



# PUBLIC GATHERINGS

All communities hold a variety of public gatherings on a regular basis. These may be traditional celebrations and events or political or religious gatherings. These gatherings can offer community development organisations with a useful opportunity to hear the views of the community and to pass on development messages.

## Advantages of Public Gatherings

Public gatherings:

- Can instigate open discussion and immediate responses.
- Are usually free and require few resources.
- Are usually conducted in the local language.
- Can include a large number of people in one go.
- Are often a familiar and trusted means of community level communication.

## How to use Public Gathering

Development organisations can either organise their own public gatherings for specific purposes, or collaborate with other community leaders who frequently organise public events.

When using public meetings:

- Information should be presented in the appropriate language.
- Time and venue should be taken into consideration so as to involve the entire target audience. Use common meeting places.
- The community should be informed in advance about the gathering.
- Gender and community customs should also be taken into consideration. Eg. Some gatherings are traditionally male domains and women are excluded or are not expected to contribute.
- You can reach a particular target group, such as youth or disabled people by working specifically with these groups.
- During the meeting you can increase people's retention of information and enjoyment by using various media such as pictures, handouts, song, dance and drama.



Chief's baraza. Namanga Hills, Kajiado District, Kenya Women do not attend these meetings. Practical Action East Africa

## Constraints of Public Gathering

- Some cultural norms may exclude certain groups from attending public meetings.
- If you are using meetings organised by others you will have limited time and control over the proceedings.

## Real Life Story

Lighting the Village - Public gatherings initiate community mobilization

The people of Ndundu village, on the southern foothills of Mount Kenya are now generating their own electricity with a small hydro scheme. They have planned and managed the project themselves, with technical assistance from Practical Action.

Once it had been established that there was sufficient hydro potential from the village river, the first community gathering was held to discuss the project concept. The objective of holding the public gathering was to have a free discussion about the project, and to create trust, rapport, confidence and commitment to sharing information.

The whole community was involved and they started to agree on issues to do with contributing time and money, and the fair sharing of the future benefits from the scheme. The local area administrative chief was present at this gathering.

As a result of this and other meetings, a Community Electricity Association was formed and a committee elected to manage the project and oversee the operation of the scheme. A written agreement was subsequently signed between the community and the implementing partners. It was agreed that all labour for the project was to be provided by the community in addition to the building materials required for the intake and the turbine house. The community



Community members outside the power house. Practical Action East Africa

members also decided that there should be a connection fee once the turbine was commissioned. This covered the costs of the distribution cables, house wiring and energy saving light bulbs. The community association was also required to register with the local government office and to open a bank account in order to deposit local contributions towards meeting the project's running costs.

Now 160 households are able to light their homes from this scheme and the community knows how to maintain and manage the system.

"We did not believe it was possible to make electricity from such a small stream but this year Ndundu village had its best Christmas ever."

*Real Life Story courtesy of Practical Action East Africa*

## Further reading

*Storytelling* Practical Action Technical Brief

*Singing and Dancing* Practical Action Technical Brief

*Community/Street drama* Practical Action Technical Brief

*Puppetry* Practical Action Technical Brief

*Demonstrations* Practical Action Technical Brief

*Community Audio Tower / Public Address System* Practical Action Technical Brief

Radio Listening Groups Practical Action Technical Brief

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Practical Action is a development charity with a difference. We know the simplest ideas can have the most profound, life-changing effect on poor people across the world. For over 40 years, we have been working closely with some of the world's poorest people - using simple technology to fight poverty and transform their lives for the better. We currently work in 15 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.

# technical brief