PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL

Participatory appraisal is a technique that can be used in development projects to capture the true voice of a community and to help realise the most appropriate solutions.

Participatory appraisal (PA), often termed PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) and linked with RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal) describes a family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act (Chambers 1994). Participatory appraisal empowers local people to conduct their own modes of investigation to develop more community based solutions. PA is effective in many applications including poverty alleviation programmes, natural resources management, agriculture, health and food security in both rural and urban settings. Such appraisal techniques can be successfully used to empower poorer communities, develop solutions, to communicate and share knowledge.

Origins

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) has come out of past approaches to appraisal, including activist participatory research, applied anthropology, agro-ecosystem analysis, field research on farming systems and Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA). RRA seeks to extract information by outsiders, whereas in PRA, the information is more shared and owned by the local people themselves (Chambers 1992) therefore creating a more accurate and truer picture of the situation.

Considerations

In research, it is important that the investigator remains objective, reflexive and that the data is gathered (i.e. not affected by the collection process) rather than constructed (i.e. data created and shaped by the way it is collected) which could lead to data being a misrepresentation that should be treated with scepticism. Researchers must be aware of the distortions produced by their methods and their intervention in the lives of people under study (Cronin 2011). They should be reflexive and aware of their own position and perspective, their effect on social actors, be aware of the construction of their account (extent to which bringing in their own interpretation), which may be explicit or implicit in accounts of research (Jones 2008). Therefore, in PA, the investigator works as a facilitator to enable local people to share and present their experiences themselves, thereby eliminating the risk of misinterpretation by the researcher. It is crucial that outside facilitators seeking to gather information via PA from communities must be critically self-aware and conscious of their behaviour and attitude. This includes showing respect, relaxing, not rushing and 'handing over the stick' (Chamber 1992) or control of the situation to the community. The gathering of information via PA is often sought from groups via visual data and comparisons, sharing and analysis are open-ended (Chambers 1992).

Basic Principles

- **Facilitation** – an outsider facilitates the investigation. Analysis, presentation and learning is conducted by local people themselves so they present and own the outcomes and learn from the process. The outsider can start the process then sit back while the community runs it themselves.
- **Self-critical awareness and responsibility** – the facilitators must be reflexive and continually examining their behaviour and judgements so as to not impact on the community and learning.

- **Reversal of learning** – to learn from local people, directly, on site, face-to-face, gaining from local physical, technical and social knowledge, rather than the outsider coming in to teach.
- **Learning rapidly and progressively** – with conscious exploration, flexible use of methods, opportunism, improvisation, iteration and cross-checking. An adaptable learning process.
- **Offsetting biases** – facilitators must not be biased in their views or have any pre-conceived ideas. Such biases may be ingrained culturally in an outsider, but these can sought to be offset by being relaxed, not rushing, listening not lecturing, probing not passing on to the next topic, be unimposing, seek out all representatives of society to learn their concerns and priorities.
- **Optimising trade-offs** – the costs of learning must be related to the useful truth of information, with tradeoffs between quantity, relevance, accuracy and timeliness.
- **Triangulation** – by seeking variability instead of averages to maximise the diversity and richness of information. For example by combining data from various sources and methodologies going beyond cross-checking to seek out contradictions and anomalies in order to reinforce the accuracy of the data gathered.

(Adapted from Chambers 1992)

Methods

PA methods often include semi-structured interviews with local community members and group discussions which enable specific activities to be conducted and questions to be answered. These exercises are designed to capture the perceptions of the community and rely on informal, oral communication methods, to put the respondents at ease, make the best use of visualisation techniques and diagrams in order to encourage maximum participation from all residents including the illiterate. Such group discussions aim to draw further information from residents that might not be shared during a one-on-one interview. Data from various sources such as interviews, group discussions and secondary data (e.g. files, reports, maps, photos) can be triangulated to reinforce the data. Methods and techniques include the following:

