DIAMONDS

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Adapted from PALS Manual,
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WHAT ARE THEY? SOME EXAMPLES

Diamonds are used to investigate extent and criteria of social differentiation within communities and/or groups. They start by identifying where the majority of a population are as the middle of a diamond. Then the numbers of people or examples at the extremes of the diagram are identified together with the reasons and criteria used.

Note: Poverty diamonds were first introduced to the author (and may have been invented by) Rosette Mutasi of SATNET at a workshop held by Kabarole Research and resource Centre in Uganda. It was also piloted and further discussed by participants at the workshop. Different types of diamond have then been further developed by the author and adapted to other types of issue in the light of discussions and field experience. In ANANDI it was extensively used in both poverty assessment and for looking at concepts of empowerment and incidence of domestic violence during and following the participatory review by the author.

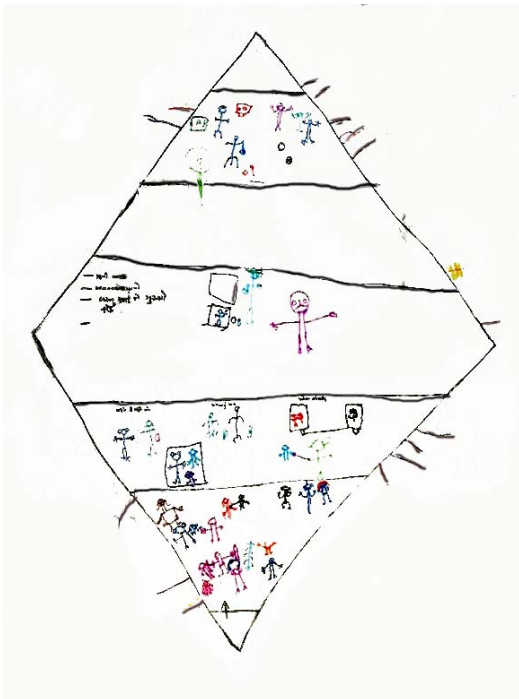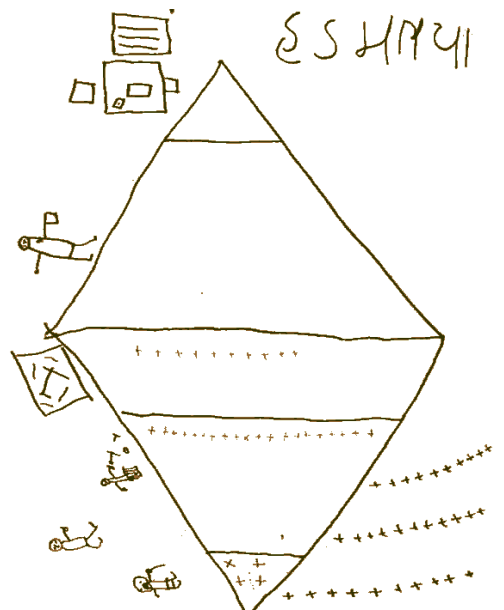*Figure 1: Diamond showing incidence of domestic violence*

Figure 2: Poverty diamond of group and housing beneficiaries

TYPES OF DIAMONDS

Diamonds may be of many different types including, but by no means only:

◆ *Poverty diamond*

Looks at whether most people are above or below the poverty line as identified by a community, then how many people are very rich or very poor, what criteria are used and why.

◆ *Empowerment diamond*

Looks at whether most people consider themselves, or could be considered, powerful, how many people are very powerful or very powerless, what criteria are used and why.

◆ *Household equality diamond*

Looks at concepts of household equality, where the most households are above or below this ideal, the criteria used and the numbers and characteristics of ideal households and very bad households.

◆ *Violence diamond*

Starts by examining the types of domestic, caste or community violence to which most people are subject. Then it looks at what an ideal state would be, and the very worst cases. Then the incidence can be quantified. For violence like domestic violence where even women suffering from it may deny its existence it may be best to start with extreme cases and then move up to awareness of generalised levels of violence or harassment.

