



# Immersion techniques or another way to transform the quality of what is done in development

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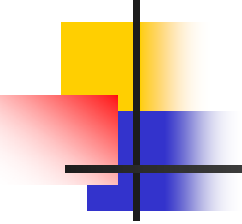




# Immersion techniques

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- Reflection on what immersion techniques are;
- Diverse experiences of immersions;
- Explore one technique: Reality Check and its application in Bangladesh (SIDA) and Indonesia (AusAID)



# Immersion techniques: What are they?

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- *Learning about poverty face-to-face*
- Opportunity to spend a period of time living with and learning from the poor
- *Common purpose is to:*
  - Bring immersion participants face-to-face with ordinary people
  - *Give participants "the chance" to test old assumptions*
  - Strengthen participants commitment to the challenge of poverty eradication



# Immersion techniques: what are they?

Staying in a poor community, as a person, living with a host family, helping with tasks and sharing in their life.

- any number of days or nights, often between 1 and 10 (the overnight stay is vital)
- Activities: working with and helping the family, listening and dialogue, learning about their life, keeping a diary, or trying to explain your work and its relevance.
- The essence is: be open to the unplanned and unexpected; much is experienced and learnt, but what that will be is hard to predict beforehand.



# Immersion techniques

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- For all this the term **immersion** has come to be used: the visitor is immersed in daily life, having left behind the baggage of role, organisation, and importance, and stays for days and nights in a community.
- Other terms: **Reality Check** (SIDA)



# Immersion techniques

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- Interest around idea of immersion among major donors and civil society groups
- Different models of immersion are being developed
- And...they have been challenged on a # of grounds
- Impact of immersions is now being tested



# Immersion techniques: the evolution

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- There are thematic immersions – focus on a sector or aspect of development
  - For project M&E
  - Familiarisation in a new post
  - Experience the reality- part of a conference
  - For the selection, induction and CB of staff
  - For program development



# Immersion techniques

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- Exposure and Dialogue program (1980s) – EDP,
- SEWA,
- the World Bank (Harvard Executive Development program), 2000 WDR
- Global School in Sweden
- ActionAid International- practicing immersions
- DfID, SDC, **SIDA** (immersion for its staff, + Reality Check)



# 'Reality Check':

## What do we mean by it?

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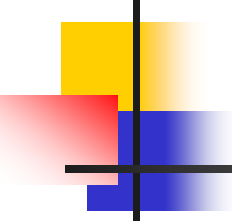
- The Reality Check is an initiative of Sida (2007).
- The Reality Check study constitutes an important element of the '*from below*' approach.
- Overall objective: listen to the voices of people living in poverty and understand people's perspectives
- A qualitative study which gathers grassroots experiences, opinions and insights which will complement monitoring and evaluation mechanisms
- An opportunity to put faces and voices to the numbers as well as answers to 'how' and 'why'.

# Reality Check: How it works?



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- It gathers detailed information from structured dialogues with people living in poverty.
- It combines immersions (living with poor households) with more conventional participatory approaches thus creating the best possible environment for open communication.
- The study focuses on households rather than public forums (voices which are rarely heard can be heard e.g. elderly, young, persons with disabilities, minorities).



# Reality Check Bangladesh– A Listening Study

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“Listening to Poor People’s Realities about Primary Healthcare and Primary Education”

- The overall goal of the initiative is to listen to and try to understand poor people’s perspectives on the national health and education programmes in Bangladesh, which are supported through multi-donor sector approaches.

# Reality Check Bangladesh– A Listening Study



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- Researchers live with families who are living in poverty, for several days and nights
- Includes voices which are often overlooked in conventional studies
- Leads to best possible conditions for open interaction through conversations which can be developed and built on
- Combines listening with researchers' own observation and experience



# Reality Check: How it works

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- Longitudinal study over five years with the same communities, same households and at the same time each year so that changes can be tracked over time.
- The study is carried out over a period of one month in October/November. Field work takes place in three different Divisions (regions) of Bangladesh.
- In each Division, a rural, an urban and a peri-urban community, which relate to the same municipal town, is selected.



# Reality Check: How it works

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Urban slum, peri urban village, rural village in three districts (north, central and south).

## *Participants:*

- 27 host families and their neighbours.
- Teachers, head teachers, members of School management committees and village committees, private tutors, book sellers
- Doctors, nurses, ayahs, cleaners, medicine shop keepers, dais, Diagnostic centre staff, health outreach workers, informal health providers.

# Reality Check: How it works



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- Conversations are held with one host household, 4-5 neighbouring households as well as other members of the community. This ensures triangulation with multiple perspectives on the same issues being gathered.
- Those interviewed may not necessarily see themselves as beneficiaries to a program

# Reality Check: How it works?



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- During conversations the researcher draws on appreciative, reflective and exploratory enquiry as well as a range of PRA approaches, which especially include visualised tools.
- These conversations then provide oral and visual documentation which illustrate multiple perspectives.



# Reality Check: Why is it important?



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- Provides new information on poor people's perceptions and experiences of health and education services.
- Sheds light on progress with formal services, information on less visible but highly important issues (particularly to the poor)
- Information emerging from the Reality Check is used to influence and shape both policy and programme implementation within SWAPs towards better outcomes for people living in poverty.



# Reality Check: How is it used?

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- Annual reports
- The study promotes less typical forms of documentation such as children's drawings and photographs taken by people themselves.
- Findings from the Reality Check feed into the SWAP annual and mid-term review processes in both the health and education sector programs.
- The study brings to attention issues that can be investigated in more detail within the programs.



# Reality Check ...

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- The method received international recognition as innovative and cutting edge methodology at the '3rd High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness' in Accra, Ghana where it was presented by the Swedish Government.
- In 2009/2010 AusAID and GRM also trailed the initiative in Indonesia to determine the influence its key education program (BEP) is having in the region.

# Reality Check in Bangladesh

**Children drawing pictures of what they like and don't like at school for the Reality Check team.**



**Conversations during normal house hold routines**