- **Semi-structured interviews** – where the investigator asks open-ended questions.
- **Group discussions** – these can be casual, focussed, deliberately structured, community/ neighbourhood during which activities are often used to deliver PA techniques.
- **Mapping and modelling** – using the soil or paper to mark social, demographic, health, natural resources, or 3D models of their land and environments.
- **Photographs** – analysed to identify conditions.
- **Transect walks** – systematically walking with community members through an area observing, asking, listening, and mapping resources and findings.
- **Timelines** – chronologies of events can be captured orally or visually.
- **Trend analysis** – accounts of the past, how things have changed, cause and impacts of changes.
- **Ethno biographies** – local histories can be gathered through conversations, interviews, secondary sources.
- **Seasonal diagramming** – by major season or month to show weather, moisture, crops, agricultural labour, food consumption, sickness, prices, migration, income, expenditure etc.
- **Livelihood analysis** – stability, crises and coping, relative income, credit, debt etc.
- **Participatory diagramming** – of flows, causality, quantities, trends, relationships, ranking, scoring, to devise diagrams e.g. systems diagrams, charts.
- **Well-being or wealth ranking** – identifying clusters e.g. households according to well-being or wealth.
- **Analysis of difference** – e.g. by gender, social group, wealth/poverty, occupation and age. Identifying preferences and differences between groups, contrasts and comparisons.
- **Scoring and ranking** – especially using matrices and seeds to compare.
- **Estimates and quantification** – using local measures, judgements and materials as counters e.g. seeds, stones.

- **Key local indicators** – such as poor people's criteria of wellbeing.
- **Key probes** – questions that lead to key issues such as, 'What do you talk about when you are together?' 'What do you do when someone's hut burns down?' 'What vegetable/tree/crop/animal/tool/equipment would you like to try out?'
- **Stories, portraits and case studies** – e.g. household history and profile, coping with a crisis, conflict resolution.
- **Team contracts and interactions** – where maps, models, diagrams and findings are presented by villagers or outsiders and checked, corrected and discussed.
- **Participatory planning, budgeting and monitoring** – in which villagers prepare their own plans, budgets and schedules and monitor progress.
- **Brainstorming**
- **Questionnaires** – short simple surveys.
- **Report writing** – writing observational field notes.

(Adapted from Chambers 1992)

Case Study Application

Using Participatory Appraisal techniques to evaluate upgraded water and sanitation infrastructure in a low-income urban community in Silanga, Kibera, Kenya.

New toilets, water kiosks and shower facilities have been constructed in a community. An independent researcher visited the community one year after completion to investigate the sustainability of the process of building the new infrastructure by an international NGO, Practical Action, and the impact of the new infrastructure upon the community's lives.   Participatory Appraisal techniques were used to gather data in a number of areas.

For this investigation group discussions and exercises were developed to capture the perceptions of the resident recipients of the slum upgrading intervention. The researcher sought to use Participatory Appraisal techniques via group discussions which were triangulated with individual semi-structured interviews. The group discussions were conducted among relatively homogenous groups of people (e.g. a group of poor women, a group of business owners), in most cases these were made up of individuals from already established community based organisations (CBO), and with groups of no more than twelve people to aid conversation and encourage all individuals to participate. During the group meetings, the researcher was assisted by a local research assistant for help with translation and recording the data as well as to build rapport with the community. At the start of each discussion a record of attendance was taken along with some basic socio-economic data. Information was recorded by drawing on large flip-chart paper with the use of Post-it™ notes of different sizes and colours, and marker pens. Some parts of the conversations were audio and visually recorded and later transcribed or used in the making of short films. A clear distinction was maintained between the issues and terminology used by the people and that introduced by the facilitators. When selecting community groups to conduct the discussion with, the researcher tried to gain access to different community groups, i.e. men, women, youth, disabled, separately to obtain separate gender disaggregated data. The facilitators sought to use simple language and prompting, probing and pausing techniques to encourage full responses during discussion and to cross-check and clarify responses. The PA techniques used were Group discussions, Visual tools for analysis, Cause – Impact diagrams, Institution – Perception mapping, Listing, Scoring, Ranking, Trend analysis, Representation.