◆ *Environmental awareness diamond*

Looks at whether most people consider themselves, or could be considered, environmentally aware or using environmentally friendly methods, how many people are seriously harming the environment or protecting it, what local criteria are used and why.

◆ *Alcoholism diamond*

Looks at ideas of 'safe or acceptable levels of drinking' , whether most people are above or below this level, and the incidence of teetotalism and serious alcoholism.

VARIATIONS: FLAT OR TALL DIAMONDS, TRIANGLES AND SQUARES.

Some types of difference may have different shapes of diamonds depending on the pattern of distribution, or different shapes altogether eg the overwhelming majority of some refugee populations may be destitute and so better represented by a triangle. However in general it is best to start with a diamong in order to first identify the extremes. Otherwise experience shows that where poverty-targeted benefits are available everyone will say they are poor! – precisely the situation which diamond diagrams are designed to tackle.

WHAT ARE THEY USED FOR?

Difference diamonds are useful for:

◆ *Raising awareness*

Poverty, empowerment and environmental diagrams are useful for raising awareness about differences and inequalities within communities and the different criteria used. They can also be used as 'now' diagrams and 'target' or 'ideal' diagrams after a specified period of time. Diamonds can be put on walls of meeting buildings to highlight the problems of inequality and importance of social inclusion and targets set.

◆ *Gathering information*

Diamonds are good for rapidly getting an idea of extent of differentiation within a group or community and particularly for identifying criteria for differentiation and extreme cases. Their reliability as quantification of differentiation, however, needs to be crosschecked either by extensive probing or voting or by other means like social mapping and surveys.

◆ *Advocacy and lobbying*

For lobbying and advocacy at local or national levels different diamonds of the same type can be qualitatively and quantitatively analysed for an overview analysis of issues like poverty, empowerment, environment and so on. They can be used as a quantitative estimate of incidents of extremes, types of criteria used and so on.

◆ *Monitoring, evaluation or impact assessment*

Diamonds can be revisited at particular intervals to see whether the qualitative analysis or quantification of the numbers of people at each level, or criteria are still the same eg have the numbers of very poor people, or very vulnerable women, or serious cases of alcoholism declined? Has the nature of poverty or empowerment changed?

◆ *Taking field notes*

Diamonds are a useful means of taking clear field notes on criteria for differentiation and rough numbers of people at different levels.

HOW TO DO IT

BASIC STEPS

STEP 1: *What is the topic of the diamond? What shape do you expect it to be?*
     What is the topic of the diamond? Do you expect people to be roughly evenly distributed or is it more of a triangle or square?

STEP 2: *Where should the line be drawn? What criteria are used?*
     What are the criteria for determining the poverty line? A normal standard of environmental awareness? An acceptable level of drinking? Are most people (i.e. the widest bit of the diamond) above or below this line?

STEP 3: *What is the hierarchy of criteria above or below this line? Are there clear levels?*
     Mark in the criteria down the side of the diamond for differentiating between e.g. the very rich, the rich, the better off poor and so on using local specifications. Is it possible to draw clear lines between different categories e.g. a band above and below the poverty line for 'the poor '?

Put on qualitative information

STEP 4: *How easy or difficult is it to move from one level to another?*
E.g. is it easy to move from rich to very rich, difficult to cross the poverty line etc.
Mark these differences with different types of line, or with arrows.

STEP 5: *Are there gender, age or ethnic differences in criteria?*
These can be marked by putting e.g. women on one side of the diamond and men on
the other.

STEP 6: *Put on quantitative information*
How many of those present would identify themselves at each level? Mark those in one
style.

Put different colours or use different sides of the diamond for e.g. women and men,
ethnic groups, different ages, income levels and so on as relevant.

How many people roughly do those present think are at each level in the community?
In particular how many people are at the very bottom or very top, and what are their
characteristics? Again use different styles or sides of the diamond for different social
groups as relevant.

