

Tool 3: Rich Picture

A tool to stimulate stakeholders to explore their shared situation

Aim of the tool

To help participants understand the complexity of an entire situation.

When to use it?

At the connection stage, when you want stakeholder to explore the issue at stake. It can also be used to review a situation with an established MSP.

What is a Rich Picture?

A rich picture is a drawing of a situation that illustrates the main elements and relationships that need to be considered in trying to intervene in order to create some improvement. It consists of pictures, text, symbols and icons, which are all used to illustrate graphically the situation. It is called a rich picture because it illustrates the richness and complexity of a situation.

Why develop a Rich Picture?

A rich picture helps us to understand the complexity of an entire situation. It is a way of thinking holistically. It is based on the idea that 'a picture tells a thousand words'. It also builds on the fact that our intuitive consciousness communicates more easily in impressions and symbols than in words. Drawings can both *evoke* and *record* insights into a situation.

A rich picture helps us to see relationships and connections that we may otherwise miss. It helps identifying one or more themes participants may want to further explore and address. Rich pictures are therefore always used in the pre-analysis phase.

Developing a rich picture is a good group exercise, as everyone can add to it and explain their particular interests or perspectives. Besides, a rich picture can also be a non-threatening and humorous way of illustrating different perspectives and conflicts.

Rich picture - Step by step

The following steps guide groups of 5-7 people in developing a rich picture. Allocate at least 1 to 1,5 hours.

Preparation

- Have a large piece of flip chart paper or brown paper.
- Put the paper on a table or on the ground around which everyone is sitting or standing in a way that each person can easily draw on the picture. Make sure each person has a marker (within the group different coloured markers).
- One person should facilitate the group work. It is essential to encourage everyone to contribute and make clear drawing skills are not important.
- Choose a case. As a group you will develop ONE rich picture about that case.

Start

Draw in the centre the problematic situation, as the key issue of the MSP case. You draw the current situation.

- Start drawing, don't start talking or discussing. Explain as you draw!
- Who are the stakeholders and how do they relate to the problematic or the issue?
- Draw the relations of stakeholders to each other.
- Draw the context, the causes and effects and any other relevant social, economic, political, environmental features or issues.
- Make sure your drawing includes both facts and subjective information.
- You can use a legend or some words to explain stakeholders or problems, but do not use too many words.

Wrap up

Write down on cards the 5 main challenges of the MSP case arising from your rich picture.

Examples

The photo shows a rich picture displaying a wetland management situation, made by course participants of WCDI's yearly courses on MSP. Actors (donors, NGO, local government, fishermen) and factors (power issues, overfishing, conflicts, money flows) can be recognized.



Learn more

BetterEvaluation; Rich Picture. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/methods-approaches/methods/rich-pictures>

Judy Oakden (2014) If a picture paints a thousand words: The use of rich picture in evaluation. Pragmatica/New Zealand. [link](#)

The Open University also released a [series of 8 videos](#) that explore the concept of rich pictures and the many ways in which images have evolved into communication tools.

This MSP Tool Guide is curated by WUR, but we recognize that many of the tools included are in the public domain or credited to other authors. Where relevant, they are referenced in the 'Learn more' section.