

Strategies for Reconstructing Baseline Data

1. Using secondary data

- Census
- Surveys
- Project administrative data
- Agency reports
- Special studies by NGOs, donors
- University studies
- Mass media (newspapers, radio, TV)
- Community organization records
- Notices in offices, community centers etc
- Posters
- Birth/death records
- Wills and documents concerning property

2. Assessing the utility of potential secondary data

- Reference period
- Population coverage/disaggregation by age, sex, location
- Inclusion of required indicators
- Completeness
- Accuracy
- Free from bias

3. Using project records

Types of data

- Feasibility/planning studies
- Application/registration forms
- Supervision reports
- MIS data
- Meeting reports
- Community and agency meeting minutes
- Progress reports
- Construction costs

4. Assessing the reliability of project records

- Who collected the data and for what purpose?
- Were they collected for record-keeping or to influence policymakers or other groups?
- Do monitoring data only refer to project activities or do they also cover changes in outcomes?

- Were the data intended exclusively for internal use? For use by a restricted group? Or for public use?
- How accurate and complete are the data? Are there obvious gaps? Were these intentional or due to poor record-keeping.
- Potential biases with respect to the key indicators required for the impact evaluation?

5. Working with the client to improve the utility of project data for evaluation

- Collecting additional information on applicants or participants
- Ensure identification data is included and accurate.
- Ensure data organized in the way needed for evaluation [by community/ types of service/ family rather than just individuals/ economic level etc]

6. Using recall to reconstruct baseline data

- School attendance and time/cost of travel
- Sickness/use health facilities
- Income and expenditures
- Community/individual knowledge and skills
- Social cohesion/conflict
- Water usage/quality/cost
- Periods of stress
- Travel patterns

7. Areas where most research has been conducted on recall

- Income and expenditure surveys
- Demographic data and fertility behavior

8. Limitations of recall

- Generally not reliable for precise quantitative data
- Useful for recalling major events or the impacts of a new service where none existed before.
- Sample selection bias
- Deliberate or unintentional distortion
- Few empirical studies (except on expenditure) to help adjust estimates.

9. Sources of bias in recall

- Who provides the information
- Under-estimation of small and routine expenditures
- “Telescoping” of recall concerning major expenditures.
- Distortion to conform to accepted behavior.
 - Intentional

- Romanticizing the past
- Contextual factors:
 - Time intervals used in question
 - Respondents expectations of what interviewer wants to know

10. Improving the validity of recall

- Ensure all groups interviewed
- Conduct small studies to compare recall with survey or other findings.
- Triangulation
- Link recall to important reference events
 - Elections
 - Drought/floods
 - Construction of road, school etc

11. Key informants

- Not just officials and high status people
- Everyone can be a key informant on their own situation:
 - Single mothers
 - Factory workers
 - Users of public transport
 - Sex-workers
 - Street children

12. Guidelines for key informant analysis

- Triangulation greatly enhances validity and understanding
- Include informants with different experiences and perspectives
- Understand how each informant fits into the picture.

13. PRA and related participatory techniques

- PRA techniques collect data at the group or community [rather than individual] level.
- Can either seek to identify consensus or identify different perspectives.
- Risk of bias:
 - Only certain sectors of the community attend
 - Certain people dominate the discussion

14. Time-related PRA techniques useful for reconstructing the past

- Time line
- Trend analysis
- Historical transect
- Seasonal diagram

- Daily activity schedule
- Participatory genealogy
- Dream map
- Critical incidents

Seasonal Calendar of Poverty Drawn by Villagers in Nyamira, Kenya												
	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Light meals	OOO	OOO	O	O								OO
Begging	OOOO OO	OOOO OO	O									OOO OO
Migration	OOO	OOO	OO	O	O	OO						
Unemployment	OOOO OO	OOOO OO	OO									
Income			O	OOO O	OOO O	OOO O	OOOO OO	OOOO OO	OOO OO	O	O	O
Disease			O	OOO O	OOO O	OOO	OO	OOO	OO			
Rainfall			OOO O	OOO O				O	O	OO O	OO O	O
Source: Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan 1997												

15. Issues in baseline reconstruction

- Variations in reliability of recall.
- Memory distortion.
- Secondary data not easy to use
- Secondary data incomplete or unreliable.
- Key informants may distort the past