

HOW TO DO A RANKING EXERCISE

A ranking exercise is a simple, participatory and rapid method for establishing what the affected community considers its primary problems and needs. In contrast to simple voting procedures, ranking can help you identify different priorities and the associated facilities and activities needed within a camp of an affected community.

Step 1: Know the exercise

Do the preference ranking in six basic steps:¹

- Identify participants.
- Draw the matrix.
- Rank the items against each other.
- Document each result in the matrix.
- Count the scores.
- Facilitate a discussion and identify the main actions needed.

Step 2: Diversify your participant group

If participants in this ranking exercise represent various groups affected by the emergency - primary caregivers, community leaders, health workers, vulnerable groups such as children, young people, widows, displaced people and so on - you will be able to establish the different priorities, associated actions, facilities and services needed.

Step 3: Facilitate the process

The facilitator helps guide the group in identifying and weighing its priorities as well as identifying and weighing the associated facilities, services and activities needed; however, the ideas should primarily come from the participants.

The facilitator should:²

- Introduce the purpose of the exercise and how it will be used.
- Give either a practical example from a previous ranking exercise – or better – run through it once with one of the participants, where he/she acts as interviewer and the participant acts as interviewee.
- Divide the participants into sub-groups of three persons.
- Instruct each sub-group to select one interviewer, one informant who answers the questions and one recorder who writes the reasons that the informant gave for the preferences. The sub-group exercise works best when to explain and complete each step before the next step is started.
- The sub-groups then present their results and observations to the whole group

Priority Needs	Rank	Associated facilities/activities	Rank
Preventing Diarrhoea	4	Communal latrines	1
		Family latrines	3
		Hand washing	2
Clean Environment	2	Solid waste pits	2
		Cleaning materials	1
Preventing Malaria	3	Wastewater disposal	2
		Bed nets	1
Traditional Funerals	1	Morgue	4
		Burial ground	1
		Coffins	2
		Concrete Grave markers	3
Family Facilities	5	Family latrines	4
		Family solid waste pits	3
		Cleaning materials	1
		Tools	2

The following table shows an sample ranking exercise for sanitation related needs and priorities. The first priority is ranked as 1, the second 2, and so on:³

Step 4: Interpret the results

Priorities may differ greatly and the exercise may produce surprising results. An important advantage is that participants can see how the main needs or problems of a person or a group can be determined. In addition, the affected individuals can learn how to compare the priorities of different groups within the affected community against another. In the above exercise, the group was much more concerned with funeral rites than with diarrhoea.

Step 5: Use the data

For a hygiene promotion programme, you can use ranking to help the affected community prioritise the most significant problems, understand the links between seasonal changes and incidence of disease, understand water sources and use, and sanitation practices. Overall, you can use information gained from ranking exercises as inputs to planning and assessment and for subsequent monitoring and evaluation of your BCC programme.⁴ Remember that priorities and actions differ depending on the impact and stage of the emergency.

Footnotes

- 1 Berg, C. et al., *Introduction of a Participatory and Integrated Development Process (PIDEP) in Kalomo District, Zambia, Vol., 2, Manual for trainers and users of PIDEP*, 1997.
- 2 Adapted from Berg, C., et al., op.cit.
- 3 Harvey, P., et al., *Emergency Sanitation: Assessment and programme design*, London, 2003, p. 184.
- 4 Adapted from Oxfam UK, *Guidelines for Public Health Promotion in Emergencies*, Oxfam, London, 2001, p. 22.

