

Editorial

This issue of RRA Notes returns to the normal format after the gloss of issue 13. It contains eight articles and a review of the returned readership surveys. Gerry Gill makes an important contribution to the reliability and validity concerns over data collected in PRA and RRA work. He compares rainfall information supplied by farmers in Nepal with 'real' data of meteorological stations, and concludes that the farmers' information represents a remarkably good approximation. Moreover, the meteorological station data took 20 years to collect but, although the farmers' knowledge probably took as long to analyse and amass, it only took a matter of 45 minutes to present.

Alice Welbourn describes the value of mapping and seasonality analyses for exploring intracommunal differences in Ghana, Sierra Leone, Malawi and Bangladesh. This approach has important lessons for development projects. It also is a powerful tool for training and encouraging attitude change. Ejigu Jonfa and his colleagues support this by describing how they encouraged groups of men, women and children in Ethiopia to produce map-models of their village. Once again, the differences in perception as well as what was intentionally omitted or emphasised by the different groups was illuminating.

Anil Shah and K Chandramouli then describe the innovative use of very simple techniques during fieldwork in India. Anil Shah's shoulder tapping shows the importance of inducing attitude change in a non-threatening manner. Interestingly, at a recent workshop in Kenya (November 1991), Ministry of Agriculture staff producing team contracts before fieldwork independently suggested shoulder tapping as a means of ensuring individuals don't dominate, lecture or ask leading questions. K Chandramouli's contribution is significant for all agencies involved in identifying and providing support to the poor. The pass-the-pen approach is non-threatening and clearly effective. As he

concludes, the happiest amongst the officers present was the Mandal Development Officer as the exercise had gone so smoothly in a normally conflict-ridden village. The unhappiest were the 6 police constables, who had no work to do.

Jennifer Sutton and Blair Orr describe the use of the school essay method as a means of learning from school students about their and their families' perceptions and views of latrines. The ninety essays contained 535 separate likes and dislikes. In a theoretical piece, James Fairhead describes some precautions and hints for investigators concerned with understanding farmers' management of crop health. He describes the importance of distinguishing between different sorts of explanations, particularly with an eye for the socio-political context.

The final article is a model of how to report on a PRA. Somesh Kumar and A Santhi Kumari employ the diary approach to describe their work in an Andhra Pradesh village earlier this year. It represents a journey, with ups and downs, both for outsiders and villagers. It also gives many detailed tips for those interested in learning the lessons of working in the field.

The final article is the review of the RRA Notes Readership Survey. In April this year we sent out 850 yellow survey forms with Issue No. 10. We had received 185 returns by the end of October. The extrapolated readership is currently 6090 people in 65 countries. We present the details of the findings, together with a selection of quotations from the reports.

Two important issues have arisen. Shall we charge for a subscription for readers in the north for RRA Notes? Readers in the north are less likely to share RRA Notes with colleagues; they also have access to foreign exchange. The second relates to a review of the mailing list. As many people may have moved, and others not find RRA Notes useful,

we are asking all readers to complete the renewal notice appended to the end of this issue. Those readers who completed the yellow forms are exempt. Their names have already been put on the new list. So,

PLEASE FILL IN THE RENEWAL NOTICE
IF YOU WISH TO CONTINUE RECEIVING
RRA NOTES

Many thanks

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