

## Building a Diary | Components

The diaries are composed of a series of themed modules. The modules together form a development curriculum that is a logical whole. Each module utilizes a variety of different approaches, or components, for meeting program goals and evaluation. The three types of components are for learning, planning and evaluation. Every module does not have all three, but most include at least some evaluation exercises. Usually a learning exercise introduces the module.

### Learning

Heavily facilitated, typically in a group setting, by the program officer or field agent. These exercises make up the “curriculum” of the program; they are messages from the program/agency to its constituents about the intervention. They tend to be problem-solving or strengths-based. The purpose is to inspire participants on how life could be, or how a problem could turn out well. They are not prescriptive but are conversation starters.

- Bad Scene / Good Scenes
- Cautionary Cartoons / Illustrated Folk Tales
- Dream Scene
- Panorama Scenes (e.g. Gender Benders)
- 6 panel Stories (photo novella, picture parade, comic strip)



Image source: Helzi Noponen

### Planning

Planning tools allow for us to take on greater complexity in our lives than if we try to keep it all in our heads. The planning exercises in the diary open up a whole new world for participants. For many, it is the first time they have purposefully created and acted on a plan. These plans help participants move from reactive/crisis orientation to a proactive/future orientation.

It is important that the participant takes an active role in their own planning. The diary is a tool to identify, prioritize and then strategize about the problems and possibilities in their life before taking action.

Planning components also allow for accountability -- both the participant to themselves and the participant to the group, vice versa.

- Problem Sorting Exercises
- Goal Setting Exercises
- Priority Choosing Exercises
- Planning Formats

### Evaluation

Some of the evaluation is for impact assessment (proving) perspective, many of them help the participant to assess their own life and circumstances in a meaningful way. Many have never thought in these terms before. Simply writing down and quantifying their life and experience can provoke new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking.

- Yes/no questions
- Quantity questions
- Multiple choice questions
- Ranking and/or scaling questions



Image source: Helzi Noponen

## Building a Diary | 5 Tasks of ILS

The core of the ILS strategy is to engage the participants in a five-step process that carries over and informs how they will think about their life. We all do these things, but the diary makes this process explicit, in order to empower the participants with choice.

### 1. Collecting Data



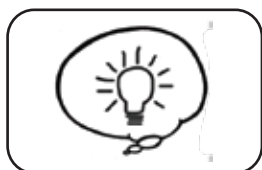
Participants own the ILS diary. It is their record. The diary promotes reflection on their current situation, in a structured and relevant format. Each indicator picture has an implied program value attached to it. The process of carefully marking and keeping the diary acts as a green light for them to dare to think about achieving a better life.

### 2. Assessing Data / Change



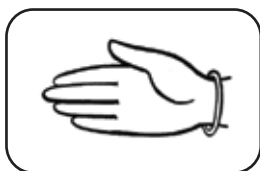
Participants, though illiterate, can “read” their own diary and that of others. Individually, and in the context of a group, they gain an understanding of their changing life and livelihood situation. Patterns emerge, the ability to set goals, prioritize problems and solutions and plan for the future are all facilitated through the use of the diary.

### 3. Analysing Causes of Change / Troubleshoot



Once a goal is set, or a pattern emerges, participants use their data and assessment of the situation to identify potential causes and reasons. Asking “why?” and pursuing an answer calls forth the wisdom and skills of each participant, empowering them to step into a position of primary actor in their lives.

### 4. Plan or Alter Strategies, Training



With an understanding of the forces at play, participants make intentional changes to their strategies and behavior for achieving their goals. They begin to track and assess data again, to understand the impact of this new plan of action—gaining greater self-awareness, confidence and better results in the process.

### 5. Documenting, sharing and reinforcing values



Sharing between participants can be a wonderful source of inspiration, support and power; discussion is an oft over-looked learning tool.

The diary acts as a testimony to individual experiences, which are often duplicated between group members. These recorded similarities give permission to discuss sensitive wider social issues and inequitable structures and the courage to attempt change. Collective action to summon needed resources and services is bolstered by the diaries' written record.

