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Correspondence corner

Louise Fortman, Nonthokozo Nabane, Robert Chambers, Selina Adjabeng-Asem,
Chris Roche

· **From: Louise Fortmann and
Nonthokozo Nabane**

In which neophytes are inspired by a talk and rush out to do mapping with no instructions other than to have plenty of leaves for trees!

Participatory mapping of three resources was done with 5 groups of women, 1 group of men and 1 group of elites (men with two 'token' women) in six villages (30-60 households each) comprising a grazing scheme. The resulting maps showed definite locality differences in exploited areas even though the distance between the two end villages was less than 10 kilometers. Women's maps were more likely to begin with individual homesteads while men's maps centred around the location

of grazing areas. Women specified the location of termite mounds which are an important source of firewood. While village leaders emphasize the importance gum woodlots (which they characterize as communal although they are in fact private), these appeared on NONE of the maps except the map drawn by village leaders. Once a present-day map was drawn, we asked them to draw maps for 1970 and 1980. They told us they would draw a map for 1982 because that was when the major changes took place. The steady decrease in tree resources was clearly indicated. Stay tuned for when we redo this with (newly trained-in-sensitivity) Forestry Commission extension workers in attendance to help plan indigenous woodland management and regeneration!



(The forked thing
is the windmill they made)



Women Home-2
Obamatonon Grazing Scheme
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- **Louise Fortmann and Nonthokozi Nabane**, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP 167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe.

- **Robert Chambers, an enthusiastic and active supporter of PRA, was struck by the processes that PRA can stimulate that were described in correspondence to him.**

He received a letter from Meena Bilgi of Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (Choice Premises Swastik Cross Road, Navrangpura, Ahmedabad 380 009, India) who writes:

“... We have been facing a number of problems related to men’s attitudes towards women. In a number of villages, women are demanding time-saving devices such as flour mill, pressure cooker, dal mill etc. but the men are resisting on these improved technologies. They don’t think that 3-4 hours per day in grinding, depounding, dehusking by women etc. increases drudgery and should be of concern. Due to resistance by men, it is becoming difficult to introduce such time saving devices even though women want them. Hence, it became important for us to conduct participatory rural appraisals related to women’s issues with men groups...”

In this letter, I am just informing you that more than a PRA exercise, the whole process turned out to be a ‘sensitization process’. For example, men talked about ‘A day in woman’s life’. At the end of the exercise, when they calculated the total hours spent by women in various activities in a day, they themselves were surprised. They first denied the information which they themselves gave. Later on they became a little defensive, they kept on saying that men’s work is much harder, but women’s work (even though they are spending 17-19 hours in a day) is much softer and does not involve such hardship. Then each woman’s work/activity was taken up separately and discussed. For example, when asked to share the information on what all is involved in collection of fuelwood and cooking on traditional chullah, they came out with lot of problems which women face, such as walking long distances in heat, incidence of snake and

scorpion bites, harassment by forest guard, non-availability of drinking water on the way, getting smoke in the eyes and into the body while cooking etc. It was interesting to note that while men were giving the information, they were thinking and to my mind, they were getting sensitized.

I may be wrong, but my experience tells me that PRA techniques not only give information about villagers to outsiders, but the whole process in itself sensitize (an awareness building?) the villagers also about various issues”.

- **Robert Chambers, IDS, Sussex.**

- **The late Selina Adjabeng-Asem wrote the following to Robert Chambers:**

“...I want to send you some report on the PRA follow up in Nigeria. Prior to the India Workshop, I had not used participating mapping much nor effectively, but the knowledge gained in India has been extremely useful to our field work here. I trained the IDRC Soya bean project group in the use of PRA for monitoring of the project impact in 5 states of the Federation i.e. Kaduna, Niger, Enugu, Anambra and Oyo States of Nigeria. The group of 16 researchers were amazed about how much easier it is to obtain in-depth information through participating mapping in addition to other RRA techniques they have already known. We were able through mapping to obtain all relevant socio-demographic information we required for the project; for example, the number of households in a village, household involved in soyabean production, gender issues in soyabean production, utilization of soyabean, and preference rankings of various soyabean diets.

The map (social map) drawn by the villagers (Dikko village) shows the size and boundaries and the village, the household units represented, the agricultural production patterns, the hectrage devoted to three major crops in the area, cassava, groundnut and soya bean, and the gender division of agricultural labour. Mangoes were in season at the time and were used in addition to cassava chipping, peels, stones, groundnut shells and milk bush

seeds. Wood ash was used to line the map. The most popular crop - cassava was represented by mango seed. Each seed represented 5 hectares of land under cultivation within a household. Groundnut was represented by its shells one each for a hectare of land while soya bean was represented by cassava strips from the grater.

We gathered an incredible amount of information within an hour and a half visit to the village. The researchers have been begging me to give more training in PRA...”.