As well as individual interviews, a group discussion was conducted with eleven members of an existing community CBO, the Kibera Silanga Usafi Group (KISUG). The group discussions resulted in various diagrams as well as recorded audio and video footage. Inspiration was taken from the methodology designed for Consultations with the Poor for the World Bank's World Development Report 2000/2001 (World Bank 1999).

Cause-Impact of well-being in the community

During the group discussion the residents were asked to discuss their perceptions of the necessary conditions to enable an individual or household to attain a higher level of well-being. Using chart paper the residents were asked to draw and indicate the causes and related impacts of things needed for well-being or a good life. They were also asked to identify linked items with coloured arrows. The resulting diagram can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Silanga group discussion.

Figure 2: Cause-Impact of well-being in Silanga.
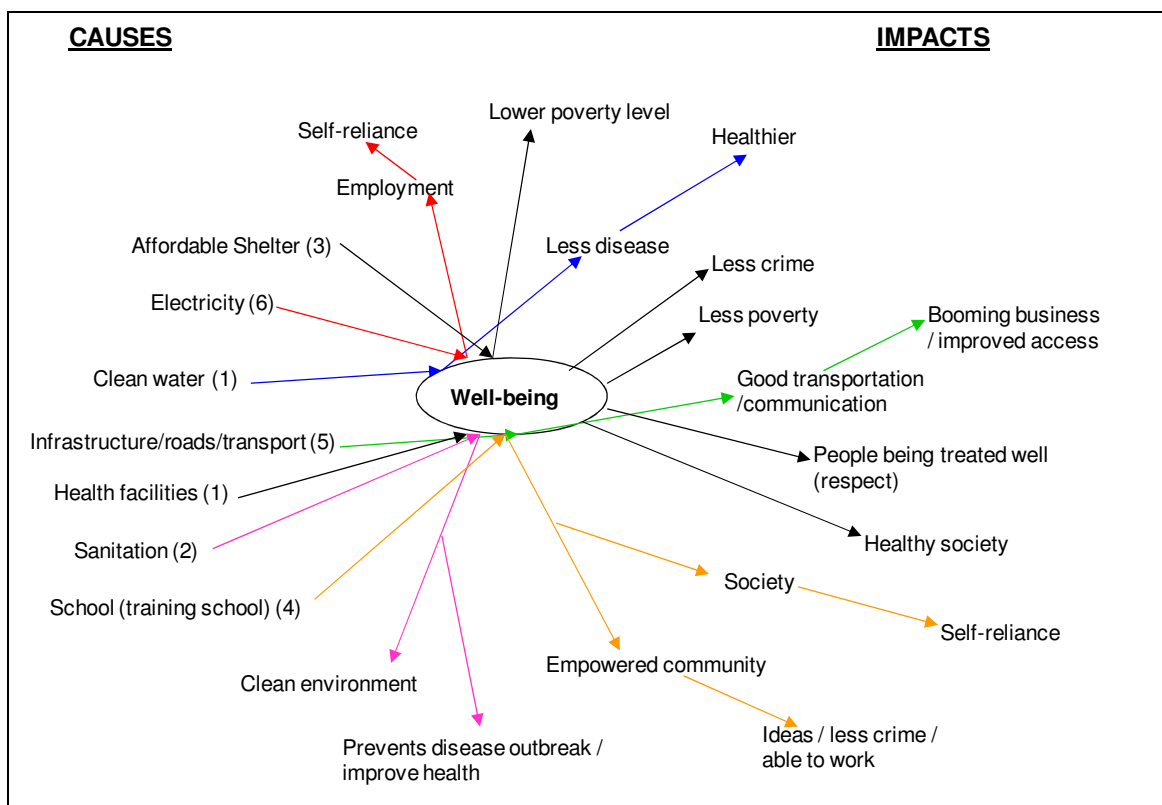
The residents were then asked to rank the top six items they consider the most important needs for well-being. The rankings can be seen in brackets within the diagram. This exercise got the residents thinking about their priorities, needs and standard of their current life today. It can be seen that residents are clearly aware of the impact that infrastructure has on their lives. They have shown the link between clean water, reduced disease and during interviews revealed they are aware this has an impact on their expendable income as hospital bills are reduced. The provision of decent infrastructure for roads and transport was also shown to support communication, access and resulting business achievement. The residents are aware of the

impact that infrastructure can have on their personal development, income and reduction of poverty.

