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# PRA for training church workers: an example from Tanzania

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### • Background

Like many other organisations, the Anglican Church in northern Tanzania has in the past tried to implement projects without the participation of the target group at the planning and implementation stage. A number of these projects have failed because they did not address the needs of the local population or were not sustainable.

In recent years, training people from rural parishes has become an important part of the diocese's development activities. At Munguishi Christian Training Centre training in theology and in rural development are combined. Most of the students are smallholder farmers with primary education who are working part time as evangelists.

During the pilot phase for the training programme, PRA methods proved very useful in studying the needs of rural communities. They can be used even with the limited manpower and financial resources available to our diocese.

After the first course at the training centre, a one week PRA was conducted in Kiru-Dick village (Babati District) with the students from this district. The PRA had three main objectives:

- to help the local people discover the root causes of their problems and opportunities for development;
- to train the former students and some diocesan staff in methods of participatory development; and,

- to get a deeper understanding of the situation in the area in order to plan relevant training programmes.

### The PRA team

The PRA was conducted by a team of 20 people. A core team of four (one economist, two agriculturalists and one female parish worker) was responsible for organising the PRA. Two members of this core team had some previous experience of PRA methods, and five of the other team members were church workers who had received three months of training. The rest were local people, appointed by village government or the local parish to be team members. Thirteen team members were from the village, seven were outsiders (one of them an expatriate), five were women and fifteen were men. Except for the core team, all team members had only primary education. All of them were literate.

### The programme

A preliminary site visit was made one month before the seminar. This was to discuss the proposed PRA with village leaders and church elders. However no definite programme was agreed on then. On arrival the PRA team discovered that the village government had already announced a programme to the village. As a result the programme prepared by the team was adjusted to some extent. Other changes were made during the course of the five days.

## Our experiences

The team members who came from the local community were the main target group of the PRA. For them the exercise was an intensive learning experience, which may help them to look systematically at their situation, find solutions to some of their problems and to develop their own resources. These insiders may play an important role as motivators for sustainable development in their community. With this target group in mind, it may be worth spending more time on team meetings in future PRAs.

A variety of methods were used during the PRA, including the use of secondary data, historical profiles, village maps, seasonal calendars, group discussions, social ranking, pairwise ranking of problems, transects, informal interviews and problem trees.

As there was poor participation in the meetings, we learnt more through the transect walk and interviews of key people (for the social ranking) than during group discussions.

Drawing a village map was difficult when done on flip-chart paper during a group meeting. Later the insiders from the team drew a good map on the ground. Unfortunately it was destroyed by rain the same day.

A lot of useful information was gathered through social ranking. We used local leaders, responsible for about ten households each (ten-cell leaders) as informants and asked questions about the resources and activities of these households.

Drawing problem trees for agriculture, livestock and health was a very useful tool for presenting the results of the PRA. It helped the people in the community understand the relationship between various problems and identify the root causes. Several team members made copies of these problem trees in order to explain the results to others.

## • Conclusions

As few of the team members had any experience of PRA, we all learnt a lot, both about the use of PRA methods, as well as about the situation in the village. During the

preparation, as well as in the field, several publications about PRA were used as guidelines and for reference. In practice we learnt about PRA by doing it. If funds are available we would like to conduct a PRA with an experienced facilitator in the future.

As mentioned above, the focus of this PRA was on training local people and part-time church workers to get a systematic understanding of the problems and opportunities in the community. Obviously the PRA methods we used were suitable to facilitate this learning process. Whether this will enable them to use participatory methods and play an active role in the development of their communities will only be seen in time. The initial reactions are however encouraging.

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