

Tool 23: Trendline

Aim of the tool

To promote participatory reflection and exploration on participants' perceptions of changes which have occurred over time.

When to use it?

On early phases of a MSP: Issue exploration and Shared language

What is a Trendline?

This tool, originating from [Participatory Rural Appraisal](#) (PRA), is useful when added to the 'Timeline' tool (tool 15). Whereas the timeline is used to identify key events, trendlines provides an understanding of people's perceptions of changes that have occurred over time. These changes could be related to climate change, resource availability, income, nutrition, etcetera. Furthermore, it is very constructive to determine whether different groups have different perspectives on change.

Trendlines - Step by step

Materials needed: white board and markers, if not available flip-over paper can be used.

Methodology (source: Geilfus, 2008)

Step 1: Organize working groups and explain the exercise.

Step 2: Draw a blank matrix on the board; then draw a graph (once an example has been provided, graphs are easier to understand). Explain how time, measured in years, moves from left to right on the horizontal axis, while parameter intensity/availability moves upward on the vertical axis. Discuss the main change parameter which you are going to use, as well as the time scale (the degree to which the exercise reaches back into the past).

Step 3: Ask the participants what they think of the changes that have occurred in the community; was there more or less intensity/availability in the past? When was there more? When was there less? Using those points in time as benchmarks, draw a trend line across the years. When opinions differ, draw several lines in different colours, until a consensus is reached.

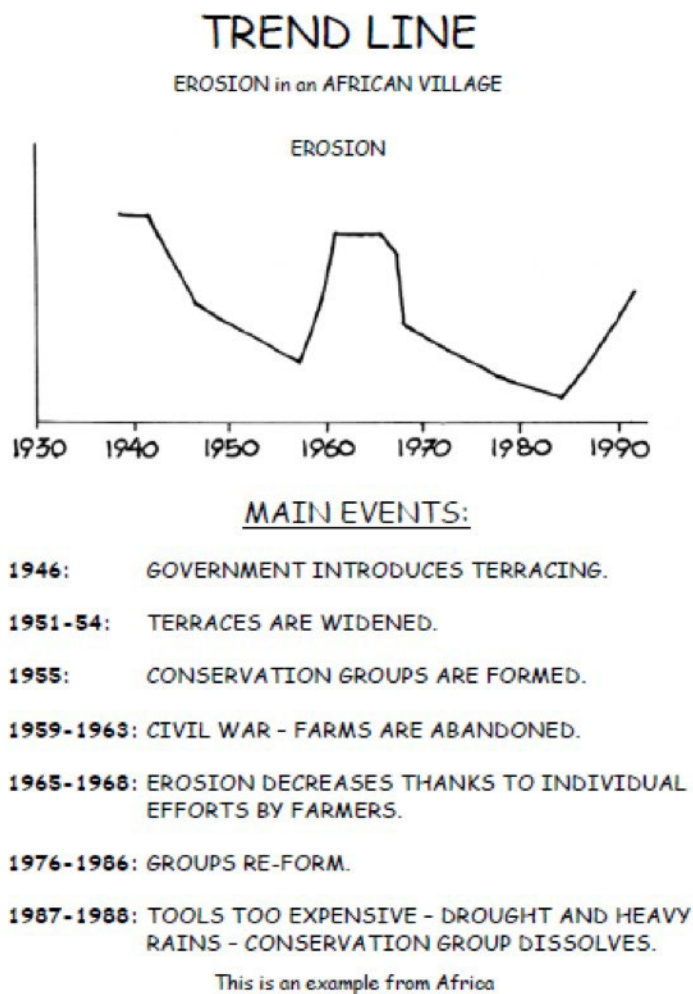
Step 4: Once the participants have grasped the concept, the facilitator should take a back seat and ask one of the participants to draw.

Step 5: Encourage participants to discuss the main trends. Always ask why changes have occurred. Write comments/explanations in the margins of the diagram.

Step 6: If the participants have been working in sub-groups, discuss the work of each one and create a common diagram. Write down the results and explain how they will be used.

Step 7: Check the results against other sources.

The figure below is an example of a trendline concerning the issue of erosion in an Africa village.



Source: F. Geilfus (2008): 54

Learn more

F. Geilfus (2008) 80 tools for participatory development: appraisal, planning, follow-up and evaluation. San Jose, C.R. : IICA P. 54- 55.

(www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/BVE17089190i.pdf)