

Editorial

• What's in a name

Rapid Rural Appraisal as it is currently practised covers such a great variety of methods and techniques that the name is sometimes misleading. Some RRA methods are not particularly rapid - they may take weeks or months to complete rather than days. Others are applied in urban rather than rural situations, and yet others are more concerned with the development process - farmer participation, project implementation or monitoring - rather than its appraisal.

But this problem of definition does not matter very much in practice, because most of us recognise an RRA approach when we see it or hear of it. What RRA methods tend to have in common are:

- greater speed compared with conventional methods of analysis;
- working in the 'field', whether it be a farm, a refugee camp or an urban slum;
- an emphasis on learning directly from the local inhabitants;
- a semi-structured, multidisciplinary approach with room for flexibility and innovation; and,
- an emphasis on producing timely insights, hypotheses or 'best bets' rather than final truths or fixed recommendations.

In this series of notes 'RRA' covers any method or technique which can be broadly described in these terms. Similarly in terms of subject matter we are taking a broad interpretation. The topics may include agriculture, or irrigation, or health or urban development. The aim of the notes is to share a wide set of experiences and ideas - our success

though depends on receiving contributions from practitioners. PLEASE WRITE TO US.

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1

RRA methodologies workshop in Thailand: a new initiative

Jules Pretty

• Introduction

The Northeast Rainfed Agricultural Development Project in Khon Kaen recently convened a three day workshop in Korat for 70 staff from government agencies and regional universities. Many of the participants have long been at the forefront of developing and using RRA approaches. Indeed, as many will know, the papers presented at the International RRA Conference in 1985 held at the Khon Kaen University still represent a major proportion of the published material on RRA. But many practitioners in Thailand have recently come to recognise that adoption of RRA into Government programs has been slower than wished. Thus the NERAD Project felt that it was a good time to set in motion the process of production of a series of user-oriented handbooks.

The principle objectives of this multidisciplinary and multisectoral workshop were the joint analysis of some 15-20 RRA tools¹, the production of guidelines for the handbooks and the nomination of authors. Participants divided into five working groups, each to analyse a separate tool, and then presented their findings to the plenary on overhead transparencies for discussion. The end result was a series of detailed guidelines for each handbook, including what the user needs to know in order to select a tool, understand its implications and some underlying theory, and to utilise the tool whilst

¹ There is currently some disagreement over the use of the terms such as tool, technique, methodology and approach. For the purposes of simplicity, the term tool was taken by the workshop organisers to refer to an implement or means for effecting some purpose or achieving an objective.

understanding the weak points. The handbooks are intended to be easy to use, but will avoid the dangers of a cook book approach by being not over-detailed and by using case studies and pictorial examples. Although the handbooks will be described to be self-sufficient, they will include a section describing linkages to other tools and how the information and hypotheses generated should be used. The handbooks will of course be in Thai, but will probably later be translated into English.

The list below should be seen not necessarily as representing the 17 most important handbook titles, but as the first of a series. Indeed this is one of the most important aspects of the workshop. It is clearly perceived by all as the beginning of a process leading to institutionalisation. Once published the success of the handbooks will be judged by testing through using. Future workshops will then revise these first editions in addition to analysing more tools.

Titles of handbooks

- Transect analysis
- Seasonal calendars
- Decision making tools
- Preference ranking
- Flow charts
- Map overlay analysis
- Historical profile analysis
- Topical agroecosystem zoning
- Farmer classification
- Diagnosis of limiting factors in farmer's fields
- Ex-ante analysis
- On-farm trials
- Multi-location trials

- Superimposed treatment techniques
- Triage
- Mini-evaluations
- Sustainability analysis

Further information on the handbooks can be obtained from Iain A Craig at the North East Rainfed Agricultural Development (NERAD) Project, NEROA, Tha Phra, Khon Kaen 40260, Thailand; or at IIED.

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2

Notes on the RRA Workshop held at IDS, 19 May 1988

Robert Chambers

• Introduction

Seventeen people, mainly UK practitioners of RRA, met at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex on 19 May 1988 with three purposes:

- to take stock of the position with RRA;
- to share experiences and information ; and,
- to identify needs and plan action.