Development priorities using listing and ranking

During the group discussion the researcher sought to capture the development priorities of the respondents. The group were asked to discuss their current needs and priorities for life now, in the past and what they expected their future situation to be. The outcomes of the discussion draw light on whether support is needed to solve problems and the expectations of the poor. Listing, Ranking, Trend Analysis and Discussion PA techniques were used.

The residents were asked to list and then rank in order of priority, the problems they are currently facing in their day to day lives. They were then asked to write a list of the problems they encountered in the past – say ten years previously, well before the development of the watsan facilities. They then indicated whether the situation was better or worse in the past. Finally the residents were asked what change they expected to happen with their problems in the future and to indicate whether their situation would improve or worsen. The results the residents gave have been sorted and are presented in Table 1. The residents were generally optimistic about physical and infrastructure developments for the future but they were generally pessimistic that their most pressing problems of poverty, unemployment, crime and hunger would only get worse in the years to come. This indicates the residents' sense of hopelessness and low expectations of rising out of poverty while continuing to reside in Silanga. Residents indicated a low expectation for social issues including child and drug abuse, but revealed they feel more positive about future developments in roads, infrastructure, housing and help from the government. This optimism might be triggered by the ongoing government Kenyan Slum Upgrading Programme (KENSUP) slum upgrading activities which are clearly visible within the community.

Table 1: Silanga Priorities.

Problems Now	Ranking Now	Past Problems	Future Problems
Poverty	1	Worse	Worse
Unemployment	2	Better (before)	Worse
Insecurity/Crime	3	Worse	Worse
Not enough food	4	Better	Worse
Poor health	5	Worse	Better
Child labour/abuse	6	Worse	Worse
Not enough pay	7	Better	Worse
Poor housing	8	Better	Better
No good education	9	Worse	Better
Drug abuse (children exposed to)	10	Better	Worse
Pollution	11	Worse	Better
Roads/infrastructure	12	Worse	Better
Ignorance	13	Worse	Better
Government don't help	14	Worse	Better
Fire hazards	15	Better (more space)	Better

