# Webinar 3: How to integrate participatory research methods

Horticulture for Development Professional Series

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# Learning from and with communities: participatory learning for action (PLA)

**via semi-structured interviewing**

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# *PARTICIPATION*
## a commitment, not a tool

# Key Program/Project Planning, Learning and Management Tasks

| Phase | Preparatory "Diagnoses" and Assessments | Detailed Implementation Planning | Implementation | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Purpose (Including Learning)** | *To prepare for program development and action by better understanding* <br> • *the social/ economic/ environmental setting,* <br> • *the needs and assets of various potential stakeholders,* <br> • *specific sectoral (health, education, etc.) challenges* <br> • *key practices and behaviors to be addressed* | *To develop a clear plan describing in what specific ways the organization(s) will act to deal with the problems/ challenges identified during the preparatory phase—detailing key resources, expected outputs and outcomes and key assumptions* | *To implement the plans and assess, in an ongoing way, the fidelity of implementation (per the plan in terms of quality, timeliness) AND identify potential changes. Learning here includes stakeholder and participant views* | *To assess the immediate effect(s) of the actions (program or project) on desired or planned outcomes—including unintended outcomes* |
| **Learning and Planning Approaches Used** | • Key informant interviews <br> • Group-based/participatory tools <br> • "Population"-based surveys <br> • Observation (including participant) <br> • Secondary sources (documents, reports, literature) <br> • Institutional assessments | • Problem tree <br> • Objective tree <br> • LogFrame Matrix <br> • SWOT Analysis <br> • GANTT Chart <br> • Budget <br> • Information system | • Structured observation <br> • Supervision visits/discussions <br> • Participatory tools <br> • Mini-surveys ("population") <br> • Key informant interviews <br> • Record reviews <br> • Audits/Bookkeeping | "Population"-based surveys <br> Client/Member satisfaction surveys <br> Group-based/participatory tools <br> Key informant interviews <br> Institutional assessments |
| **Resources Needed to Apply Approaches** | • *Semi-structured/Standardized interviewing techniques* <br> • *Group facilitation/interviewing skills* <br> • *Sample survey methodologies (sampling, survey design, structured interviewing, analysis)* <br> • *Observation tools* | *While no specific "research" tools are listed here, some form of research (literature reviews or field-based methods) may be necessary to provide support to the problem and objective trees* | • *Semi-structured/Standardized interviewing techniques* <br> • *Group facilitation/ interviewing skills* <br> • *Sample survey methods* <br> • *Observation tools* <br> • *Feedback techniques* | • *Semi-structured/Standardized interviewing techniques* <br> • *Group facilitation/ interviewing skills* <br> • *Sample survey methodologies* <br> • *Observation tools* |
| **Additional Key Terms** | Some refer to this as <br> • Formative Evaluation <br> • Analysis Phase <br> • Project Design Phase <br><br> See also Action Research, Appreciative Inquiry and their links to broader strategic planning | Planning process at this phase is referred to by many names, eg. logic model, results framework, logical framework. <br><br> The terms used to develop the LogFrame (in particular) vary (see "Rosetta Stone" doc). | Some refer to learning in this phase as: <br> • Progress Tracking <br> • Monitoring <br> • Implementation Evaluation <br> • Process Evaluation <br> See also quality improvement <br><br> Involves inputs and outputs | Some refer to this as <br> • Summative Evaluation <br> • Impact Evaluation <br> • Outcome Evaluation <br><br> See also Most Significant Change (MSC) <br><br> Involves outcomes and impacts |

# Qualitative and Quantitative

|  | *Qualitative* | *Quantitative* |
|---|---|---|
| Basic Definition | Qualitative research produces findings for which the variables are not in a numerical form, but are in the form of text, photographs, sounds bytes, and so on. | Quantitative research yields data that appears in numerical form. |
| Overall Purpose | Rich, complete detailed description of context to understand actors' perspectives | Broad classification and description to summarize and generalize statements about whatever is observed (possibly including naming causality) |
| Relation to Theory | Generates hypotheses and is viewed as inductive (starting with observation and moving towards theory by generating hypotheses) | Tests hypotheses and is viewed as deductive (starting with theory and using observation to test it by testing hypotheses coming from it) |
| Form of Data | Words (text), Pictures, Sounds, Objects, Taxonomies, | Numbers expressed as percentages, means, medians, variance, coefficients, etc. |
| Use of Data (assuming collected rigorously) | Provide rich descriptions and, perhaps, explore descriptions of "why" | Allow for generalization to a larger population or to test hypotheses—explore broad descriptions of what |
| Tools/Approaches | • Unstructured, semi-structured or standardized interviews<br>• Observation<br>• Review of documentation | • Structured interviews carried out identically in each case with pre-coded responses |
| Sampling | Purposive or Random—may seek maximum variability | Random (simple, stratified, cluster or more complex) |