## Why ILS? | Going beyond proving

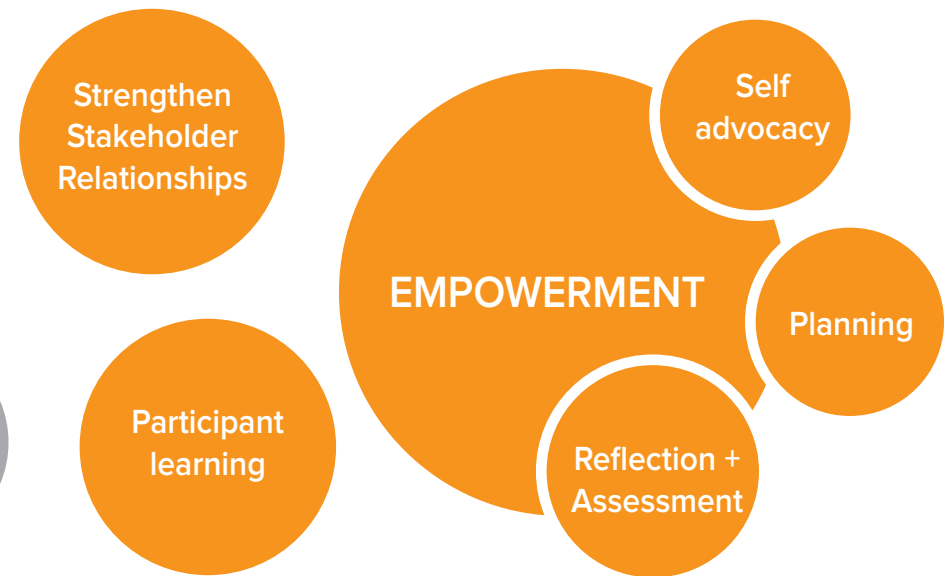
While ILS can help “prove” program effectiveness, and can be used for internal accountability, its real strength lies in its ability to support improving. It is the learning and planning components of ILS coupled together with evaluation that make it a powerful tool which is integral to the program design.

### Program Impact Assessment Objectives

#### PROVING



#### IMPROVING / LEARNING



### “Traditional” Impact Assessment

Traditional impact assessment has an external focus (to the donors and policy makers) and a more quantitative and “objective” approach. It tends to be extractive, the information gathered is primarily used outside of the community and little, if any, feedback is provided to the community in terms they can understand. The purpose of the assessment is to prove effectiveness and efficiency rather than to empower the community, participants or program staff to learn and improve.<sup>1</sup>

### Participatory Impact Assessment (ILS, and others)

Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) is internally focused, aimed at improving outcomes through the empowerment of the program staff and participants. PIA falls along a spectrum of participatory methods used to gather data from extractive formats to fully engaging participants in evaluating their own progress and the program.<sup>2</sup> While some focus on the pictorial aspect of ILS as a way to gather information from a low-literacy population, the true strength of ILS is in its ability to empower learning and inspire action.<sup>3</sup>

1. Marisol Estrella and John Gaventa, “Who Counts Reality? Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: A Literature Review”, as summarized in Anton Simonawitz, “Making impact assessment more participatory” June 2000

