

APPENDIX ONE

Oral history notes of guidance

Excerpt from D. Naryan (forthcoming) Towards participatory data collection. UNDP/World Bank Water and Sanitation program. Washington DC.

Purpose

To understand the community's history, attitude and values towards its leaders, women, production systems and government action.

Background

In short cut, rapid research there is always a danger of taking an ahistorical perspective by not understanding the context of a situation, the degree or lack of change or the reasons for current problems. To increase the depth of understanding and achieve a perspective on a situation over time it is important to get a sense of the history of the community, what people's circumstances have historically been and what their goals and aspirations are.

As the term implies, "oral history" is the verbal history of people's situations. Because oral history is not written down, not only are the words people use important, but so too are how they are used, and the tone and emotions with which they are spoken. In eliciting oral histories the person asking the questions becomes part of the process by recording the words and by interpreting their hidden meaning.

Oral history can be of places, events or lives. Life stories are extremely important in understanding the concerns, problems, critical incidents, and changes that occur through an entire life cycle. In telling their stories, people reconstruct the past as they remember it. The subjectivity of the story is its revealing feature. What people tell you or don't tell you are keys to interpreting how they feel about certain situations.

Oral histories can be particularly useful in understanding village history: its geography, ethnic composition, when and why it was formed, who were its leaders, and what changes took place over time. In recording village oral history, older men, women and traditional leaders make good informants.

Time: 1-3 hours

Audience: Community members

Materials Needed: Extensive notes can be taken or tape recorders can be used.

How to conduct the exercise

1. Begin by setting the right atmosphere. People are usually more relaxed in the late evening or at night once the day's work is over. People are more likely to talk if they believe the person asking the questions is genuinely interested and non-judgmental.
2. Conduct a conversational interview, keeping the main purpose in mind.

APPENDIX TWO

Pilot study in Idodi village (16/17th August 1994)

Aim

To develop a method for collecting oral history information.

Methods

The method was based on the guidance notes in Appendix One i.e. to talk casually with older village-members to gain an impression of personal and village histories. The information sought was anecdotal, relating mainly to natural resources and the relationship of Idodi to RNP.

The researcher did not use a counterpart (because he was on leave) and arrived in the village alone. On the first day, the researcher spoke with a mzee who had been recommended to him. The mzee volunteered to arrange for a group of other senior residents to meet the researcher the next day.

The list of topics in Appendix Three was drawn up prior to the study and was kept in mind by the researcher during conversation, but not explicitly referred to; the intention was to keep things informal and allow the respondents to dictate the flow of conversation.

The conversations were held in Kiswahili. Important points were written down by the researcher during the conversations. Immediately after the discussions the researcher produced a fuller transcript of the conversation with reference to the topic list. Following the pilot trial the effectiveness of the method was considered and suggestions proposed for improvement.

Results

The information obtained is set out in the pilot study transcript in Appendix Four.

Assessment of usefulness of technique

The arranged nature of the discussions made them too formal. The participants arrived expecting a structured interview and not a rambling discussion. At one point they requested they be asked specific questions and the interviewer was not prepared for this.

Lack of an experienced counterpart made it difficult to wander round the village and talk to people "on spec". It was noticeable that "pillars of society" had been selected as meeting participants.

Conclusion

An experienced counterpart would assist in making introductions to a wider range of people, all of whom would have been re-assured by his/her familiar presence.

Individual interviews would generally be better than group sessions, unless the groups were already in progress (i.e. not formed for the purpose of the research) or very informal.

The researcher should be prepared to take a more positive role if need be i.e. introduce specific topics of conversation or even ask direct questions if conversation founders.

In view of the potential sensitivity of some subjects, e.g. illegal hunting, it did not seem appropriate to use a tape recorder. Written recording worked well.

APPENDIX THREE

Conversation topics

Village history

How long have you lived around here? How old is the village?

What changes can you see since the old days:

- in terms of community composition
- number of people, houses, farms, stock
- lifestyles and livelihoods - better/worse?
- space, woodlands, rivers, wild animals
- tsetse
- diseases spread from wildlife to stock, MCF, ECF, ticks etc.

General natural resources /access/management

What sorts of things from the bush did people use in the old days e.g. fodder for stock, fuel-wood, poles, thatching grass, dawa ya kienyeji, honey, beeswax, fruits for beer e.g. in Kenya for Muratina, meat, skins, fish?

Cultural e.g. ceremonial like Maasai and Samburu lion skins, ostrich feathers, song-birds etc. Skins for drums?

Were these things protected by rules on who could take things, at what time, how much etc.? Who made the rules?

Were some areas set aside or some species given special status? How were rules enforced - were there any punishments ?

Were there specialist people involved in honey gathering, hunting etc.? Techniques - hives, bows, spears, traps, nets, poison, guns, dogs etc. processing e.g. meat drying, skins....

Charcoal making significant? doesn't seem to be much around these days....

Were the things used in the villages only or sent outside?

Is it the same these days.....?

Do people still need these old things? Are there still people who know the bush? Can they use these things properly ? What about outsiders and get-rich-quick merchants who can't be satisfied?

Specific wildlife

More or less? Reasons....? Crop-raiders better or worsewhy?

Ruaha NP and the Rungwa GR.

How did people feel about being moved out? Why?....

Ladies

Fuel-wood, water, chores, wild foods, crops (working/guarding), tending stock?

APPENDIX FOUR

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS