academic article, to enhance learning across the field of land rights protection and promote professional development.
- **Report the findings back to the community.** Community members are experts in their own right, and may be able to use the data gathered in positive ways. For example, if the baseline data show that people are not using local natural resources sustainably, facilitators can share that data with the community and then support the community to take action to improve the situation. Motivated community members might learn data collection techniques, then use the techniques to gather data and track information that may contribute to the overall health and wellness of the community.

NOTES