Taking stock

We noted that the sharp rise of interest in RRA, and much pioneering activity in Thailand and many other countries. With the Khon Kaen volume, RRA has come of age, and the case for it has been quite widely accepted. There are obvious dangers of the label of RRA being used to legitimise bad and biased work, but when it is well done, it often proves superior to earlier conventional methods.

We also recognised that demand for training from donor agencies, NGOs and governments is increasing and already exceeds the capacity to meet it. Training of trainers, and the efficient dissemination of methods, is now a priority. New methods are continually being invented and developed, but much of the experience is not properly recorded. Practitioners often do not realise how interesting and important their activities and methods are. Much of the literature is informal and scattered, but there are now several initiatives to write manuals.

Sharing experiences

Seven practitioners made presentations as follows:

1. Sheila Smith (University of Sussex) on the repeated and intractable problems faced in trying to find the poorest people during a study in rural Tanzania, and how they were eventually overcome.
2. Ian Scoones (Imperial College of Science and Technology, 48 Princes Gardens, London SW7 2PE) on methods of wealth ranking in rural Zimbabwe, gender differences in choice of indicators and participatory research by a community's 'barefoot researchers'.
3. Graham Clarke (IDS and Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA) on team dynamics in a study in Pakistan with 6 researchers, three pairs of village case studies, the selection of contrasting households, and after the case studies, each researcher investigating a crosscutting theme by questioning his other five colleagues about their villages.
4. Jenny McCracken (IIED) on the use of diagrams in agroecosystem analysis as a quick means of finding out about an area and its people, learning farmers' conditions and constraints, and getting different disciplines to work together.
5. Robert Chambers (IDS) on ranking methods to enable individuals or groups to compare and evaluate different items in a class (such as sorts of vegetables or trees or rice varieties or fertiliser) according to their own criteria.
6. Mary Tiffen (Overseas Development Institute, Regent's College, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS) on selecting villages for representativeness by ranking them by size and interviewing in each of the total population quartiles. Selection within each

quartile can be done so as to cover each agroecological zone and each administrative district.

7. David Potten (Hunting Technical Services, Elstree Way, Borehamwood, Herts WD6 1SB) on triangulation in an irrigation rehabilitation RRA in Zimbabwe. Biases were offset by each member of a team of three doing different things in different places, and comparing notes in the evenings.

Sources for these experiences are:

1 and 2: Forthcoming in RRA Notes Number Two.

3. Write to Graham Clarke at IDS or QEH.

4. Gordon R. Conway, Jennifer A. McCracken and Jules N. Pretty, 'Training Notes for Agroecosystem Analysis and Rapid Rural Appraisal', 2nd edition. Sustainable Agriculture Programme, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London, WCIH ODD, November 1987.

5. Robert Chambers, pages 13-18 in these notes.

6. Write to Mary Tiffen, Overseas Development Institute.

7. J. Harvey, D.H. Fotten, 'Rapid Rural Appraisal of Small Irrigation Schemes in Zimbabwe.' Agricultural Administration and Extension, 27 (1987), pp 141-155.

Some points made in discussion were:

- ecological and social heterogeneity distinguish RRA from rapid urban appraisal, but they have much in common and can learn from each others' practices;
- finding the poorest can be a major problem and deserves more attention;
- maps and diagrams provide common languages, both between outsiders and rural people and between disciplines;
- traders are often neglected as key informants;
- rural people's own analysis and comparisons have been relatively neglected. Asking one group about a

contrasting group, and vice versa, can give quick and good insights; and,

- consultants and others need to use RRA methods more consciously and explicitly.

Identify needs and planning action

The major needs identified were:

- to capture, record and disseminate experience with current methods in different conditions, and with new methods as they are invented and developed;
- to prepare, test and revise handbooks or manuals on RRA methods, ensuring widespread distribution, feedback and revision;
- to develop training materials and expertise; and,
- to increase the cadre of experienced practitioners and trainers.

