

Seasonal Diagram

Introduction

In this activity, participants explore the effects of the changing seasons on their lives with regard to health status, workload, food security, and other issues. This tool allows community workers to identify serious problems that can be addressed through appropriate interventions, and collect field information on the best time of year to implement certain projects. This is a fairly non-threatening exercise and useful as a starting exercise to get to know the community.

If facilitated skillfully, this activity can also be useful for identifying patterns that relate to sexual and reproductive health. Participants may, for example, identify a specific season during which family members leave their homes for seasonal work in another location, and when they return (and therefore when patterns of sexual behavior may change). There may be a specific time where participants note an increase in number of births, STIs or abortions. For programs that are planning to implement interventions related to livelihood, nutrition, or maternal or child health, it's good to know about harvest cycles and times when people may be particularly hungry or busy, or when they have more disposable income.

Objective

■ Participants will be able to identify patterns in their daily lives that are a result of the changing seasons.

Timeframe: 1 – 1 ½ hours

Materials needed: flipchart paper, markers; alternatively, bare ground, a stick, and many small stones, dry beans or other small objects

Ideal workspace: large enough for participants to see and add to seasonal diagram

Number of participants: 10-15

STEP 1

If participants are not already acquainted, ask them to introduce themselves.

Describe the activity, its purpose, and how it will work.

Remind participants that this is a group learning exercise, and that it is not necessary for everyone to agree on everything. However, everyone in the group deserves respect. Participants should refrain from judging, interrupting or ridiculing others, and should respect the privacy of others by maintaining confidentiality.

Distribute markers and paper to each participant.

STEP 2

Gather the group together around a large piece of paper on the ground or around a clear space on the bare earth.

Ask the group to list all the types of health issues they see as important in their community. (See next page for an example of a seasonal calendar.)

Draw a grid on the ground. The grid will have 12 columns representing the 12 months of the year, and rows for each issue that will be examined; the number of rows you include on the grid, will depend on the number of issues you're examining. If the group is more familiar with seasons rather than months of the year, use local seasonal descriptions instead of months.

Ask the group which seasons or months correspond to which health issues.

Ask the participants to identify the months (or seasons) during the year when the health issue(s) is/are most prevalent. Depending on how prevalent the issue(s) is/are during a given month, participants will rate the issue on a scale of 1 to 10 (0 or blank indicating 'no prevalence' during a certain month, 1 indicating 'very low prevalence,' and 10 indicating 'very high prevalence'). One variation is to ask participants to place stones (or beans, or other small objects) in the cells instead of rankings; when the problem is prevalent, more stones should be added. You will be able to tell when problems are most prevalent by the amount of stones in a given cell.

Allow plenty of time for participants to discuss their answers among themselves. Listen for points of disagreement among participants, and note the themes that emerge.

STEP 3

Facilitate a discussion with the group. You can use the following questions to guide you.

Guiding Questions

- Were you, as a group, able to easily agree on the seasons of low and high prevalence? What was the source of disagreement?
- What patterns do you see in your seasonal calendar?
- What can you see as the possible reasons for the high prevalence of [health issue] during [month or season]? Now that we have identified season as a factor, what could we do to improve the situation?
- Do you see any differences in the way the problem(s) affects women and men differently during certain seasons? How can you explain this difference?
- What can you do as an individual to address these problems? What can other community members do to address these problems?

Example of a Seasonal Calendar

HEALTH PROBLEMS	MONTH											
	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Malaria	4	2	1							8	7	6
Cough					6	3	4	9				
STI						9	9					
TB	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
High Blood Pressure										5	3	
Wounds	5											5
Burns						8	6					
AIDS	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Headache	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Mental Illness	8	3	4	4	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	8
Pregnancy	3	2	1	7	2	2	1	7	1	2	2	7
Hunger	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Workload	3	3	1	2	2	1	1	3	2	1	1	1

In this example, the group found that AIDS, headache, TB, and hunger had no seasonal pattern and were prevalent throughout the year; that's why they gave a score of 1 for all the months. The group found a high incidence of STIs and burns during the months of June and July – the cold season. Even though people felt that pregnancy wasn't exactly a health problem, it was added to the list because it is related to health and had a seasonal pattern.



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