



Participatory Epidemiology

A Guide for Trainers

Chapter 2

Course Preparation

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Chapter 2 Course Preparation

This chapter outlines the general issues to consider when designing and planning a training course in PE.

The design and planning of a PE training course follows the basic principles and ideas of any participative training event. As mentioned in Chapter 1 PE Trainers should be familiar with participative training techniques. The book *Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide* (Pretty et al. 1995) published by the International Institute for Environment and Development (<http://www.iied.org>) provides more detailed information and ideas on many of the issues described below.

Designing the Training Course

Course objectives

A crucial stage in any training course is to set clear and achievable course objectives. Also, at the end of the course it should be easy for both the trainer and trainees to determine whether the training objectives have been met.

One way to think about the course objectives is to first of all, list the topics that the PE course can cover. For example:

- Origins of participatory approaches and methods
- Key principles of PE
- Attitudes and behaviour for PE
- Indigenous knowledge on livestock health and production
- Triangulation in PE
- Methodological adaptation and flexibility
- Methods for PE:
 - Interviewing methods
 - Visualisation methods
 - Ranking and scoring methods
- Options for quantification and standardisation in PE
- How to present and feedback the information; when and how to apply statistical analysis
- Participatory disease searching
- Future training and practise needs of the trainees

This list of topics ensures that adequate attention is given to attitudinal and behavioural features of PE.

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This list of topics can be converted to course objectives that are written in an active form. An example is shown in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1 **Training Objectives from the Arusha PE Training**

At the end of the training course, the participants will be able to:

1. Describe the origins of participatory approaches and methods
2. Demonstrate the main attitudinal and behavioural aspects of participatory inquiry
3. Incorporate indigenous knowledge into animal disease investigation, research and surveillance systems
4. Use a range of PE methods correctly
5. Summarise, analyse and present data derived from PE
6. Describe the strengths and weaknesses of PE and community participation in animal disease control
7. Outline future PE training events for their own countries and institutions

Participative training approach and methods

A participative training course differs from a conventional training event. Participative courses recognize the limitations of lecture-based learning and therefore very few, if any, lectures are given. Instead, participative learning uses methods such as:

- group discussion (in large and small groups)
- practical demonstration followed by question and answer sessions
- practical sessions in the classroom followed by question and answer sessions
- group and individual exercises
- plays followed by discussion and questions
- practice sessions – in the field

The justification for using these methods is that participants can learn from each other. Examples of these methods are provided later in the guide, drawing on the Arusha PE Training.

A participative training course also tries to create a relaxed and open working environment in which participants feel confident to share their experiences without being criticized. Methods such as energizers and icebreakers are used to create a

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friendly and enjoyable atmosphere during the training. Again, examples are provided later in this chapter.

Session plans

A well-organised trainer makes a detailed session plan for each session. An example of a session plan from the Arusha PE Training is shown below.

Example of a session plan

Session objective: At the end of the session the trainees will be able to demonstrate how to use the matrix scoring method

| Aim | Method | Timing | Materials |
|---|---|------------|-----------------------------------|
| To introduce matrix scoring | Presentation | 10 minutes | PowerPoint |
| To show trainees how to do matrix scoring | Demonstration | 40 minutes | Cards, pens, counters |
| To enable trainees to practise matrix scoring | Practical work in groups | 80 minutes | Cards, pens, counters, flip chart |
| To enable trainees to reflect on the practise session and critically analyse other groups | Group feedback with questions and answers | 45 minutes | Flip charts and pens |
| To summarise and emphasise the key learning points | Summary presentation | 5 minutes | Flip chart and pens |

Total time required: 3 hours

From a combination of the overall course objectives and the session plans for each training session, the trainer can work out the total time needed for the course. The course outline for the Arusha PE Training is shown below.