In summary, action in hand, known about proposed or agreed was as follows:

ITDG: (Intermediate Technology Development Group, Myson House, Railway Terrace, Rugby, CV21 3HT)

- Publication of Barbara Grandin's wealth ranking manual, due out in June;
- An internal ITDG workshop on RRA on 20 June; and,
- A bibliography on Applied Techniques in Social Science (not only RRA) being prepared for ODNRI, due in August More manuals on methods next year.

ILEIA: (Information Centre for Low External Input Agriculture c/o ETC, PO Box 64, 3830 AB Leusden, The Netherlands)

The next ILEIA Newsletter will report on the April 1988 ILEIA workshop on Participatory Technology Development.

In addition, and following the recommendations of that workshop, ILEIA will prepare manuals on:

- Getting Started: how to begin with a farming population;

- Finding and strengthening farmers' experiments;
- Outsiders and farm families: face-to-face communication;
- How NGOs can find out about agricultural research; and,
- How to learn farm families' agendas (including supporting their own analysis).

ODA: (Overseas Development Administration, Eland House, Stag Place, London SW1E 5DH)

(with Don Curtis, Institute of Local Government Studies, University of Birmingham, PO Box 363, Birmingham, B15 2TT). A guide to social analysis for development projects, following the ITDG/ODNRI literature search and review.

CDC: (Commonwealth Development Corporation, 33 Hill Street, London W1A 3AR)

A guide for planning and appraisal projects to be written by Antony Ellman.

NERAD : (NERAD, NEROA, Tha Phra, Khon Kaen 40260, Thailand) Following the April 1988 workshop at Khon Kaen, handbooks in Thai are to be produced on each of the following (see Pretty, Jules N. 1988. Simple and Innovative Tools for Agricultural Development Programmes, Sustainable Agriculture Programme, IIED, April)

IIED:

- A technique bulletin on transects, to be prepared by Jules Pretty, as the first of a possible series;
- A Guide to RRA for Agricultural Development, with a list of key workers and an annotated bibliography, being prepared for SIDA;
- Continuing training activities in several countries (Indonesia, USA, Switzerland etc.); and,
- RRA Notes, of which this is the first issue.

For the future, it may be useful to think of a loose leaf folder with sections for methods which can be removed and updated. A simple user-friendly layout is important. This will need liaison between those preparing manuals.

A further one-day workshop is planned for six months' time.

Participants in the RRA Workshop at IDS, 19 May 1988

Robert Chambers	IDS
Graham Clarke	IDS/QEH
Gordon Conway	IIED
Sander Essers	ILEIA
Rosalind Eyben	ODA
Mick Howes	IDS
Naila Kabeer	IDS
Priscilla Magrath	ODA
Jenny McCracken	IIED
David Potten	Hunting Technical Services Ltd.
Jules Pretty	IIED
Ian Scoones	Imperial College of Science and Technology
Andrew Scott	ITDG
Lawrence Smith	Wye College
Sheila Smith	University of Sussex
Mary Tiffen	ODI
Camilla Toulmin	IIED

What you can do

For the moment, the central point for information will best be IIED, with the RRA Notes as the focus. If you have ideas or information, please write to RRA Notes, Sustainable Agriculture Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development, 3 Endsleigh Street, London, WC1H 0DD

- **Robert Chambers**, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN19RE, UK.

3

Pairwise ranking in Ethiopia

Gordon R Conway

• Introduction

An IIED/IDS team consisting of myself, Robert Chambers and Jennifer McCracken recently ran an RRA workshop in Wollo Province for the Ethiopian Red Cross. It was primarily intended as a demonstration of the value of RRA methods in formulating development plans for Peasant Associations (PA). The fieldwork was carried out in two PA's -Gobeya and Abicho.

The theme of the workshop was diversification and we spent some time trying to obtain the views of the peasants on the virtues and drawbacks of different crops and tree species. One technique we developed was pairwise ranking and the following are extracts from our report which describe the procedure.

We first tried it to find out which tree species the peasant's preferred for reforestation: 'First we interviewed three farmers, on the PA Chairman, another the Producer Co-operative Chairman and the third a farmer who had been specially trained in conservation. We chose six most widely used reforestation species and wrote the name of each on a square of paper. We presented the three farmers with a pairwise comparison by laying two of the squares, Eucalyptus camaldulensis and Eucalyptus globulus, on the floor and asking the men to collectively chose which was 'better' in terms of usefulness. Then we asked them why they had chosen that species over the other. We also asked whether the less preferred species was superior to the preferred in any respect. Finally we asked whether there was anything else they could tell us about the pair. We continued laying out different pairs of squares for comparison until

all the possible combinations had been considered.

