

| Tool Name: Time Line | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| What is it? | A time line is a graphic method used to show nonrepetitive changes or events taking place over time. |
| What can it be used for? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishing and representing sequences of key events or major changes that have occurred in or affected a community over an extended period • tracking changes in relation to specific issues over time and predicting future events on the basis of past experience • establishing major activities or events associated with a project, program, or policy change/implementation that is being evaluated • understanding and analyzing a current problem by looking for its causes in the past |
| What does it tell you? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local, national, and international events that people in a community consider important in their history • previous events and traditional community responses to them • possible opportunities to resolve current problems based on historical events |
| Complementary tools | Causal flow diagrams, life histories, community resource map |
| Key elements | This participatory group-based analysis identifies shocks and events and promotes critical reflection of causes and impacts of change. |
| Requirements | |
| Data/information | This tool generates data and information; the only prior information required is for sampling analysts. |
| Time | 1 to 2 hours |
| Skills | High level of participatory facilitation and social analytical skills |
| Supporting software | No software needed |
| Financial cost | This tool will cost \$30,000 to \$100,000 when conducted as part of a participatory study, depending on the number of communities sampled and the geographical scope of the study. |
| Limitations | Sensitive issues from the past might be raised. If this happens, the facilitator can move to the next time period and return to the sensitive issue later on. The group should not get stuck in deep discussion over sensitive issues. |
| References and applications | <p>FAO. http://www.fao.org/Participation/tools/Timelines.html.</p> <p>FAO. <i>The Forest Manager's Guide to Participatory Forest Management: Module 3. The Participatory Process in Forest Management.</i> Forestry Policy and Institutions Branch, Forestry Department. http://www.fcghana.com/pfma_fao/archive_docs/ref_docs/pfm_manager_guide_module3.pdf.</p> <p>Planning and Development Department, Government of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir. 2004. "Between Hope and Despair." Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment–Azad Jammu and Kashmir Report.</p> |

Time Line: Procedures and Examples

Time, Materials, and Skills Needed

About one hour should be allowed to produce and analyze the time line and to ensure that a full discussion occurs with local analysts.

Markers and large sheets of paper are required. Notebooks/paper and pens will be needed to make a copy of the time line and for the note-taker to record the discussion during its development. The time line can also easily be drawn on the ground; if this is the case, then a large area will be needed as well as various objects such as sticks, stones, leaves, seeds, colored powder, and so on, that the analysts can use to represent particular events.

The discussion group will include a facilitator, observer/note-taker, and selected local analysts. The facilitator and observer/note-taker should be experienced in both the principles behind the use of participatory tools and methods as well as in their practical use.

Possible Approach

The following approach is a general example that can be adapted to suit the local context, views of local analysts, and the research objectives.

Step 1: Select Local Analysts. Identify the groups of people to talk to about their recollection of key events in their community's history. These decisions will be based on the objectives and depth of information required for the research. For example, separate groups of men and women might be useful to obtain different perspectives of what constitutes important events in the history of a community. Groups of five to ten local analysts should reflect any relevant and important social divisions.

Step 2: Provide Introductions and Explanations. When working with each group, the facilitator and observer/note-taker should begin by introducing themselves and explaining carefully and clearly the objectives of the discussion. Check that the local analysts understand and feel comfortable with what will be discussed.

Step 3: Produce a Time Line. Ask the local analysts to write down or draw on card all the important events that have occurred within their community. Emphasize that these events can be both within their lifetime or before they were born. Asking all the analysts to write or draw events individually is one way of ensuring that particular individuals do not dominate the activity to the exclusion of others.

Ask the analysts to draw a long line on a large piece of paper (or on the ground using a stick or a piece of string) and then, as a group, to arrange all their cards in chronological order along the line. Put together all the cards that indicate the same event. An alternative is simply to draw a line and then ask the analysts to draw, write, or symbolize specific important events along it.

Time lines are mainly used to examine a sequence of events over many years, however they can also be used to look at events within particular time periods (such as the preceding decade or 50 years) if that is appropriate.

It is not important to get specific dates for each event, especially in communities where there is less emphasis on calendar dates. When the events are in chronological order, the space between them along the line can be used to indicate the time between events (that is, a short space indicates a short period of time; longer space indicates a longer period of time). If dates are available for specific events, they can help establish when other events occurred.

Time lines can be used not only to get a general idea of the community's history in terms of major events, but also to construct personal histories of selected community members or in specific areas or sectors (such as natural resources, political events, and conflict or cultural changes).

Step 4: Analyze a Time Line. Where cards have been used, record the number of cards with the same events on them. This duplication might be an indication of the relative importance attached to the event by local analysts. Where events have just been drawn next to the line, ensure that a full discussion has occurred with local analysts and that all relevant issues have been recorded.

Discussion and analysis of the time line might be made easier if the analysts divide it into smaller time periods, perhaps by breaking the line where a period elapses during which nothing of importance happened.

Ask the analysts what bearing these historical events have on current issues or debates, what impacts they had in the short and longer term, and if the impacts are still seen or felt now.