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Table 2.1 Outline timing of the Arusha PE Training

| Topic | Number of days |
|---|----------------|
| Course opening, welcome and introductions; expectations, fears and ground rules | 0.5 |
| Meaning of community participation - review participants' experiences | 0.5 |
| Introduction to participatory inquiry; attitudes and behaviour | 0.5 |
| Communications skills – verbal and non verbal communication | 0.5 |
| PE methods – managing groups, triangulation and other issues | 0.5 |
| PE methods – interviewing | 0.5 |
| PE methods – participatory mapping | 0.5 |
| PE methods – matrix scoring | 0.5 |
| PE methods – seasonal calendars | 0.5 |
| PE methods – proportional piling | 0.5 |
| Field work – planning | 0.5 |
| Field work – implementation | 2.5 |
| Field work – review | 0.5 |
| Handling data derived from PE | 1.0 |
| Participatory disease searching | 0.5 |
| Review of course objectives, course evaluation and official closing | 0.5 |
| Total | 10 |

**Give yourself
enough time**

A single PE method requires half a day to teach. The teaching for each method involves a short, introductory presentation (around 10 minutes), followed by demonstration, practical sessions and feedback/group discussion.

Although participative training courses are widely recognised as being more effective than formal training methods, they also require more time. In particular, in a PE training course it is essential to allocate enough time to the general principles of participatory inquiry and community participation. Also, issues of verbal and non-verbal communication need to be included.

Most trainees in a PE course will be veterinarians. Some may initially feel that the general topics are a waste of time, and they will want to focus only on the methods of PE. However, PE methods cannot be used properly unless users are aware of and

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practise appropriate attitudes and behaviour. In other words, the right attitude and good communication skills are an integral part of PE methods.

Organising the Training

How many trainers and how many trainees?

In a participative training approach, the ideal number of participants is 15 to 20 people. A single trainer can manage this number of participants and provide the necessary support to practice sessions and fieldwork. Also, during group discussions, the group should not be so large that some people are reluctant to contribute. A group size of greater than 20 people is likely to limit the effectiveness of the training.

For a two-week training course, it can also be useful to use more than one trainer. Two trainers, particularly if they have different training styles, can help to keep the training lively. Also, if you are new to training, running a two-week training course on your own can be a daunting task. Working with another trainer helps to share the workload

Selecting the trainees

Participatory epidemiology is a field-based activity, often in more remote locations and requiring much interaction with livestock keepers. The participative training techniques used in PE training are designed to build on the existing knowledge and experience of the trainees. It follows that trainees with field experience and who enjoy communicating with others, tend to benefit most from PE training. Also, participative training techniques require trainees to take responsibility for their own learning, and invest time and effort in the training. Such commitment is more likely to occur if trainees feel that PE may be useful in their work, and that they will have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt. The selection of people for training in PE is usually the responsibility of managers within a particular organisation. Managers may not be fully aware of these issues and it is often useful for PE trainers to work with managers to select trainees.

Training materials

A PE training course does not require sophisticated training materials. The basic requirements are:

- Pre-prepared handouts (for example, see Annex 1) plus the course timetable
- Flipcharts and plenty of flip chart paper and marker pens
- Pieces of card
- Counters (e.g. stones, beans)
- Notebook, files and pens for participants

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Depending on the venue and equipment available, it is also useful though not essential to have an overhead projector or LCD projector (though both need a reliable electricity supply).

Creating a Learning Environment

People learn best when they're relaxed, but attentive. In other words, people don't learn well when they're apprehensive, bored or tired. A trainer can do various things to create a good learning environment.

The training venue

For the Arusha PE Training, the MS-TCDC was selected as a training venue because it was a purpose built training centre focussing on participatory approaches to development. The centre was well equipped with training equipment and able to offer specialised trainers to assist with the training course design and implementation. The centre was also able to organize fieldwork. On-site accommodation at the MS-TCDC also enables participants to concentrate on the training.

Ideally, training venues for PE training should be locations with relatively easy access to livestock keepers for practising PE approaches and methods. The greater the time dedicated to this practise, the more successful the course will be.

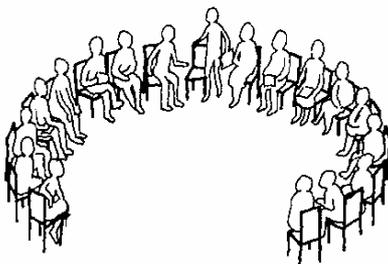
The training room

Trainees will spend a lot of time in the training room. This room needs to be large and 'flexible', so that desks and chairs can easily be moved around to cater for presentations and working group sessions. The room will need the usual visual aids and equipment such as blackboards or whiteboards, flipcharts and overhead projectors plus plenty of wall space to display various maps, matrix scorings and other methods and results as they emerge during the training.