The final ranking was obtained by examining all the pair combinations, laying out the squares of paper in a line so that each species was above all those to which it was preferred. The ranking and characteristics were as follows:

1. African olive

- Diverse utilisation.
- Implements-digging sticks, yoke and other parts of ploughs, hoes, axe handles, sticks.
- House construction -not attacked by termites.
- Firewood - no smoke.
- Incense from leaves.

2. *E. camendulensis*

- Easy to split.
- Strong for construction.
- Durability.
- Straightness.
- Easy to make charcoal.

3. *E. globulus*

- Good for holding nails.
- High elasticity - bends easily.
- Difficult to produce charcoal.
- Farming implements.
- Firewood.

4. Juniper

- Window and door timber.
- Chair making.

5. White acacia or local acacia

- House building.

6. Croton

- Door construction.
- Smokey as firewood.

We then asked whether there was any characteristic or potential tree missing from this list. After some discussion the farmers said they would like a hard furniture tree like *Podocarpus* which would be better than Juniper.

We then interviewed one of our team members who was a forestry expert, and asked him to make the pairwise choices on the same species, and to consider their characteristics in terms of ease of nursery cultivation, establishment, productivity and erosion control. His ranking was as follows:

1. *E. camaldulensis*

- No nursery problems. High yield.
- High survival rate.
- Not so good erosion control.

2. *E. globulus*

Like *E.camaldulensis* but lower yield and survival rate.

3. African olive

- Longer in nursery.
- Good erosion control.
- Slower growth.

4. Juniper

- Even longer in nursery.
- Lower survival rate.
- Larger crown.
- Once mature better erosion control.

5. White acacia

- Faster in nursery.
- Nitrogen fixing.
- Poorer erosion control.

6. Croton

- Better erosion control but longer maturing.
- Poorer establishment.
- Better in highlands

(The comparisons refer to the species immediately above).

One conclusion from this analysis is that a tree which combines the fast growing characteristics of the Eucalyptus with the versatility of use and better erosion control of the African olive would be of great value.

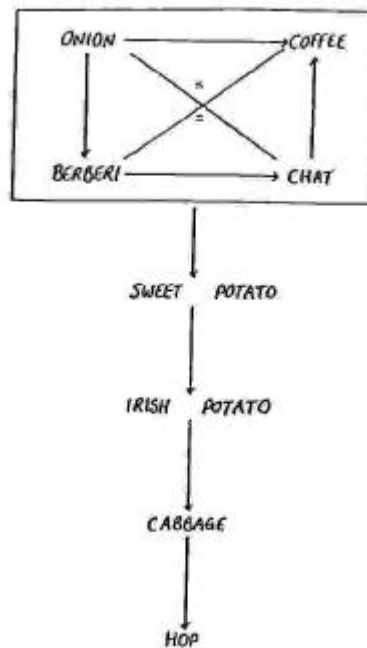
Preferred homegarden species

We used a similar ranking procedure to find out which home garden crops one particular farmer preferred and why. We selected the eight most important home garden crops and performed the same pairwise comparisons as for the tree species, in this case asking the farmer to make his choice each time on the basis of which of the two he would grow in the homegarden of the new village if land was short and he could only grow one of the pair. The main criteria the farmer used were size of cash income, quickness of cash income, and importance as an ingredient in traditional cooking. The final ranking was more complicated than for the tree species. We could not lay the squares in a straight line: instead they formed a pattern as in Figure 1.

Coffee, onions and chat were preferred over potatoes, cabbage and hops because they provide a cash income. Coffee was said to be good because it provided the country with foreign exchange.

Berberi (Chili) was preferred over chat, potatoes, cabbage and hops because it is a basic ingredient of traditional stews, but onions were preferred over berberi because "there is no point in using berberi unless stew has onions".

Onions and chat were preferred over coffee because income is quicker.