Success and need for the infrastructure upgrading using cause-impact diagram

During group discussions residents were asked to discuss the need for, cause, impact and success of the watsan project that has been constructed in their community. The residents were then asked to draw a cause-impact diagram on chart paper to indicate the reasons for the development of the watsan facilities and the related impacts they have observed. The outcome of this exercise can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Cause-Impact of WatSan Blocks.
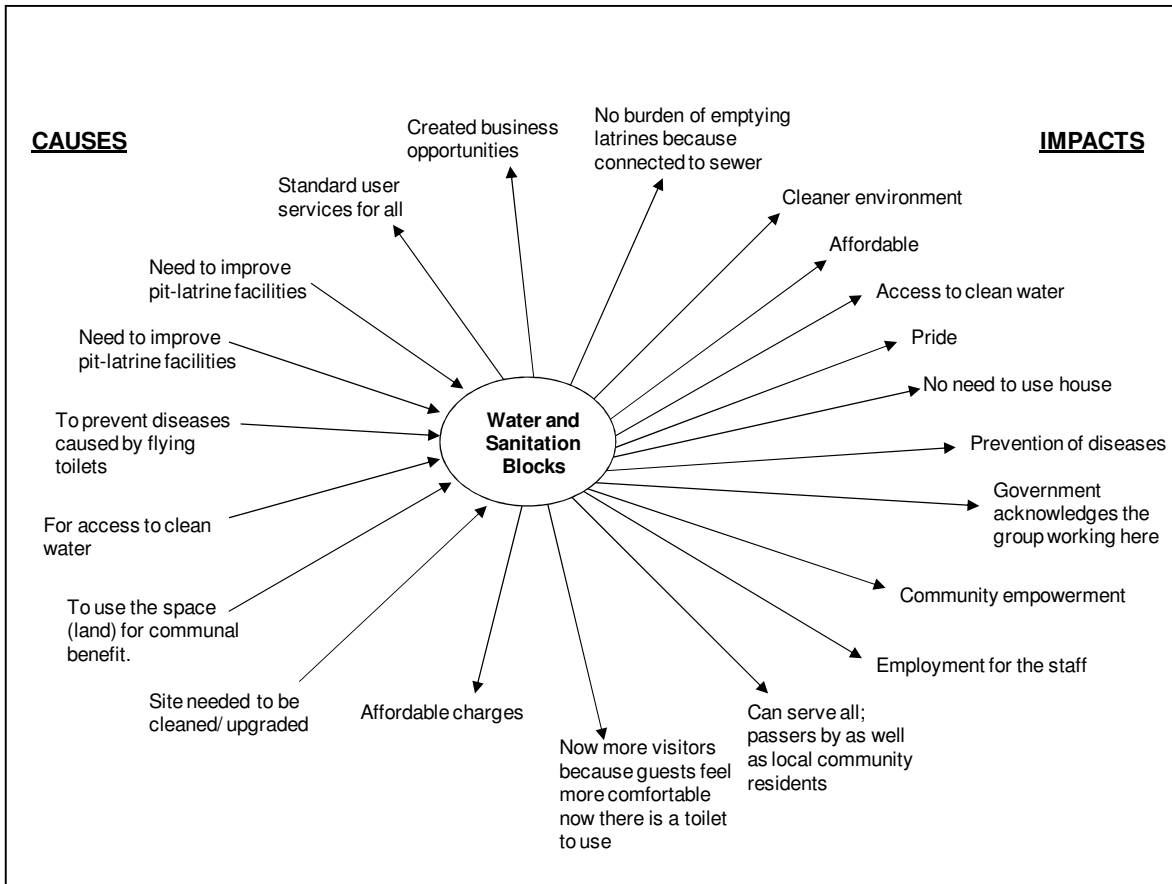
The group of residents who participated in the group discussion were members of an existing CBO, the Silanga Usafi Group. (Usafi is a Kiswahili word meaning clean and in this case implies both clean water & toilets). Therefore, these members already have a concern for water issues in the community and are well aware of the impacts of water supply and management. Their awareness of the topic is demonstrated in the results of this exercise which shows many well considered and informed responses. Many of the responses from the group discussion are matched and supported by the responses from the individual interviews.

Institutional perception using a mapping exercise
During the group discussion with residents an exercise was carried out to capture the group's perception of institutions and their regarded importance by the community, to discover the influence the community perceives to have upon institutions and to determine the change and predicted evolution of institutions. The PA techniques used were listing, ranking, trend analysis and institution-perception mapping.

The residents were first asked to list all the institutions they are involved with, see Table 2 and then to map them indicating their perception of importance, strength and direction of relationship with the institution, and accessibility of the institution. The resulting main output in the form of a diagram can be seen in Figures 4 and 5.

Table 2: Silanga Institutions

| Institution	Comment	
KISUG	Kibera Silanga Usafi Group	Watsan and environmental upgrading
KISEP	Kibera Slums Education Program	NGO undertaking teacher training
Church		
USK	Undugu Soceity of Kenya	Empowerment of youth and marginalised communities
Care Kenya		Relief and development
Practical Action		NGO
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres	Health
Chief		Local governance
Maisha Bora		Savings and loans
Government		
AMREF	African Medical and Research Foundation	Health
SYG	Silanga Youth Group	Environmental upgrading
SUM	Silanga Usafi Na Maendeleo	Watsan and environmental upgrading, with savings group
Health institutions		
Well-wishers		
Community policing		