# Semi-Structured and Standardized Interviewing

- Use <u>open-ended</u> questions

- Avoid <u>leading</u> questions

- <u>Probe</u> issues in depth

- Let the <u>informant lead</u>

- Prepare <u>interview guides</u>

- Practice asking <u>questions</u> (not created equal)

- Collect, expand and code <u>notes</u>

- Look for patterns, concepts, themes, outliers

# Use Open-Ended Questions

**<u>Closed Questions:</u>** Questions for which the answer choices are either given to the respondent or understood by the respondent

Examples:

- *What are three ways to prevent a cold* [Implies limited correct answers]
- *Do you talk to people about your experiences as a student at UCD?* [Choice implied: yes/no]
- *Do people here want more or less government intervention?* [Implies limited choices]

*Closed questions limit the breadth of information that a respondent has to offer.*

**<u>Open Questions:</u>** Questions that allow the respondent to answer without presented or implied choices

**Turn the above closed questions into open questions**

Open Question Words: What? Where? Who? When? How? Why?* OR Tell me about…

**\* Why?** Limit the use of "Why?" questions because it implies that there is a right answer and because there is not always a reason for behavior (at least not one respondents can identify).

## Avoid Leading Questions

Allow people to answer in their own terms voicing their own views, values and experiences.

Leading questions are phrased to suggest a particular answer or to imply that one answer is expected or more correct:

- *What do you like about the distance learning portion of the program?*
- *Why is the election process such a problem here?*
- *Talk about some of the great parts of your academic program?*

Non-leading questions on the same topics could be asked this way:

**Turn the above into non-leading questions**

# Probing

"The key to successful interviewing is learning how to probe effectively…

…that is, to stimulate an informant to produce more information…

…without injecting yourself so much into the interaction that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data."

Bernard, H. R. (1995). *Research methods in anthropology : qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Walnut Creek, CA., AltaMira Press.

## Types of Probes

- **Echo** - repeat the last thing the respondent said with a slight rise in the voice..."I think x is good... You think x is good...?"

- **Re-question** - "What else do you think about x...?"

- **Silent** – wait, just remain quiet and wait for the respondent to continue

- **Re-cap** - "Could you repeat what you said about x..?" The repeat will likely yield new information

- **Encouragement** - Verbal probe with noises such as uh-huh, I see, etc.

- **Non-verbal** - Such things as smile, click, head shake, etc.

## Letting the Informant Lead

"In unstructured interviewing, you keep the conversation focused on a topic, while giving the informant room to define the content of the discussion.

The rule is: Get an informant on to a topic of interest and get out of the way. Let the informant provide information that he or she thinks is important."

Bernard, H. R. (1995). *Research methods in anthropology : qualitative and quantitative approaches.* Walnut Creek, CA., AltaMira Press.

# Types of Interview Questions

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview.* New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

1. Descriptive Questions

   • Grand Tour

   • Example Questions

   • Experience Questions

   • "Native Language" Questions

2. Structural Questions

3. Contrast Questions

# Descriptive Questions

These questions seek to open the door and start to get an idea of how things work

<u>Grand Tour</u>

- *Typical* - "Describe a typical day here."
- *Specific* - "Describe what happened yesterday, beginning with when you woke up."
- *Guided* - "*Could* you show me around your community/office/campus?"
- *Task* - "I would like to ask you to draw a map for me of the surrounding community and explain to me what it is like here."

<u>Example Question</u>
"You mentioned challenges your community faces in helping returning vets integrate into your community. I would like to hear some examples of these challenges?"

<u>Experience Questions</u>
"Tell me about some of your experiences of trying to help homeless men in this community."