Figure 1. Farmer preferences for home garden crops

The farmer could not choose between berberri and coffee or onions and chat, i.e. between a basic ingredient and a cash income.

Sweet potato was preferred over Irish potato because it can be readily mixed with wheat and other foods to produce bread. Irish potatoes were preferred over cabbage because they produce more income and over hops because two crops a year can be obtained.

Cabbage was preferred over hops because it combined personal use and income.

We were all struck by just how informative this simple pairwise ranking turned out to be. In just over half an hour we had uncovered a rich pattern of decision making - that was not obvious by direct observation of casual conversation.

The practical value of the information was that it brought home to the team how important it was to provide a broad range of crops from which the farmers could choose when developing the home gardens in the new villages.

- **Gordon R Conway**, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK.

4

Direct matrix ranking (DMR) in Kenya and West Bengal

Robert Chambers

• Introduction

When Gordon Conway and I went on from Ethiopia to Kenya, we continued to work on ranking methods. We took the criteria elicited from pairwise choices and made a table, with the criteria down the side and the items (in this case species of trees) across the top. The informant was then asked to rank the items according to each criterion in turn. Table 1 is an example of the result.

Later, in West Bengal, with Robin Adhikari and other staff of the Indo-British Fertiliser Education Project, a further change was introduced. We ran into the problem of incomparability. A respondent objected that “I cannot compare these two varieties of paddy because I plant them on different sorts of land”. We had to improvise another method for eliciting criteria other than pairwise choices, so we asked directly what was good and what bad, about each item. We then used this method for varieties of paddy/rice, for types of vegetables, and for types of fertiliser (Tables 2-4). ‘Direct matrix ranking’ or DMR describes the method because it moves quickly from early discussion and questioning to recording respondents’ views directly onto a table or matrix. It is simple, quick, and informative, and everyone seems to learn something from it.

How to do it: seven steps

As it stands, the procedure has seven steps:

1. Choose an individual or group.

2. Choose, or ask people to choose, a class of object (tree species, paddy varieties,

vegetables, fertilisers etc.) which are important to them and about which they know.

3. Ask them to name the most important. The list could be anything from 2 to 7 or more. So far 4, 5 or 6 have proved best.

4. Elicit criteria. For each item in turn ask: What is good about it? and continue asking until there are no more, and then what is bad about it? and similarly continue to exhaustion.

5. List all the criteria. Turn negative criteria (e.g. vulnerable to pests) into positive ones (e.g. not vulnerable to pests) so that all are positive.

6. Draw up a matrix with the objects across the top, and the criteria down the side.

7. Ask which object is best by each criterion. With six objects, I have found that the following sequence works quite well:

- which is best?
- which is next best?
- which is worst?
- which is next worst?
- of the two remaining, which is better?

Record the rankings directly onto the matrix. Force a final choice with questions on the lines of: “If you could only have one of these, which would you choose?” Which next? Which next? etc.

Experience and reflections

1. *With whom?* We have used the method, or something like it, with both individuals and groups. Both worked well. Groups have several advantages:

- a wider range of experience is brought to bear;
- responses tend to be quicker;
- if one person gets tired, others can take over;
- more criteria are likely to be elicited, and more quickly; and,
- arguments which develop can be revealing, and identify issues for further investigation.

Groups also have the usual disadvantage that some people may dominate while others stay quiet.

A homogeneous group (eg. all men, or all women) may be easiest and most informative. Our groups in West Bengal were mainly male marginal and small farmers, although our party did manage to do one ranking of paddy varieties with women. Whether mixed groups, e.g. of men and women, would reveal more through arguments and disagreements needs to be tested.

2. *By whom?* Two people may be best, one to ask the questions and conduct the interview, and the other to keep notes and do most of the work collating and listing the criteria. The second person can also observe what goes in a group, noting potential key informants for follow-up, and listing points for further probing.

3. *Whose criteria?* It is tempting for interviewers to introduce their own criteria. This should be done only at the end, and the criteria should be clearly marked off from those of the respondents.

