

Access and control matrix



To analyse who has the power to access and control different resources and who is denied this.

The Access and Control Matrix encourages marginalised groups (such as women, ethnic minorities or disabled people) to think about their power to access and control the different resources that are relevant to their lives. This tool helps people to visualise inequalities in order to understand shifts in power and determine who has access to the range of resources at the household or community levels and who has the power to make decisions on how they are used. Using the access and control matrix can help to facilitate discussions around these important questions of power making it a motivating and politicising experience for those who are involved. The tool generates both quantitative and qualitative data on marginalised groups' perceptions of power, and the factors that empower and inhibit them.

In this example we focus on access and control by women. Examples of the resources that are relevant to their lives might include land, equipment, education and training, labour, information, communications and, of course, money.

Steps

1. Introduce each other, the theme and purpose of the exercise and the required time. When discussing the purpose of the exercise, the facilitator should be clear how the information gathered will be used (for example for community reflection, to feed into monitoring and reporting processes, to inform PRRPs, to develop new strategies for action as a group). Groups

should be clear how they can use the information they will generate and how the organisation intends to use it.

2. Ask the group to identify the different resources that are relevant to them (at household or community level depending upon your level of analysis). Probe the group and make sure that their brainstorm includes all the resources they feel are important, whether they have access to them or not. Prepare a list and encourage the group to choose a symbol for each.
3. Brainstorm with the group to understand the meaning of term 'access to' and 'control over', ensuring that the group are clear that control is a stronger expression of power than access. Explore some of the examples from group's context.
 - Access refers to the opportunity to make use of something.
 - Control has to do with the ability to define and exercise its use (decision making).
4. Ask the group to choose a symbol to represent the terms 'access to' and 'control over'.
5. Develop a matrix using the materials available to you, either with flip chart and pen or using items at hand to represent the different resources. Place the symbols for the resources along the vertical access. The horizontal access has two columns, one for access and one for control.
6. Provide the participants with stones or beans for scoring. If women and men are working together, they should choose separate material as a counter so that it is possible to differentiate between the two responses (or you can create separate columns for women and men).
7. Before scoring starts, ask a volunteer to explain or read the matrix to make sure that everyone understands it.
8. Each participant then votes by
 - Putting a counter in the appropriate box where they feel they do have 'access to' or 'control over' that particular resource.
 - Alternatively, in the case of a literate group, each member can score 1-3 depending on the degree of access and control.
9. The group can repeat the exercise for the past (retrospective analysis) to invite reflection of how power has shifted concerning 'access to' and 'control over' resource. It is a good idea to use different counters (stones, seeds, beans etc.) to avoid any confusion between past and present scores.
10. Photograph the matrix and conclude the discussion by thanking the group and discussing with them how they plan to use this information at the community level and briefly explain to them again how the organisation will use this information and analysis.

Questions for analysis

The following questions might help to deepen the discussion:

- Do women and men have equal access to the resource? Why?
- What kinds of resources are available (in your community, household)?
- What is the difference between access and control?
- What are the type resources does the group has 'access to'?
- What are the types of resources that the group has 'control over'?
- What other resources do you think are important but are not available or accessible to you?
- Does the type of resource affect the degree of access and control that women have?
- How has women's (or other disadvantaged groups) access and control over resources changed in recent years?
- How does the change in access and control represent a shift in power?
- What has changed in how women negotiate and share decisions with their husbands, families and communities?
- What strategies have women used to gain access to resources?
- What strategies have women used to increase control over resources?
- What other strategies do women have to increase their access and control of resources?

Documenting and reporting

The discussions and responses can be gathered and documented as people find most convenient and easy, but making sure that the critical words, examples, metaphors and testimonies are captured and brought into the analysis.

The simplest way to document the access and control matrix is to take a photo or copy it onto a flip chart. However, it is also useful to document the evidence in a more structured written form to ensure that you record all the actors identified and the extent of their power. You could do this in a table:

Resources identified	#s of women with access	#s of women with control	Process through which women have gained access or control	Future strategies to increase access or control

Suggestions for use:

- If documented rigorously, the findings provide evidence to the question 'to what extent do women have access to control over resources? As such can be used as part of **research** into this area.
- If this knowledge is documented rigorously then the research can be used to lobby decision makers to give women more access and control over resources as **part of a lobby or advocacy strategy**.
- The value of this work is that it provides both **qualitative** and **quantitative** evidence, which together work well to influence decision makers, appealing to a wide audience.

References

- Communication & Power, ActionAid, 2003.
- [Tools for Analyzing Power, Inclusion and Exclusion, Just Associates](#)