2. Anton Simonawitz, “Making impact assessment more participatory” June 2000

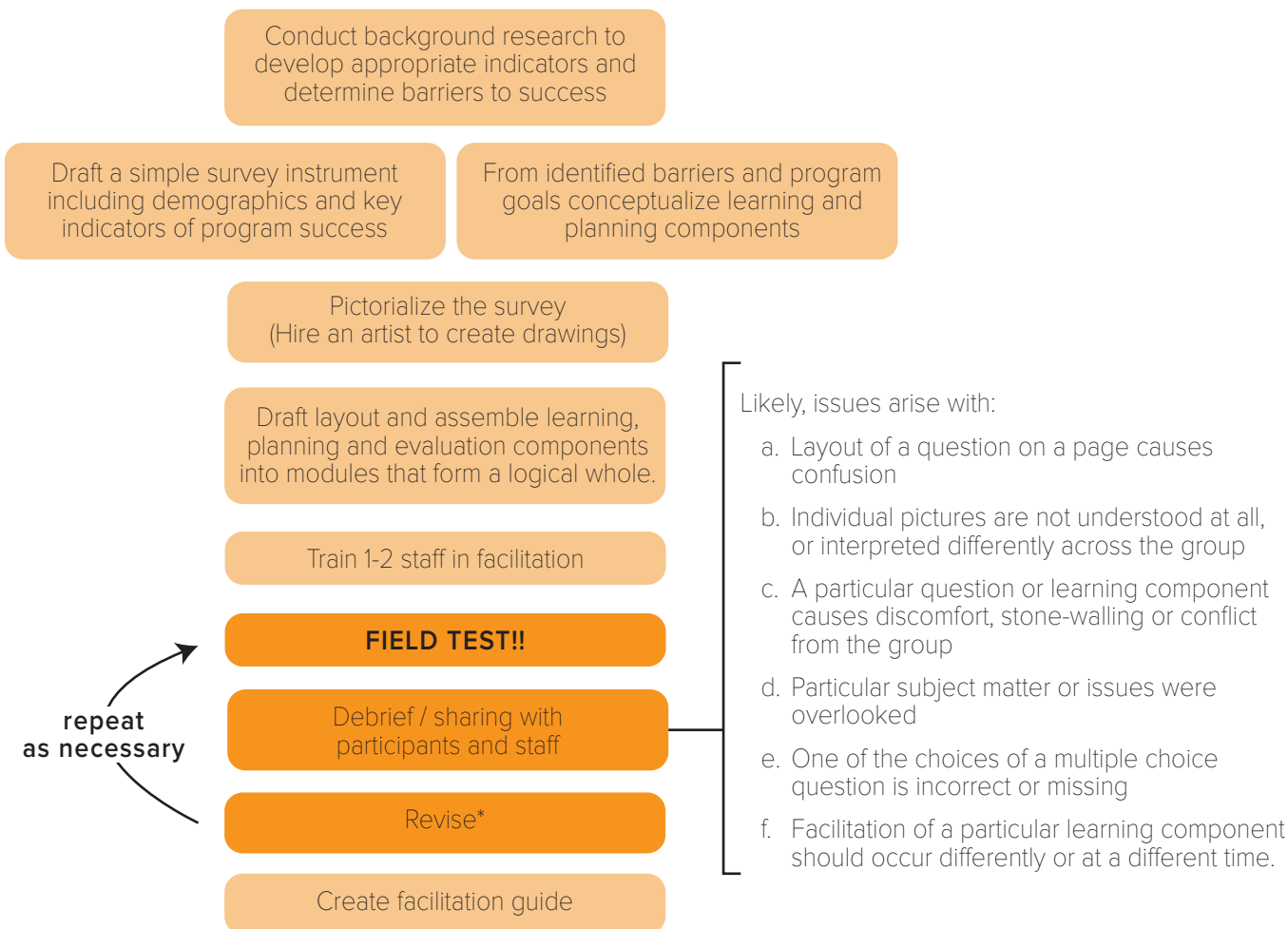
3. For a discussion of how ILS differs from PRA techniques using pictures see Noponen, H. (2002) The Internal Learning System—a tool for micro-finance and livelihoods interventions. Development Bulletin 57: 106–110.

## Building a diary | How to ILS (the basics)

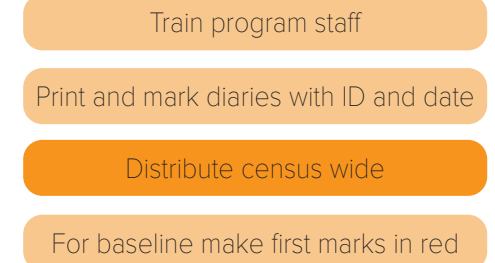
ILS is not just about creating a pictorial diary. It is based on well-grounded research design and starts with the creation of a simple survey instrument using indicators derived from thorough background research on the community and the program. Initial research is often done with a participatory approach, though a survey could be designed in collaboration with program staff who have sufficient field expertise. In both cases it is critical to do at least one field test before implementation.

In order to make a diary that is interesting and relevant to all participants, it should contain very few skip patterns. The survey should be designed with questions that can be answered pictorially such as status or yes/no, simple quantities, multiple choice and scale ratings. Each indicator should relate to a learning component. Do not include survey questions that are only of interest to program staff or for external proving.

### CREATING A DIARY



### PUTTING IT TO USE



### ANALYSIS & REPORTING

