

Editorial

During 1990 and the early part of 1991, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) has spread at a remarkable pace through non-governmental and some government organisations in India. The spread, though, has not been of a single approach or method. Once exposed to the culture of learning from and with rural people, more and more organisations are trying out the methods, inventing their own additions and developing their own variations. Already this has produced a wealth of practical experience of how things work at field level.

In February of 1991, MYRADA, an NGO based in Bangalore, convened a three-day workshop to enable practitioners to come together and share their experiences. The PRA Trainers Workshop was attended by 35 PRA trainers representing 18 different institutions (see participants list following contents page). These participants had conducted 145 PRA field exercises of one to five days in seven states - Rajasthan, Gujarat, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. But already it is difficult accurately to say how many have been conducted. Many institutions are no longer counting PRAs conducted regularly in projects, and others have trained villager extensionists who conduct PRAs independently of the outside institution. In one MYRADA project, for example, wealth rankings have been conducted in 110 different villages to provide baseline information.

It is widely recognised that there are four features of these PRA initiatives that cut across different institutions. The attitudes and behaviour are similar; the methods selected, adapted and invented differ; these methods have shifted from being used in an extractive fashion to being employed to help village groups decide upon what they want; and the

organisational culture of these institutions has been open and sharing, so fostering spread.

The objectives of the workshop were thus:

- to share experiences of training;
- to share details of experiences of the process of participatory planning, analysis, implementation and evaluation;
- to understand how innovations arise;
- to take stock of common constraints and problems, learning from each other where some have been solved; and,
- to produce an inventory of what has worked.

The objective of this special bound issue of RRA Notes is to share some of the thoughts and findings of the participants of the workshop. There are two main sections. The first is an overview of the major issues arising during group discussions and presentations. The second contains thirteen different papers representing overviews and case studies of PRA, particularly detailing innovations in both methods and process.

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