4. *Listing and weighting the criteria.* Listing can be tricky. I made a mess of the vegetable ranking (see Table 4). Brinjal comes out badly on many criteria, but ends up ranked number one. There seem to be two reasons for this. The first is that the method at present does not

include any weighting for different criteria. The second reason is that in the hurry of listing the criteria I failed to include high cash returns. This was because of a complicated discussion about the relative importance of stable prices, but also of seasonally high prices if you can market while they prevail. The lesson is to be careful at the listing stage, and to discuss the criteria with respondents and other team members wherever there is any doubt. The final forced choice question came into its own here, and proved its value as a check.

5. *Credits and sharing.* Unless informants prefer not to be named, it will be a good practice to give them credit by listing them. In any case, they can be sent a copy of the output.

Weaknesses and strengths

DMR has or could have weaknesses:

- it does not handle weightings, yet; and,
- it is limited to rankings of classes of objects, so far.

(but there seems no reason why different types of relationship, conditions or practice should not be ranked such as types of patron-client relationship, types of occupation, types of diseases, methods of cooking, treatments for an illness etc.).

- it is subject to most of the usual biases and weaknesses of individual and group interviews; and,
- it could become an end in itself. It is not. It is an optional stage in a process of learning from and with people.

On the other hand, it is strong on:

- *speed.* It has usually taken no more than an hour
- *interest.* All concerned have so far found it interesting and participants themselves can learn something through the discussion and through making choices explicit

- *reversals*. It requires outsiders to learn, and to respect and record the knowledge, judgements and preferences of rural people according to their own criteria.

Potential

Ranking methods in general appear a versatile tool, suitable for use in RRA. Potential uses include:

- rapid understanding of people's technical knowledge;
- rapid understanding of how values and use of items vary by gender, occupational group etc;
- identification of priorities for research e.g. as a stage in finding out what people perceive as their needs and priorities;
- as an ice-breaker, leading to further interviews and discussion;
- as a means of identifying key informants;
- as a training tool, reversing the learning process by providing a procedure which elicits a wide range of knowledge from people; and,

- as a means for senior and busy officials and others to quickly and enjoyably learn from and develop rapport with, groups of rural people.

Appeal

Ranking methods are not new. We are probably rediscovering the wheel. There is a considerable psychological literature on ranking and personal construct theory some of which gets complicated and difficult. DMR, in contrast, is simple. Similarly, Barbara Grandin's wealth ranking method is straightforward, using the sorting of cards, each of which represents a household, by respondents who place them in piles of similar wealth. Jeremy Swift has used a system for progressive ranking of problems using holes in the ground and stones, asking people to make a hole for each problem identified, put a stone in each, and then progressively eliminate the least important, transferring their stones to more important holes. If you know of other methods, or have developed any of your own, or if you gain experience with something like those described above, do please write in.

Table 1. Ranking of characteristics of four tree species by Mrs. Zena Ibrahim, Mumias Division, Kakamega District, Kenya, 7th March 1988

	Eucalyptus	Grevillea	Sesbania	Mululusia
Speed of growth	3	4	1	2
Timber	1	2	don't know	don't know
Firewood	1	4	2	3
Improves soil	3 =	3 =	1 =	1 =
Ok with crops	3 =	3 =	1 =	1 =
Kitchen smoke	1	4	2	3
Status/popularity	1	4	2	3
Market value	1	don't now	nil	nil
Beauty	3	1	4	2
Resists termites	1	don't know	2 =	2 =

1 = Best 4 = Worst

Table 2. Comparisons of five types of fertiliser by four farmers in village Kuchiakole, District Bankura according to their criteria, 28th April 1988

	FYM	DAP	Gromor 28-28	MOP	Urea
Low cost	5	1	4	2	3
Price rises little	1	3	4	2	5
Easy to apply	5	2 =	2 =	4	1
Good nutrient proportions	1	3	2	4 =	4 =
High N concentration	4	3	2	nil	1
Micronutrients	1	-	-	-	-
N availability to plant	4	1	2	nil	3
Lasts well in soil	1	2	3	4	5
Improves soil fertility	(+) 1	(-) 3	(-) 4	(-) 2	(-) 5
Soil holds water better	1	2 =	2 =	2 =	2 =
Acidity not increased	1	dk	dk	dk	5
Effect on pests/diseases	1 =	3	4	1 =	5
Market availability*	2	1 =	1 =	1 =	1 =
Storing quality*	2	3	4	1	5