If there are several different groups, ask each group to present its time line to the others for their reactions and comments. Are there any serious disagreements or are major events recorded by one group but not another? If so, note these and the reasons for the differences.

Step 5: Conclude the Activity. Check again that the local analysts know how the information will be used. Ask the analysts to reflect on the advantages, disadvantages, and the analytical potential of the tool. Thank the local analysts for their time and effort.

Points to Remember

Good facilitation skills are key. The approach outlined above is a general guide; be flexible and adapt the tool and approach to local contexts and needs.

Case Study Example: Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment Time Lines in Azad Jammu and Kashmir

The time line in figure 1 was produced during the Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) and shows the changes that have occurred in the Nakar Bandi, Seerian, Sangal area of Bagh District in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The local analysts who constructed the time line were a group of 16 to 45-year-old poor male farmers from the majority Rathore tribe.

Figure 1. Time Line in Nakar Bandi, Seerian, Sangal Area of Bagh District in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 1940–2000

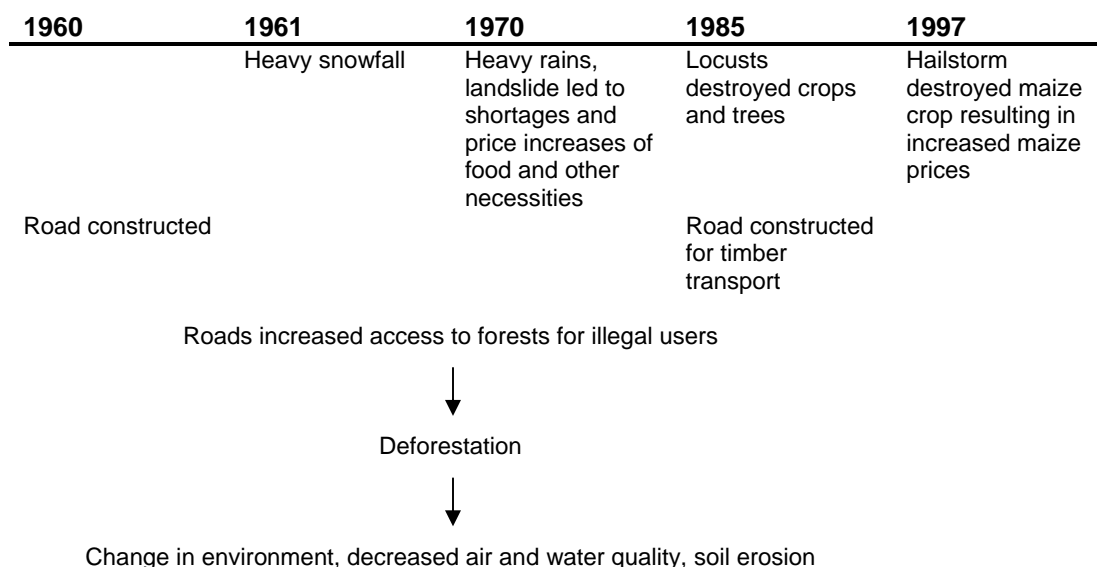
| 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1965 | 1971 | 1990 | 2000 |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lower population | Increased population | Road constructed | War | War | More schools, increased literacy | Increased population |
| Lower household expenditure | Household expenditure increased | Schools constructed, literacy increased | Migration due to war | Migration due to war | Increased population | Landholding size decreased |
| High agricultural production | Landholding size decreased | Opportunities to access different services opened | Lives of people disturbed | Lives of people disturbed again | Forests decreased | Decreased agricultural activities |
| More livestock | Agricultural production decreased | | Houses damaged | Houses damaged | Warmer climate, less rain and snow | Agricultural production decreased |
| Thick forests | | | Infrastructure destroyed | Muhajir came from India held Kashmir | Decreased water resources | Less animal rearing |
| More wildlife | | | Vulnerability increased | Vulnerability increased | | Less farmyard manure |
| People's behavior was good | | | | | | Unemployment |
| | | | | | | Poverty |

Source: Planning and Development Department, Government of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir 2004. Between Hope and Despair, Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment–Azad Jammu and Kashmir Report.

The time line in figure 1 shows not just one-off events but also gives an indication of how previous periods were perceived and how things have changed over time (for example, in 1940, the perception appears to be that life was easier/better: more livestock, lower expenses, and so on). It also shows some of the perceived impacts of specific events (for example, the war in 1965 led to migration, the destruction of houses and infrastructure, and increased vulnerability).

The time line in figure 2, produced by a group of 25 to 55-year-old males, shows the perceived events that occurred and affected natural resources and people's lives in the area of Maknyat, Lamnian, Muzaffarabad District.

Figure 2. Time Line in Maknyat, Lamnian, Muzaffarabad District, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, 1960–1997



Source: Planning and Development Department, Government of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir 2004. Between Hope and Despair, Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment–Azad Jammu and Kashmir Report.

This time line focused more on specific events, both natural and man-made, that occurred in the area and had an impact on natural resources and people’s lives. It also included some cause–effect linkages.