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## 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 tools<sup>1</sup>, 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

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<sup>1</sup> 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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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Jules Pretty</b>, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London, WC1H ODD, UK</li></ul> |
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