<u>"Native-Language" Questions</u>
"You mentioned how 'mniha' has changed here.  Tell me more about how 'mniha' works."

**Descriptive questions form the basis of all ethnographic interviewing**.

# Structural Questions

Verify terms learned via descriptive questions and the relationships between them

"What are *some* of the different kinds of 'loha' that occur here?"

"I'm interested in knowing all the different symptoms of 'mambo-layo' that you talked about."

"You said that women here are afraid to go out alone because of 'teasing'. What are some ways you have seen 'teasing' take place?"

# Contrast Questions

These questions also seek to find out what an informant means by various terms:

"What are the differences between the 'hardcore homeless' and 'newbies'?"

"Earlier you said that the 'second generation' of Hmong immigrants view violence differently than the 'first generation'.  Give me some examples of the difference between the two."

# Some Tips for Interviewing--Asking Questions

Do not begin interviewing right away
- Friendly greeting and explanations
- Establish "cultural ignorance"—interviewer as learner

Listen and express interest in what the informant tells you
- More of a friendly conversation
- Not a strict question & answer exchange
- But remain neutral: don't approve or disapprove

Try to encourage informant to expand on their answers and give as many details as possible—informants have a tendency is to abbreviate answers
- Use "describe" or "tell me more about that…"
- Don't rush through questions--explore!
- Let informant's answers determine the direction the interview takes (**keeping within topics of interest**)

Use informant's own language to ask new questions
- Do this as you learn informant's "language"

Crude measure of success is the volume of response
- 80% at least "their" words
- Most problems are the fault of the interviewer

Learn how to re-phrase/re-think questions

Avoid using "why?" questions as much as possible.
- Informants will try to give you a 'right' answer
- Informants may have to "invent" an explanation/justification

# Putting it All Together:

# A Checklist to Guide the Interview Process

| Interview Element<br>(provide examples in spaces provided—use back for more explanation using number) | Overall Use of Practice |
|---|---|
| 1. Began with friendly greeting (helpful ideas:_____) | +  - |
| 2. Established self as learner (describe way(s): _____) | +  - |
| 3. Used open questions (examples of closed:_____) | +  - |
| 4. Avoided leading questions (example of leading:_____) | +  - |
| 5. Let the informant lead (relative amount of speaking by each:_____) | +  - |
| 6. Encouraged the participant to expand (examples of how:_____) | +  - |
| 7. Used probes | |
|    • Echo (example(s_____) | +  - |
|    • Re-question (example(s)____\|_____) | +  - |
|    • Silent (example(s_____) | +  - |
|    • Re-cap or Repeat (example(s)_____) | +  - |
|    • Encouragement – Verbal (example(s)_____) | +  - |
|    • Non-verbal (example(s)_____) | +  - |
|    • Phased Assertion (example(s)_____) | +  - |
| 8. Used informants "language" (example(s)_____) | +  - |
| 9. Rephrased questions (example(s)_____) | +  - |
| 10. Avoided too many "Why?" questions (example(s) of "Why"? questions used_____) | +  - |
| 11. Examples of types of questions used: | |
|    • Descriptive: Grand Tour-Typical (example(s)_____) | +  - |
|    • Descriptive: Grand Tour-Specific (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Descriptive: Grand Tour-Guided (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Descriptive: Grand Tour-Task (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Descriptive: Example (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Descriptive: Experience (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Descriptive: "Native Language" (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Structural—verify terms (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |
|    • Contrast—contrast terms/ideas (example(s)_____) | + - N/A |

# Field Guides
(experiment with a style that works for you)

Purpose: to help us identify and explore relevant topics with key informants.

Length: 10-20 Questions/Question Elements, plus instructions
- Should focus on the research topic
- May be subdivided into subtopical areas

Introductory Statement: Purpose of study, confidentiality, disclosure statement

Types of questions:
- Begin with descriptive, open-ended questions to explore/identify terms and concepts
- Move from descriptive to structural and contrast questions

Ways to use FG:
- As a starting point - a set of cues
- NOT to be followed like a structured survey

