

# SEASONAL CALENDAR

## Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance Programme Tools for participatory approaches

February 2013

A seasonal calendar is a visual method of showing the distribution of seasonally varying phenomena (for example, economic activities, production activities, problems such as debt, illness/disease, migration, and natural events/phenomena etc) over time.

### What is it useful for?

- Understanding seasonal distribution and differences between variables (events, conditions, activities etc) and the cause and effect relationships between them.
- Identifying periods of stress and hazards, including those associated with a changing climate, and those times of year when different social groups are more or less vulnerable.
- Understanding livelihoods and identifying some of the reducing, mitigating, and coping strategies people use, including those that have emerged as a result of climate changes.
- Introducing the concept of climate change adaptation.
- Identifying the likely impact of a proposed intervention on seasonal risk and vulnerability amongst different households or groups.
- Exploring the benefits (or costs) of ecosystem services at different times of the year for different people, and the relationship between different variables that may influence this.

### Suggested steps

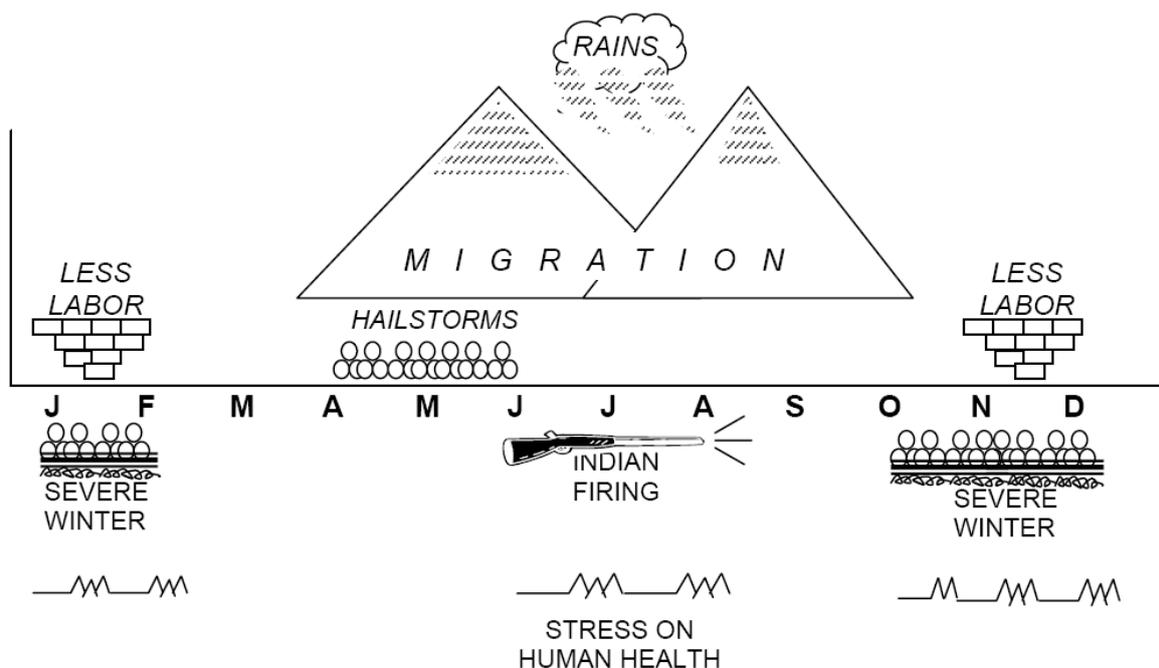
Allow approximately **2 hours** for this exercise.

- 1) Ask participants to identify aspects in their lives that fluctuate on a seasonal basis. If necessary, start with areas that appear clearly related to the main focus of the research (livelihoods systems or climate hazards for example) but do not limit the list to these. These can include (but are not limited to):
  - Holidays and festivals
  - Rainfall / wet seasons / dry seasons
  - Water availability
  - Periods of food scarcity / plenty
  - Income sources (times of higher and lower income)
  - Expenditures (times of higher and lower expenditure)
  - Planting and harvest seasons
  - Labour for agriculture (intensity)
  - Times of migration
  - Timing of hazards / disasters such as cyclones, droughts and floods
  - When common seasonal illnesses occur
- 2) The calendar can be based on a linear format, as in the example (Figure1), or on a table format with months/seasons along one matrix and phenomena, events and changes along the other. If using a table format, these variables or phenomena can then be placed down the left side of the diagram. Additional variables can be added whenever necessary. A period

of at least one year should be covered (in some circumstances a period of 18 months might be more useful) so that the full seasonal variations in individual phenomena can be seen clearly.

- 3) Taking each variable in turn, ask participants to put marks, or place stones, sticks, seeds, coins, and other locally available materials, under each month or season to indicate relative amounts, abundance or intensity of each variable.
- 4) If there are differences in the timing of fluctuations / events for women and men, each variable should be considered separately for women and for men (and clearly marked). Alternatively, the group may decide to prepare separate calendars for women and for men.
- 5) Discuss and analyse the results. Look for any patterns that can be seen, and cross-check and probe for possible inconsistencies. It is important to note different perspectives from different participants. If there are several different groups, ask each group to present its calendar to the others for their reactions and comments.

**Figure 1: An example of a seasonal calendar produced by male farmers in Kashmir** (World Bank, 2005)



### Questions to guide discussion and analysis

The following questions can be used to guide the discussion but should be adopted and adapted according to the focus of the exercise.

- How do women's calendars compare with men's? What are the busiest periods for women? For men?
- How does food availability vary over the year? Are there periods of hunger? For whom?
- How does income vary over the year? Are there periods of no income? For whom?
- How do expenditures vary over the year? Are there periods of great expense, for example school fees, food purchases?
- What are the key linkages or 'cause and effect' relationships? For example, income and food supply or rainfall and labour or weather and disease.
- Are the overall livelihood systems fairly stable or with great seasonal variations? What are the most important livelihood strategies employed at different times of the year?

- Which are the most difficult or high-risk times during the year? How do people plan and respond to any risks? (This information can be transferred to a risk management matrix). Are these strategies working?
- Are there any differences in the timing of seasons and events as compared to 10 / 20 / 30 years ago?
- Have livelihoods/coping strategies changed based on the changing seasons or events?
- How are decisions made on timing of livelihood strategies?
- What are the possible implications of these findings for any proposed intervention?

#### Points to remember:

- ❖ Seasonal calendars should reflect local/indigenous concepts of time and seasonal categories.
- ❖ Symbols or drawings can be used to indicate the seasons and/or the events and changes that occur throughout the year. It is important that all participants understand what has been represented.
- ❖ Local participants should be encouraged to build as much of the diagram as possible without interruption and to suggest anything else that should be recorded.
- ❖ Before using this tool read the accompanying document, A guide to using tools for participatory approaches.

#### For further information

CARE (2009) *Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis Handbook*  
<http://www.careclimatechange.org/tools>

FAO (2001) *Field Level Handbook (Socio-Economic and Gender Analysis Programme)*  
[http://www.fao.org/sd/SEAGA/1\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/SEAGA/1_en.htm)

World Bank (2005) *Poverty and Social Impact Analysis Sourcebook*  
<http://go.worldbank.org/ZGZHJEDBZ0>

This tool is an adapted version of the tool *Seasonal Calendar* in the World Bank (2005) *Poverty and Social Impact Analysis Sourcebook*



FFI's Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance programme is financially supported by Anglo American.



The development and public dissemination of this tool has been co-funded by the British American Tobacco Biodiversity Partnership.



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