- **Selina Adjabeng-Asem**, Technology Planning and Development Unit, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

It is with great regret that we heard that Selina passed away in Nigeria. We are sure that those who have been inspired by her will wish their regrets to be expressed to Selina’s family and colleagues. Her words will continue to encourage those who knew her. **From: Chris Roche**

Creating rapport

So let me tell you about PRA,
Its a new approach that’s here to stay,
Its a paradigm shift and that’s OK,
if it can adapt and change day-by-day

Get rapping

Rapid Appraisal Procedures oft called RAP,
Have evolved to let ‘them’ map,
and rank and diagram and all that,
That ‘experts’ did with computer on lap.

Get rapping

The first thing to do is get your attitude right,
and learn to share and listen and stay the night,
‘use your own best judgement’ without fright,
To help the poor understand their plight.

Get rapping

We’ve got to get off that tarmac road,
And stop talking in development code,
Lets listen to those who carry the load,
And not just men in questionnaire mode

Get rapping

We need to probe and use triangulation
Which means cross-checking all information,
This means including improvisation,
flexibility and iteration

Get rapping

Now a lot of methods have been used
To make sure that local knowledge is not abused,
We can conduct semi-structured interviews,
Mapping and ranking and stay amused

Get rapping

Now really crucial is building rapport
Which involves respect for the rural poor,
Lecturing less and listening more,
And spending some nights on a cold hard floor

Get rapping

Participatory mapping is a good ice-breaker,
With the community themselves the best mapmaker,
Houses, diseases and even the baker
Are shown with outsiders learning not being the taker.

Get rapping

Ranking and diagramming are easily done,
And can be a lot of fun,
Priorities emerge for the long-run
And pre-conceptions can be undone.

Get rapping

Knowing the change in seasons and daily life
Must include both husband and wife,
Young and old and those in strife,
As problems differ and aren’t always rife

Get rapping

A walk across different hills and fields
Can give an idea of different yields
As well as how to create the shields
To protect the poor and give them offer to wield

Get rapping

We should try and avoid difficult phrases
 And try to progress in easy stages
 Because in our bellies a fire rages
 To release the poor from oppressive cages

Get rapping

Now PRA won't be good unless,
 We admit to problems we must address
 The solutions to these we can't guess
 So we must be honest about our success

Get rapping

So its bye for now to the R.A.P
 We'll be back soon your minds to tap
 We're going to work and not to nap
 And do something about that poverty trap!

- **Chris Roche**, ACORD, Research and Policy Programme (RAPP), Francis House, Francis Street, London SW1P 1DQ, UK.

• **From: Louise Fortmann**

Paying in our own currency, starring in our own show

This is two topics jammed into one note, both stemming from my recent experiences in Zimbabwe.

The first is about giving villagers credit for their work. It begins in the 1970s when I read a development book which had an acknowledgements section which went something like this. *"I would like to thank my wife who helped me do interviews in the field, typed and catalogued my field notes, undertook much of the archival research, coded and analysed the quantitative data, and typed and commented on my drafts, making many helpful suggestions"*. Why wasn't she the co-author you *&@#!! I thought at the time. And I have thought of that frequently since. During recent research in Zimbabwe, I went out with a group of villagers who in the course of 4 hours collected specimens of 95 species of indigenous trees. Not only did they know the soils on which different species grew, they knew the precise places where individual trees were growing. All I did was

drive the truck. It struck me that it was high time that if all this rhetoric and hoopla about indigenous knowledge is genuine, we should not only pay our workers and village colleagues for their time, we should pay them in our own currency for their knowledge, that is with academic credit. Thus, it was that Chidari et al. was born, an academic publication with the villagers as senior authors. I am an author too, because in the overall process I did more than just drive the truck, but my name is at the end of the list as it was their knowledge that made the publication possible. So let's all give credit where credit is due, not buried deep in the acknowledgements, but up front in the authors list.

My second experience has to do with getting carried away with our own performance, starring in our own shows. I had arranged a participatory village planning exercise with staff from a government agency. The person who was supposed to be the main facilitator cancelled at the very last minute due to family commitments. Another person came who had supposedly been trained in participatory methods. In the middle of things, he decided to abandon the tree matrix we had planned and lead a participatory discussion of the information village researchers were presenting. The result was horrifying! He bounced into the middle of the circle, beamed at everyone and said, *"Right, we have all these experts here, what would you like to ask them?"*. He managed to extract some questions (all from old men who were community elites), bounced about some more, and bounced out. He gave a lovely performance. What struck me about this (aside from my desire to throttle him) was that he probably mistook his own generation of energy (the production of his own show) for participation. And I suspect that I and many others have made similar mistakes in the past. If we can go aquatic for a moment, be a sponge, not a starfish. Whose show?!

- **Louise Fortmann**, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe, PO Box MP 167, Mount Pleasant, Harare, Zimbabwe.

NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Please send us your thoughts on the limitations and strengths of participatory

methods. With your permission, we will pass them on to other readers.