Seating plans

The seating arrangement will also greatly affect the atmosphere and communication during the training. During the Arusha PE Training, most of the class work and group discussions took place in a meeting room at the MS-TCDC. This was a circular room and the seats were organized in a circle around a flip chart, marker boards and

projector screen at the front of the room. A circular arrangement places everyone at the same distance from each other and makes communication easy between the participants. Also, there is no table or lectern between the trainer, and therefore no barrier between the trainer and the participants.



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Opening the course

The opening of a training course can be conducted in a formal or informal manner. If officials are invited to open a training course, government protocol is usually appropriate. Typically, this involves formal seating arrangements and a speech by one or more senior officials or invited guests. After an official opening, it may be necessary to reorganize the meeting room into a more informal arrangement that is better suited to a participative training environment. For example, seating patterns should be organized to maximize communication between participants.

Icebreakers

In addition to creating a good physical environment for training, an important role for a PE trainer is to help people feel mentally relaxed and comfortable with the training. Important initial steps include exercises to make sure everyone knows each other, to get people interacting and used to talking in the group; these methods are sometimes called 'icebreakers'.

Box 2.2

Example of an icebreaker: Getting to know you

In this icebreaker, a blank piece of card is given to each participant. The trainer asks the participants to write three things about themselves on the card *but not their names*. The three things should not immediately give away the participant's identity, so that to someone reading the card it would not be obvious who had written it.

The trainer collects all the cards and places them on a table at the front of the room. Then, everyone is asked to come and choose any card other than their own and then using the card, find the person who wrote it.

Once everyone has found the owner of the card, the group is asked to take their seats again. Everyone is then asked to introduce the owner of the card they selected, using the information on the card.

There are many other icebreakers and trainers can get ideas and methods from *Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide* (Pretty et al. 1995).

Expectations and fears

In a PE training course, it is useful for the trainer to understand the expectations of participants at the beginning of the course. This helps to identify any expectations that will not be covered by the course and inform people accordingly. In other words, false expectations are addressed at the beginning. Listing people's expectations also helps to ensure that everyone is clear about the objectives of the course, and which topics will be covered.

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Box 2.3

Expectations and fears in the Arusha PE Training

This session was conducted with the whole group of participants. The facilitator simply asked people to offer their expectations, and these were written on a flipchart. After the expectations had been discussed, the fears were then listed and also discussed.

In order to overcome some, or even all of the fears, the trainees can then propose some 'ground rules' for the training. The ground rules usually cover issues such as the timing of each session (when it will start and finish), breaks for tea and coffee, and punctuality. The trainees can also select a group representative to organize social events and present any problems to the course organisers.

Expectations

- * To learn the practical use of PE in the field
- * Acquire techniques to help farmers investigate livestock problems
- * Establish regional contacts with people interested in PE
- * Share experiences with colleagues in East Africa
- * Be able to pass on knowledge to colleagues who are not here
- * Integrate PE into national surveillance networks
- * Learn the latest developments in PE
- * Adopt PE as the main approach for working with pastoralists
- * Know how to integrate PE into the epidemiology curriculum in veterinary schools
- * Know how to combine PE with conventional epidemiological approaches

Fears

- * Not enough time for practical work
- * Wasting time during the course
- * Malaria
- * Change of environment and culture during the fieldwork
- * A tight timetable – will there be time for socializing?
- * Poor co-operation from other participants
- * Language barriers in the field
- * Attitude of some of us towards PE
- * Language problems internally in the group
- * Lack of harmonization regionally after the training
- * Bad weather (heavy rain)

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Preliminary exercises such as ice-breakers and discussing fears and expectations can be time-consuming. However, they help to ensure that participants feel that their opinions are influencing the design and atmosphere of the training. These initial stages of a PE training course differ from conventional teaching approaches, which usually begin with (and continue) with lectures right from the start of the training course.

Fieldwork in PE training

Why is fieldwork important?

To become a good PE practitioner, practice is needed. This means trying out new methods with 'real informants', learning the strengths and weaknesses of the methods, and developing capacity to adapt methods to suit particular situations. It follows that a PE training course must include enough time for fieldwork. At the end of a course, it is very common for trainees to say 'I never really understood how to use these methods until I did it myself'.