* = suggested by interviewer

1 = Best 2 = Worst

FYM = Farmyard manure

DAP = Diammonium phosphate

MOP = Muriate of potash

Table 3. Criteria and ranking for paddy varieties by 14 farmers (4-10 bighas) at village Mamaipur, District Bankura on 29th April 1988

	Paddy varieties					
	Rasi	IR-50	IR-36	Hiramoti	Masuri	Nagrasal
Farmers' criteria:						
Resistance to pests	1	6	5	4	3	2
Drought resistance	1	3	4	2	5	6
Length of straw for thatching	4	6	5	3	2	1
Market price	4	3 =	3 =	4	1	2
Suitable for light soil	1 =	3 =	1 =	3 =	-	-
Eating quality	5	2 =	2 =	4	6	1
Suitable for both Kharif and Rabi	1 =	1 =	1 =	-	-	-
Recovery of aged seedings	4 =	4 =	4 =	3	2	1
Interviewers' criteria:						
Tolerance to deep water	5	4	3	6	2	1
Height of straw	4	6	5	3	2	1
Milling recovery percentage	2	5 =	5 =	4	3	1
Seed available locally	4 =	3	2	4 =	4 =	1
Yield per Bigha	4	3	1	6	2	5
Length of pannicle	6	5	4	1 =	1 =	1 =
Suitable for high fertiliser dose	3 =	3 =	1	5 =	2	5 =

Table 4. Ranking of six vegetables according to farmers' criteria – undertaken by Tarapada Ghosh and 8 other marginal and small farmers in village, Purulla District, West Bengal, April 1988

	Tomato	Brinjal	Radish	Potato	Cauli-flower	Cabbage
Low investment	2	4	1	6	3	5
Stable price	4	3	6	5	1	2
Continuous production	2	1	-	-	-	-
Short duration	5	6	1	3	2	4
Useful byproducts	6	3	4	5	1 =	1 =
Needs less irrigation	1	6	2	3	4	5
Can stand flooding	2	3	1	6	4	-5
Less pests/diseases	3	6	1	2	4	5
Produce keeps well	2	4	5	1	6	3
Low fertiliser cost	2	5	1	6	3	4
Less pesticide needed	2	6	1	3	4	5
Easy to harvest*	2	3	1	6	4 =	4 =
Low labour cost*	2	5	1	6	3	4
If you could only grow one, which would you choose?	4	1	5 =	5 =	2 =	2 =

1 = Best 2 = Worst

* Suggested by interviewer

- **Robert Chambers**, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, UK.

5

Peasant lore

- **The reasons why people grow trees**

One of the outcomes of ranking methods is that they produce a fascinating variety of reasons why people prefer one tree or crop to another.

Two examples from Kenya:

- Tall isolated trees are often justifiably avoided because they stand the risk of being struck by lightning. But one tall local Kenyan tree (species unfortunately unidentified) standing beside a house was claimed to be a lightning repellent.
- One woman questioned about the tall Eucalyptus beside her house said she liked it because it told everyone where her house was.

- **Have you heard the story about the:**

Antique dealer who heard about a peasant up country who possessed a saucer decorated with an Imperial Crown.

The antique dealer travelled by plane and jeep and finally for several miles on foot until he came to the village of the peasant. The villagers directed him to the peasant's hut where he was made welcome. His eyes immediately lit on a sleek black cat lapping up milk from a saucer. As the cat licked the last drops of milk the antique dealer could see the Imperial Crown marked upon the saucer and knew it to be very valuable.

He sat talking to the peasant and after a while remarked upon what a fine cat the peasant

owned. They chatted further and then the dealer said he thought the cat was so fine that he would like to purchase it. The peasant demurred at first but after several minutes of haggling agreed to sell the cat. The dealer was delighted but concealed his pleasure and as he was about to depart said casually:

'I shall need something to give the cat its milk, so if you don't mind I'll take that old saucer as well.'

'You can have the cat' replied the peasant, 'but not the saucer. We need the saucer to sell cats'.