**TYPICAL PROBLEM OF INEXPERENCED INTERVIEWERS: STICK SLAVISHLY TO GUIDE**

# Note Taking Process

## Collect Raw Field Notes
Notebook for raw field notes
Small notebook for informal observations

## Write Expanded Field Notes
Write up immediately after interview/observation
Hand write clearly in notebook for expanded notes or,
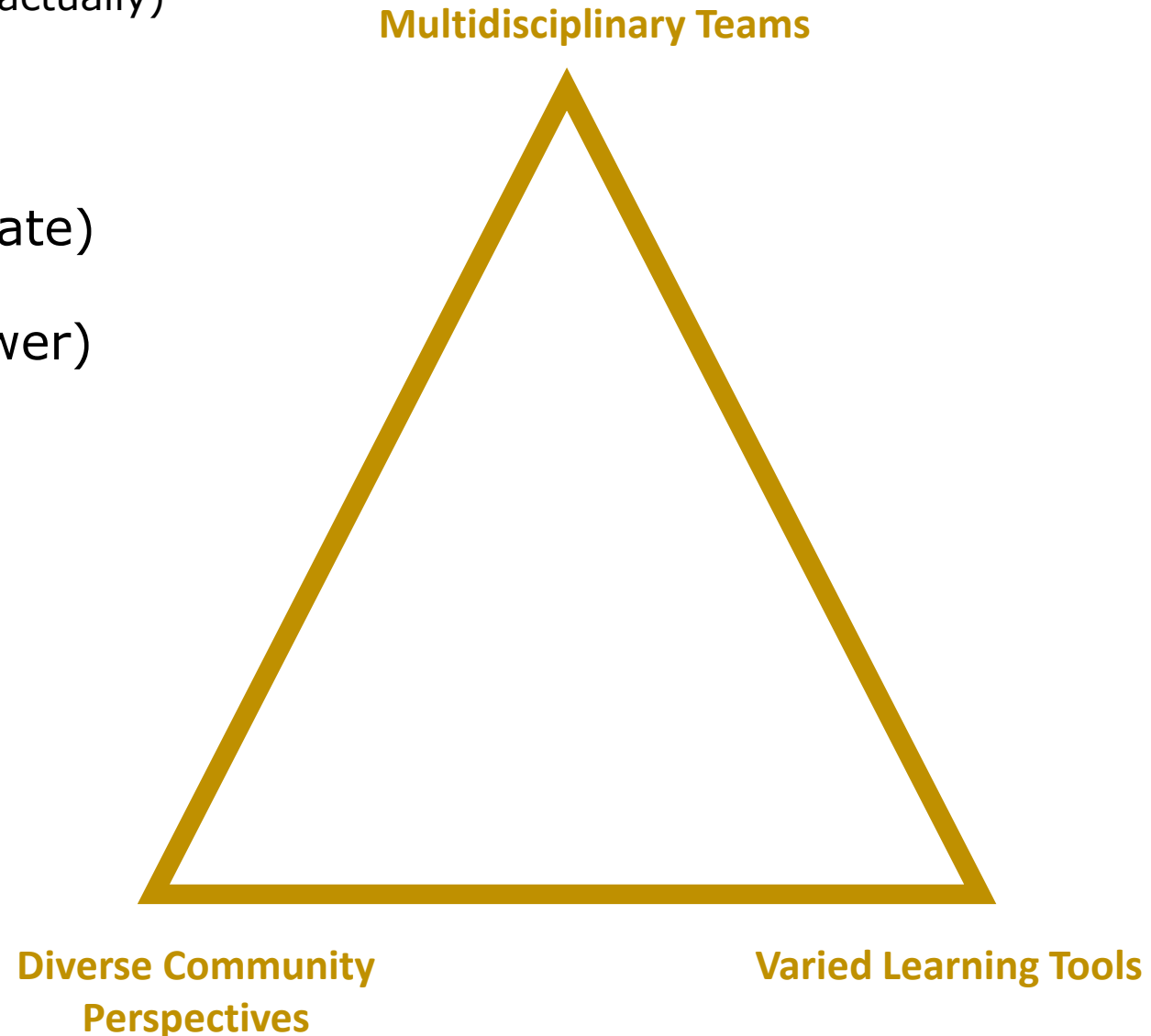Type up expanded notes, if possible

## Code Field Notes

**Participatory Learning Approaches**

**A set of qualitative learning approaches with a "twist"**

(4 twists actually)

**Multidisciplinary Teams**

- Group Based (the power of group debate)

- Interactive (the disappearing interviewer)