Figure 4 : Silanga group discussion perception mapping exercise
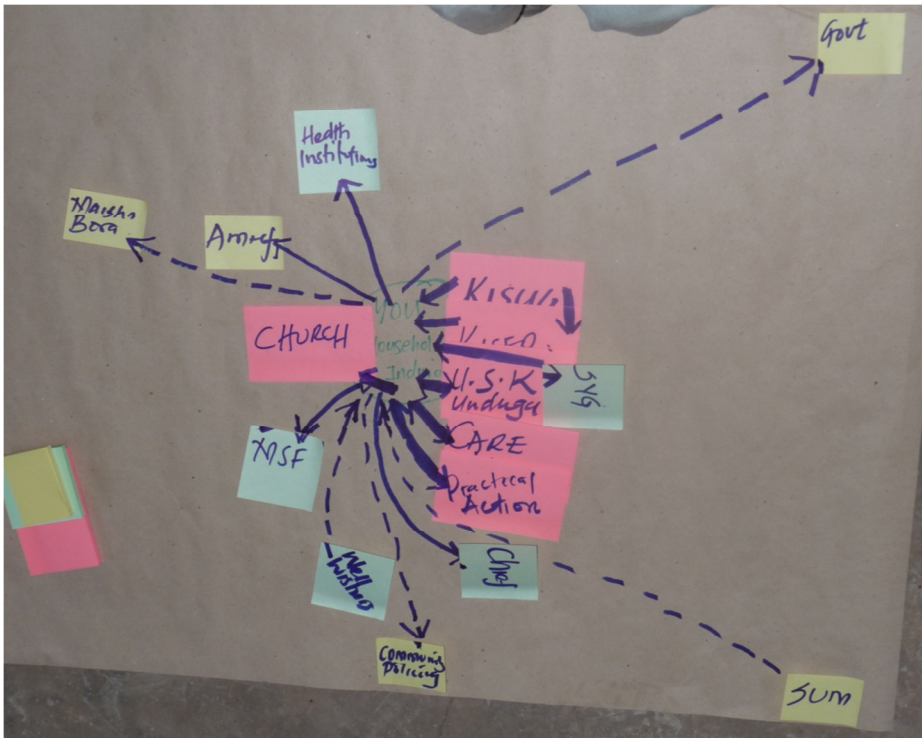
Figure 5 : Institution-Perception Map Silanga.
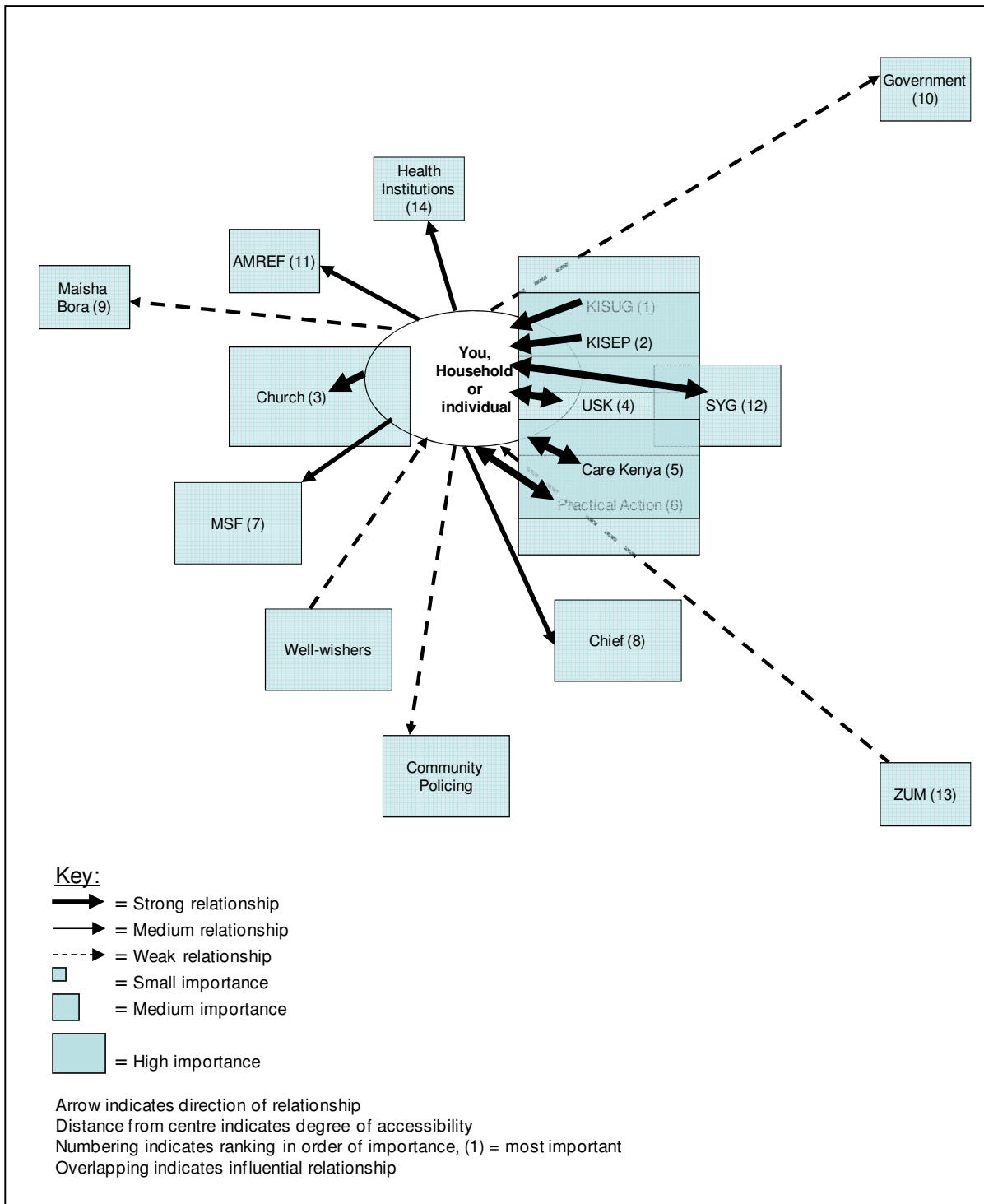
The results of the institutional mapping exercise broadly groups the institutions into three groups in order of priority to the residents;
Group 1 – KISUG, KISEP, Church, USK, Care Kenya, Practical Action
Group 2 – SYG, MSF, Chief, AMREF, Health institutions
Group 3 – ZUM, Maisha Bora, Community policing, Well-wishers, Government

