

IMPACT PROJECT

video4change

► **Method: Immersion and Observation**

When is this method useful?

- When your project aims to build or sustain relationships.
- When your project aims to create new spaces for communication.
- When your project aims to increase people's knowledge or skills.
- When you want to increase the acceptance of the community you are working with.
- When you want to become more familiar with the language of the community.

How do I use this method?

The following worksheet offers tips and examples that will help you use this method.

METHODS

Immersion and Observation

▶ Quick Summary

Time: At least 20 hours

Facilitators: none

Offline option: yes

Online option: yes

Participant consent: yes

Scope for creativity: low

▶ Introduction

By immersing yourself within groups of people or communities, you are better able to observe their practices. If time is not spent watching, listening, and participating, then the temptation arises to make simplistic assumptions about people's priorities, needs, and rituals.

Observe body language as well as words that are spoken and by whom. Write down detailed notes of what you hear, not your interpretation of what you hear. Spend time with them doing normal things, and offer to help. Also keep in mind that your account of their lives will only ever be a story, told from your specific perspective.

▶ Considerations

- 1 Geographical distance and cultural appropriateness might make it difficult to spend time with people and communities.
- 2 If you ask for written consent from the people you are observing, it gives them time to think about why you want to be in their communities; it also gives them the option to say no.
- 3 Make sure you understand the meaning behind the terms they use to describe their situations and experiences. This contributes to the development of shared understandings.

■ This resource is for video makers to gather evidence of their impact. More tools can be found at <http://www.v4c.org/cookbook>

METHODS

Immersion and Observation

► Steps

1. Make a hand out that describes to people that you want to observe their practices to better understand their experiences. Make it clear that you do not want to misrepresent them, and that you are willing to feedback on what you observed to gather their reflections and inputs.
2. Make yourself useful. By offering to help, people will feel more at ease with your presence, and feel as though you are making more of a contribution to their community.
3. At the end of each day, write a 'mind dump' of things that have stuck in your head.
4. At the end of the week, go through your notes and highlight recurring themes or ideas.

► Questions

1. Does the community trust me enough to have me observing them?
2. How might I help the community?
3. How much time can I realistically offer the community?
4. How do I offer the feedback of my observations to the community?
5. What's the relationship between my recurring themes and the social change I envision?

► TIP

Think about when it is appropriate to make notes. If you are having an interesting conversation with someone, it might be an idea to make notes once the conversation has finished.

► TRY

Make audio recordings of everyday activities. The act of listening back can help draw your attention to new details and lead to informed insight.

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