

LIVELIHOODS SCORING & PREFERENCE RANKING

Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance Programme
Tools for participatory approaches

February 2013

Livelihoods scoring and livelihoods preference ranking are both methods of investigating preferred livelihood options of local people against specified criteria.

What is it useful for?

- Understanding which livelihoods are preferred or prioritised against specific criteria, for different groups of people.
- Identifying the criteria on which people base their preferences, and the “trade-offs” involved in choosing between different livelihood options.
- Exploring the possible impacts of a conservation intervention, or predicted climate change impacts, on livelihood options and preferences.
- Informing a process of ecosystem services valuation by identifying locally important livelihood strategies and (with further analysis) the ecosystem services on which they depend.
- Informing the development of livelihood support initiatives.
- Monitoring changes in preferred livelihood options and criteria.

Suggested steps

Allow approximately **one hour** for this exercise.

Scoring can be more complicated than preference ranking but may enable greater insight into the criteria people apply in considering livelihood options as the criteria themselves can be compared in terms of their importance. Both approaches are presented here.

Livelihoods scoring

- 1) Ask participants to brainstorm all of their main livelihood activities or options. Once agreed, these should be listed in the first column of a matrix. Symbols can be used as well as, or instead of, words if necessary or if the participants prefer. This option might help to ensure that all of the group members can follow the matrix, which is a necessity.
- 2) Ask participants to discuss and agree up to 3 criteria on which to assess the livelihood activities. Examples include physical ease, level of return (income, yield, etc), hours per day/intensity, prestige, low risk etc. The local participants should decide which criteria are important to them and the top 3 should be chosen. These should be listed in columns.
- 3) Participants can now assess each livelihood option against the criteria in the three columns. Based on the consensus of the participants, a fixed number (100 in the example table below) can be allocated between the various livelihood options and criteria to show the relative preference weighting for both the options and the criteria. It may be easier to do this exercise with a fixed number of stickers, beans, seeds or stones (or other small object) before transcribing onto paper, to allow numbers to be easily amended during discussions.

- 4) Discuss and analyse the results, recording any inconsistencies or differences of opinion.

Figure 1: Examples of livelihoods scoring

Livelihood activity	Criteria			Total
	Physical ease	Income	Prestige	
Local office work	12	8	10	30
Migrate – manual work	3	12	5	20
Home gardening	2	1	2	5
Livestock production	3	6	4	13
Crop production	2	8	6	16
Petty trading	4	5	7	16
Total	26	40	34	100

Livelihoods scoring can also show preference for specific activities in terms of cash income and home consumption, as in the example below.

Activity	Income and savings	Home consumption	Total
Maize cultivation	12		12
Bananas	2	10	12
Fruit	4	12	18
Vegetables	4	6	10
Livestock keeping	4	6	10
Forage collection	4	4	8
Kapok		4	4
Sweet potato	4	6	10
Weaving	6	6	12
Labouring		4	4
Total	40	60	100

Livelihoods preference ranking

- 1) Ask participants to brainstorm and list their main livelihood options / activities. As a group, they should agree which are the 6 to 8 most important.
- 2) Ask participants to prepare a table, listing the activities across the top row starting in the second column, with one activity per column. The same list should then be entered down the first column, starting on the second row (Figure 2). Symbols can be used as well as, or instead of, words if necessary or if the participants prefer. This option might help to ensure that all of the group members can follow the table, which is a necessity.
- 3) Taking each cell of the table in turn, participants take the option listed in the vertical column and compare it to the one listed horizontally. The preferred option is noted in the cell where the two options cross-cut. Where the option is compared against itself, or where the reverse comparison has already been made, the cell is shaded or marked with an X. The process is repeated until all options have been compared.
- 4) The options can then be ranked according to the number of times it appears in the table, as in the example below.
- 5) Discuss and analyse the results, focusing on which options are preferred above others and why, and which criteria are most important and why, for different groups of people.

Figure 2: An example of livelihoods preference ranking

	Sell labour (locally)	Sell labour (migrate)	Home gardening	Livestock production	Crop production	Petty trading
Sell labour (locally)		Sell labour (locally)				
Sell labour (migrate)			Sell labour (migrate)	Sell labour (migrate)	Sell labour (migrate)	Sell labour (migrate)
Home gardening				Livestock production	Crop production	Petty trading
Livestock production					Livestock production	Petty trading
Crop production						Crop production
Petty trading						

Ranking

1. Sell labour (locally)
2. Sell labour (migrate)
3. Livestock production
4. Crop production
5. Petty trading
6. Home gardening

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.

- What is the most common livelihood option? Why?
- What is the most popular? Why? Who mostly does this?
- Who is involved in those different livelihood activities (men/women, young/old, different social and economic groups i.e. poorer, less poor etc)? Why?
- Why is this option preferred over this other one?
- What are the most important factors (criteria) in choosing one option over another? Why?
- Are the criteria different for women and for men? For other groups?
- How have these preferences changed in the past x (number of) years? Why?
- Are the changes different for women and for men? For other groups?
- What is the likely impact of [a proposed intervention], or the expected impacts of climate change, on livelihood options and preferences for different groups of people?

Points to remember:

- ❖ Subjective criteria for making decisions and choices might not be clear or discussed.
- ❖ Investigation of livelihoods might be sensitive in particular contexts (for example, where conflicts exist over livelihood resources).
- ❖ 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

Field Tools Section of <http://www.fao.org/Participation>

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

The Livelihoods Scoring tool is based on the *Livelihoods matrix scoring* tool in the World Bank (2005) *Poverty and Social Impact Analysis Sourcebook*.

Livelihoods preference ranking is adapted from the tool *Pairwise / Preference Ranking* on www.fao.org/Participation. Preference ranking can be used to rank a wide range of subjects including resources (see tool Resource Preference Ranking), problems, options etc.



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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