Fieldwork and community expectations

As fieldwork is such an important component of PE Training, it follows that the organisation of fieldwork is crucial. However, an important consideration when arranging fieldwork is the expectations of the community to be visited. Not least, if local people invest time working with the trainees, they may expect some form of assistance to result from the interaction. In the case of PE training, this expectation might take the form of treatments for sick animals. Whatever the case, it's important that false expectations are not raised.

If the PE training is related to a longer term process or project in a given area, such as a community-based animal health project, it can be one of the first stages in setting up the project. Although a training event, useful information can still be generated and discussed at community level. Alternatively, PE training might take place within an established project e.g. to investigate a previously unrecognised animal health problem. In these situations, it is relatively easy to explain to local people the reason for the training.

In many other situations, PE training will be a one-off event affecting a particular community. Neither the training organisation nor the trainees will have plans to return to the community and act on findings arising from the field work. In these situations, a golden rule is honesty. If livestock keepers clearly understand that the trainees are visiting an area in order to practise new approaches and methods, then they can better decide if they wish to spend time with the trainees. In areas where communities are highly dependant on livestock, it is common for people to be willing to sit and

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discuss livestock issues regardless of any obvious benefit (such as free veterinary medicines). Another approach in these situations is to include a livestock worker from the community in the training. This worker then becomes responsible for following up issues that arise during the practice sessions.

Fieldwork logistics

Having decided to conduct field work in a PE training course and considered the ethical questions related to community involvement, the field work needs to be organised. Box 2.4 overleaf summarises the main questions to ask when arranging the field work.

Practising the methods and feeding back

In addition to the logistical issues, the field work also has to be organised in terms of the methods to be practised and the information to be discussed. Therefore, the trainer needs to develop a session plan for the field work and ensure that enough time is available for practising each method. At this stage of the training, trainees should already have practised the methods in the classroom and so it should not be necessary for the trainer to repeat the demonstrations. Instead, the trainer can simply observe what happens as the groups practise the methods and only intervene if there is a major misunderstanding.

In the Arusha training, the trainees were divided into four groups of about five people, and each group practised the same methods on a particular day. Groups then presented their experiences and findings to each other in the evening. This approach allows trainees to identify what they did well and where they went wrong, and also allows comparison of results from different groups. These feedback sessions are also an opportunity for the trainees to correct each other, or if necessary, for the trainer to solve any misunderstandings.



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Box 2.4

A checklist for preparing for the field (from Pretty et al., 1995)

The Host Community

- Does the community know when you will be arriving and how long you will be staying? Have all sectors of the community approved your stay?
- Are the fieldwork dates convenient for all the local people? Are they busy all day with their animals or in the fields? When is market day? Are there important political events or social ceremonies that will draw people away?
- Do they know why you are coming?
- If it is just for training, then do they know there is no guaranteed follow-up? Will they still be interested in accommodating the teams?
- If it is part of the ongoing activities of the trainees' institution(s), then do they have resources to follow up plans developed in the village?
- When is it most convenient for women and men to be involved in discussions (morning, afternoon, evening)?

Accommodation

- Are you planning to stay in the village(s)?
- If so, have full discussions been held on practical arrangements in the community?
- If not, how close to the community will you be staying?
- Is there electricity? (If so, you may be able to show slides /videos to local people in the evenings.)

Food and Beverages

- What arrangements have been made to feed the team whilst in the village?
- Will you buy food there? Will you take it with you?
- Who will go to market to buy food and drink? Who will do the cooking?

Transportation

- How will the team get to the village sites?
- Do you have sufficient vehicles/fuel allocations?

Materials

- Do you have a full supply of charts, pens, paper etc. for the visualisations?
- Do you have a small notebook for each trainee?

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Evaluating the training

The evaluation of PE training can involve two processes:

Continuous evaluation of trainees

The frequent feedback and discussion sessions during PE training are an opportunity for the trainer to assess trainees' uptake of new knowledge or skills. These sessions will reveal areas of confusion within individual trainees or the group as a whole, and will also show which topics have been understood. This continuous evaluation enables a trainer to address major misunderstandings or provide additional support to individuals on specific issues.

Course evaluation by trainees

At the end of the training the trainees can be asked to complete a simple evaluation form. An example is provided in Annex 3.