STEP 7: *How does this analysis affect the shape of the diamond?*

STEP 8: *What are the key conclusions?*
What conclusions can be drawn about the extent of differentiation? About the different
criteria? About the characteristics of those that the extremes? These should be marked
in a corner of the chart or a separate sheet.

STEP 9: *Identify the main implications for the future*
Following from the key conclusions discuss implications for the future eg what can be
done to improve the situation of those of the very bottom, (depending on the topic) to
challenge or emulate those at the very top? To try and make the majority move up the
scale? These should also be marked in a corner of the chart or a separate sheet.

◆ Throughout the process observe levels of participation of different people and feed this back to
the group.

◆ Check that the key is clear and understandable by all.

GOING DEEPER: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Once the diagram is drafted, or during Step 4, go into further depth relating to each criterion used.
Mark these on the tree if possible or write detailed notes on a separate sheet of paper on:

◆ *Why have particular criteria been identified?*

eg why have particular criteria for empowerment or household equality been identified? what are the gender, ethnic or other differences in criteria and why do they occur?

◆ *Why is it difficult to move from one level to another?*

Why are different patterns observed for men and women or for different social groups?

◆ *Are the proposed solutions realistic?*

Why did these things not happen before? What are potential constraints? Are they gender sensitive? Do they increase social inclusion?

Discuss with participants how the detailed written notes can best be presented in a form accessible to illiterate members of the group.

ADDING IMPACT: QUANTIFICATION

In piloting the reliability of quantitative information was somewhat questioned eg the majority of the people at the workshop itself reported themselves as 'poor' – objectively not the case when compared with people interviewed in the field visits. There appears to be a tendency for people to want to identify themselves as 'average' and like everyone else. This is however not unique to diamonds and part of the very problem they are designed to address.

◆ *How reliable is the quantification?*

Eg what does income and expenditure information represent? Are the different criteria used equivalent eg do 5 cows equal one mobile phone? How can these be compared?
Does the information on numbers of people refer to the actual experience of problems of group members present, or perceptions of the importance of problems in the community as a whole?

◆ *For overview information on many groups*

The degree to which information can be standardised depends on how systematic and similar are the criteria and the levels at which the different lines are drawn. Where comparison between groups is essential, it is possible to develop a second diagram with the group according to commonly agreed criteria. This is easiest once a number of pilots in different context has been done to show the range of variation to be covered.

◆ *Then the data can be aggregated in the number of ways e.g.:*

Add up the numbers of diamonds of a particular shape, or for which particular numbers of people have been identified at the bottom or top.
Add up total quantities or total numbers of people marked at the extremes of the diamonds for a particular area. These can also be disaggregated by gender or social group.

COMBINING DIAGRAMS

Diamonds are very useful for raising awareness of social differentiation, and particularly at identifying, and quantifying, extremes. They do enable discussion to get beyond statements that 'everyone is poor '. At least some of the above problems can be resolved through very careful probing, through thorough discussion of criteria and secret ballots. Where the main aim is to

identify the extremes, and particularly the most disadvantaged people within the community, they may often be adequate on their own.

When used for more in-depth analysis it is useful to combine them with:

◆ *Social maps*

Social maps can be used to crosscheck or go into more detail about the quantitative information eg how many people in the community are actually at each level?

◆ *Surveys*

Surveys can be based on the criteria identified and also crosschecked the social maps.

◆ *Problem and solution trees*

Problem and solution trees, or income and expenditure trees, can be used to investigate the reasons for the differences identified and possible solutions.

◆ *Road journeys*

Road journeys can be used to set targets and identify stages in improving the situation.

GENERAL POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

◆ In general these exploratory diagrams point to a number of important points for consideration:

◆ It is important to use symbols for illiterate people or outsiders who do not speak the particular language to understand.

◆ It is always important to include a key. Otherwise it is difficult to interpret diagrams again at a later date, or for people who were not present.

◆ Diamonds need in-depth probing to get reliable quantitative analysis.