- Visual by design
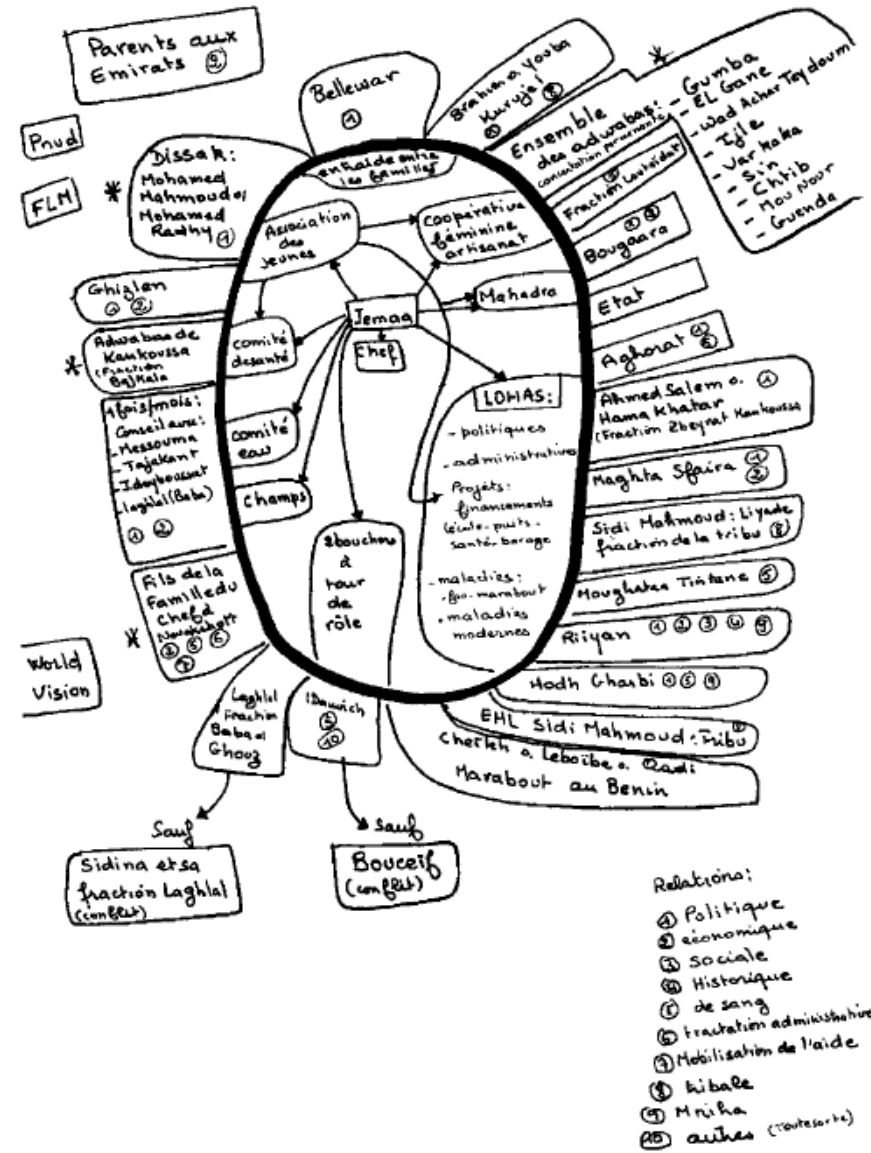
- Kinesthetic

**Diverse Community Perspectives**

**Varied Learning Tools**

# Types of PLA Tools

- Spatial--maps, walkabouts

- Social/Relational--"Venn", social mapping

- Temporal--seasonal calendar, timelines, histories

- Preferential--ranking

- Comparative--various matrices

- Classification--sorting

- Cause/Effect-problem trees, solution trees

# Spatial—Village Map



Figure 10 – Impiron Village Map

# Social/Relational—Venn



VENN BOUGADOUM

# Temporal—Seasonal Calendar

# Examples of PLA Tools: "Preferential"--Ranking

**Participatory Learning Approaches**

## Examples of PLA Tools: Comparative--Matrix



Health Care Matrix

| Disease | Home | Traditional Healer | Herbalist | TBA | Clinic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Diarrhoea/vomiting | X | | X | | X |
| Pneumonia | X | | | | X |
| Eye | X | | X (TBA) | | X |
| Mambu Lea | | | | | X |
| Malaria | X | | | | O Buy medicines from shops |
| Cold Sores | X | | | | X |
| Mbato Altam | X | X | | | |

TBAS — Massage children's stomachs

Herbalists — Sought for advice for a variety of illnesses & TBAs.

