

RESOURCE PREFERENCE RANKING

Conservation, Livelihoods and Governance Programme
Tools for participatory approaches

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Resource preference ranking is a method of identifying and ranking natural resources according to local people's preferences.

What is it useful for?

- Identifying the most important natural resources for different socio-economic groups in a community. The focus of this tool can be broadened to considered all livelihood resources, or assets.
- Understanding the priorities of different socio-economic groups and the criteria they use to prioritise.
- Informing an understanding of the values of different ecosystem services to different groups of people.
- If the focus of the tool is on natural resources, with good facilitation it can help to identify aspects of the environment that are not perceived as directly beneficial to communities but deemed worth conserving.
- In the context of climate change, this tool can be used as a starting point in discussing the potential effects of climate change on priority resources.
- Monitoring changes in preferred resources and the criteria on which those preferences are made.

Suggested steps

Allow at least **one hour** for this exercise.

- 1) Ask participants to brainstorm and list all the livelihoods resources available to their community. As a group, they should agree which are the 6 to 8 most important to their livelihoods. It may help to start by brainstorming livelihoods activities within the community, and then identifying the resources used in pursuing those activities. Depending on the objectives of the exercise, the focus of the discussion and analysis could be narrowed down to natural resources or broadened to consider resources in the widest sense (i.e. by considering all of the five categories of livelihoods resources - or assets - in sustainable livelihoods frameworks).
- 2) Ask participants to prepare a table, listing the resources across the top row starting in the second column, with one resource per column. The same list should then be entered down the first column, starting on the second row. 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, ask participants to consider the resource listed in the vertical column and compare it to the one listed horizontally. The preferred resource is noted in the cell where the two options cross-cut. Where the resource 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 resources can then be ranked according to the number of times they appear in the table.
- 5) Discuss and analyse the results. Any inconsistencies or differences of opinion should be discussed, exploring the reasons for these differences and preparing more than one table if necessary. Ask the group to focus on why certain resources are ranked above others and why, and which criteria are most important and why.

Figure 1: A blank resource ranking table

	Resource 1	Resource 2	Resource 3	Resource 4	Resource 5	Resource 6
Resource 1						
Resource 2	Which is the most important resource?					
Resource 3						
Resource 4						
Resource 5						
Resource 6						

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.

- Which resources are looked upon as most important by women? And by men? How do priorities differ between different socio-economic groups?
- Have these preferences changed over time?
- What criteria do different groups use for preferring one resource over another?
- What are the problems in accessing resources identified by different socio-economic groups? How does this affect their livelihoods?
- What are the predicted impacts of climate change and how will these affect priority resources?
- What is the likely impact of [a proposed intervention] on livelihood resources and preferences?

Points to remember:

- ❖ Resources or assets interact in complex ways in livelihood strategies, which can often take time to understand. If more than 6 resources are prioritised the procedure can become lengthy.
- ❖ 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>

This tool is adapted from the tool *Pairwise/Preference Ranking* on the website above.



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Fauna & Flora International, 4th Floor, Jupiter House, Station Road,
Cambridge, CB1 2JD
Telephone +44 (0) 1223 571000
Fax +44 (0) 1223 571000
Email info@fauna-flora.org