It is clear that the community in Silanga are impacted by a large number of institutions. As Kibera is well known to be a slum with extreme poverty in Africa, many international agencies concentrate their activities to helping the population there. It is obvious to see in Kibera the vast number of organisations, NGOs and CBOs active within the community.

As would be expected, the organisations with less presence in the community such as the government and less active NGOs (Group 3) have the weakest relationship and are considered the least important and least accessible to the community. Community policing, although central to the society, was also placed in this group as residents feel there is both a weak and a one way relationship. It appears that community policing is perhaps mistrusted by the residents in the group and communication could be improved.

Core community institutions such as those in Group 1 – The church, village-based CBOs and some particularly active NGOs, are considered the most important, most accessible to the community and with the strongest relationships to the community. The residents chose to position Practical Action close to the community which signifies they feel they are a highly accessible institution and indicated that the relationship is both strong and two-way. This is a positive indication that the residents feel they can both contribute to and gain from their relationship with the NGO and that there is a good level of communication and most likely trust. However, Practical Action was ranked as the 6th most important institution to the community which is at the lower end of this group, not surprisingly, the CBOs are more central to the community and were therefore ranked higher. Interestingly the residents chose to indicate that the top six institutions (CBOs and NGOs) all influence one another.

Group 2, which consists mainly of various organisations that work with communities and between communities and governments were represented as both medium and low importance. Three of the group are healthcare providers, but the village Chief was also placed in this category. As Chief, this person links between the government and local community, so this middle position is as might be expected.

Summary
As has been demonstrated, PA offers a technique by which the voice of the poor can be captured. It is an interactive rather than extractive process that requires researchers to recognise the value of local knowledge. There is much evidence to show that information shared by communities via PA shows high validity and reliability. However, challenges for the facilitator do exist, therefore facilitation must be very carefully conducted. Participatory appraisal has the potential to enable communities to develop their own systems and support for a paradigm shift towards decentralisation, local diversity and empowerment (Chambers 1992).

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process brief

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