# Cause/Effect—Problem Tree
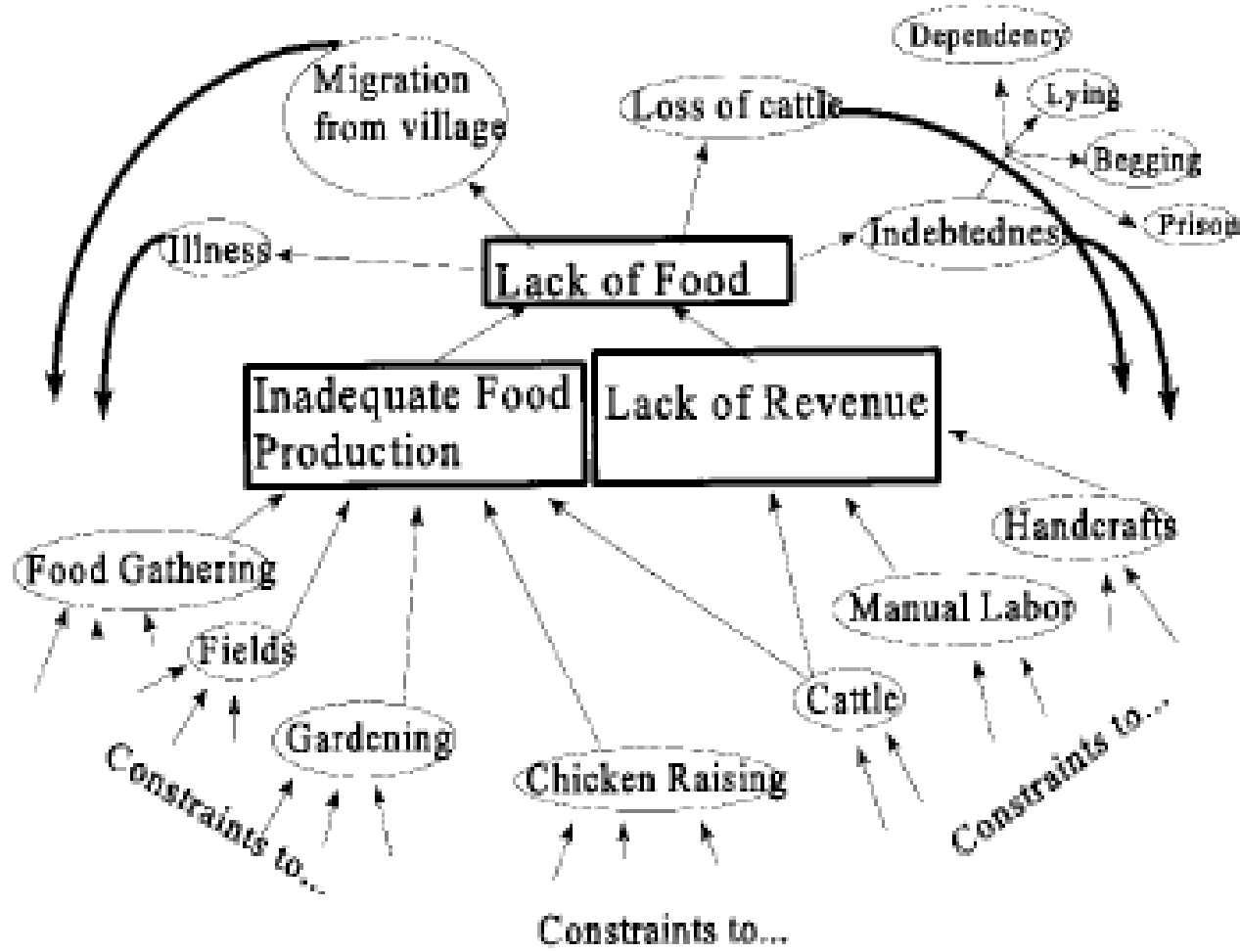
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