

Tool Name: Seasonal Calendar	
What is it?	A seasonal calendar is a visual method of showing the distribution of seasonally varying phenomena (such as economic activities, resources, production activities, problems, illness/disease, migration, and natural events/ phenomena) over time.
What can it be used for?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding seasonal differences during livelihoods analysis and vulnerability analysis • illustrating dynamic dimensions of well-being, which are often poorly illustrated through conventional forms of poverty assessment • identifying cause-and-effect relationships between seasonally varying phenomena • understanding the time of the year when different social groups are more or less vulnerable • identifying some of the reducing, mitigating, and coping strategies people use to manage risk • identifying periods when specific groups of people usually suffer particular hardship so that appropriate “safety nets” can be set in place or other remedial actions taken
What can it tell you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal variations in vulnerability, risk, and access to assets and resources • The likely impact of proposed policy change on seasonal risk and vulnerability amongst different households or groups
Complementary tools	Seasonal resource mapping, baseline asset wheel, risk management matrix
Key elements	This participatory data generating process identifies seasonal patterns and variations that might not be obvious to a nonlocal person.
Requirements	
Data/information	This tool generates data and information; the only prior information required is for sampling analysts.
Time	1.5 to 2 hours
Skills	Good participatory facilitation and social analytical skills; a natural resource disciplinary background is useful.
Supporting software	No software needed
Financial cost	This study will cost \$30,000 to \$100,000 as part of a participatory study, depending on the number of communities sampled and the geographical scope of the study.
Limitations	Care must be taken by the facilitator to acknowledge locally used calendars and ways of representing time.
References and applications	<p>Brocklesby, M. A. 2002. <i>Chars Livelihoods Programme Design— Diversity and Livelihoods Assessment: Fieldwork Guide</i>. Swansea, Centre for Development Studies.</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>———. http://www.fao.org/participation/.</p> <p>Sontheimer, S. et al. 1999. <i>Conducting a PRA Training and Modifying PRA Tools to Your Needs. An Example from a Participatory Household Food Security and Nutrition Project in Ethiopia</i>. http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/DOCREP/003/X5996E/X5996E00.HTMwww.reflect-action.org.</p>

Seasonal Calendar: Procedures and Examples

Time, Materials, and Skills Needed

Allow up to two hours to produce a seasonal calendar and to ensure that a full discussion occurs with local analysts.

Markers and large sheets of paper are required. An alternative is to draw the calendar on the ground. Notebooks/paper and pens will be needed to make a copy of the seasonality calendar and for the note-taker to record the discussion generated by the development of the calendar.

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. Start by identifying some knowledgeable people and having a general discussion about the topic to be explored. This might provide useful information about the different groups that need to be formed. Groups of five to ten local analysts should reflect any relevant and important social divisions. For example, groups might be gender specific, of the same well-being ranking or income, age, livelihood, or social group, and so on. Other social differences can be included once in the field.

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 Seasonal Calendar. Seasonal calendars should reflect indigenous concepts of time and seasonal categories. Ask the local analysts what names they use for the main seasons of the year and write these along the top of a large sheet of paper or on the ground. Symbols can also be used to indicate the seasons. Where analysts are familiar with the months of the year these months can be written or symbolized below the seasons so that they correspond with the main seasons. If necessary, refer to local events (such as festivals) or to a familiar cycle (such as food production). A period of at least a 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. Ensure that there is enough room on the left side of the paper to list the changing phenomena that are being investigated or that the local analysts feel are important.

Ask what aspects of or things in people's lives fluctuate on a seasonal basis and list them. If necessary, start with areas that appear clearly related to the main focus of the research but do not limit the list to these. Ask the local analysts to write, draw a picture, or symbolize each variable or phenomenon on a card (or on the ground) and

display them for all to see. Ask the analysts to put them down the left of the diagram. Check that all analysts understand what has been represented and explain that others can be added whenever necessary.

Take each variable in turn and ask the local analysts to put stones, sticks, seeds, coins, and other locally available materials or marks under each month or season to indicate relative amounts or abundance of each variable. For example, more stones or marks could be used to indicate those months or seasons with most rain, and fewer stones to indicate drier months or seasons. Local analysts should be encouraged to build as much of the diagram as possible without interruption and to suggest anything else that should be recorded.

Step 4: Analyze a Seasonal Calendar. When the local analysts have covered all the variables they feel are important or relevant, ask them to examine any patterns that can be seen. Cross-check and probe for possible inconsistencies within the diagram. For example, do the start and end points of crop seasons make sense in terms of the rainfall pattern? Do peaks in demand for male labor and high wage months coincide with these periods? Do female labor peaks follow the main harvests? Do prices go down at harvest time and then start to rise again? If not, why not? Where possible, cross-check with other data sources. For example, does the data correspond with the information recorded in other participatory tools or secondary data? If not, why not?

If there are several different groups, ask each group to present its calendar to the others for their reactions and comments. Are there serious disagreements? If so, note these and whether a consensus is reached.

Ask the local analysts to indicate when there are high-risk times during the year (this might need a discussion about what is understood by the term “risk”) and how they plan and respond to any risks. (This information can be transferred to a risk management matrix.)

Ask the analysts to examine possible linkages or “cause-and-effect” relationships between seasonal variations of the different variables (for example, between weather and disease patterns, home workload and school drop-out rates). This examination might also provide an opportunity to discuss any seasonal impacts on a proposed policy change or implementation, and on any seasonal effects of a policy change or implementation on different variables.

Step 5: Conclude the Activity. Ask the analysts to make a copy of the diagram on paper for the research team. Check again that they 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: The Pakistan Participatory Poverty Assessment Seasonal Calendar

The following seasonal calendar showing stresses on livelihoods was produced by poor and better-off male farmers, 25 to 55 years old, from Khorian, Seerian, Sangal, Bagh during the Participatory Poverty Assessment in Azad, Jammu, and Kashmir.

