

5

Stumbling towards gender aware PRA training in Indonesia

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• Introduction

Pusat Pengembangan Sumberdaya Wanita (PPSW-Centre for Women's Resources Development) is an Indonesian NGO that has been working since 1986 on the involvement of women in Indonesia in the development process, in line with governmental policies¹. It has lengthy experience in addressing gender issues in its own fieldwork and in training other agencies to be gender aware.

For some time now PPSW has wanted to adopt PRA approaches. Thus it called on a fellow NGO (*Lembaga Pengembangan Teknologi Pedesaan* (LPTP-Institute for Rural Technology Development) that has been being applying PRA in community development programmes and in training other NGO for the last three years for help with this. It was decided that PRA training would be carried out for the PPSW staff with a dual purpose: firstly, direct training on the approach and techniques of PRA and, secondly, to 'genderise' them within the cultural context of Indonesia.

• The training

The five-day training session took place in Jakarta in April 1995. Two days in class were

¹ PPSW favours a Women In Development (WID) approach and, in its community development work, it targets marginalised women who want to raise their level of prosperity through small businesses. Given that the informal sector in Indonesia is enormous and is the main route out of unemployment for both men and women, this is a fruitful source of income generating for women, even though cultural stereotypes about women's roles have to be tackled in the process.

followed by three days in the field and a day's evaluation at the PPSW office.

In class

Two facilitators from LPTP carried out the training based on an adaptation of the training manual by Theis and Grady (1991). The PPSW community development team and staff from *Mahwaddah Foundation* (an offshoot of PPSW that works with women migrant workers) were joined by two participants from Lombok and Bali in East Indonesia. The PPSW staff had been given a task in addition to learning: to continuously critique the training in terms of gender and urban appropriateness. However the trainers could hardly be criticised for failure to include women in the simulations of PRA techniques - the men to women ratio was 2:31!

Preparation for the field included a presentation by a local community leader who described the circumstances in Pondok Ranggon, our destination in East Jakarta. This area is semi-urbanised and characterised by the presence of newcomers who were attracted to Jakarta by hopes of work and better standards of living as well as people indigenous to the area. PPSW facilitated a women's community development group in the area for four years, and activities include garden crop development and a savings/credit scheme. Given the plan to extend this to other parts of the area, Pondok Ranggon was selected as the location for the PRA field training.

In the field

Ahhhh.....reality! PRA may have many differences to other methodologies but it shares the 'in theory/in reality' dilemma. The latter rarely reflects the former. We immediately hit

the problem of 'no community', or at least none that was ready for our appearance. PPSW is used to a lengthy approach to the community appropriate to Indonesian culture with its emphasis on the importance of community, religious and local government leaders. These leaders all require at least courtesy calls if not full clarification of planned activities before house to house visits and community meetings. Yet with PRA we fell straight into the pitfall of focusing on 'rapid', assuming that the PRA techniques themselves would replace this 'approach to the community' stage.

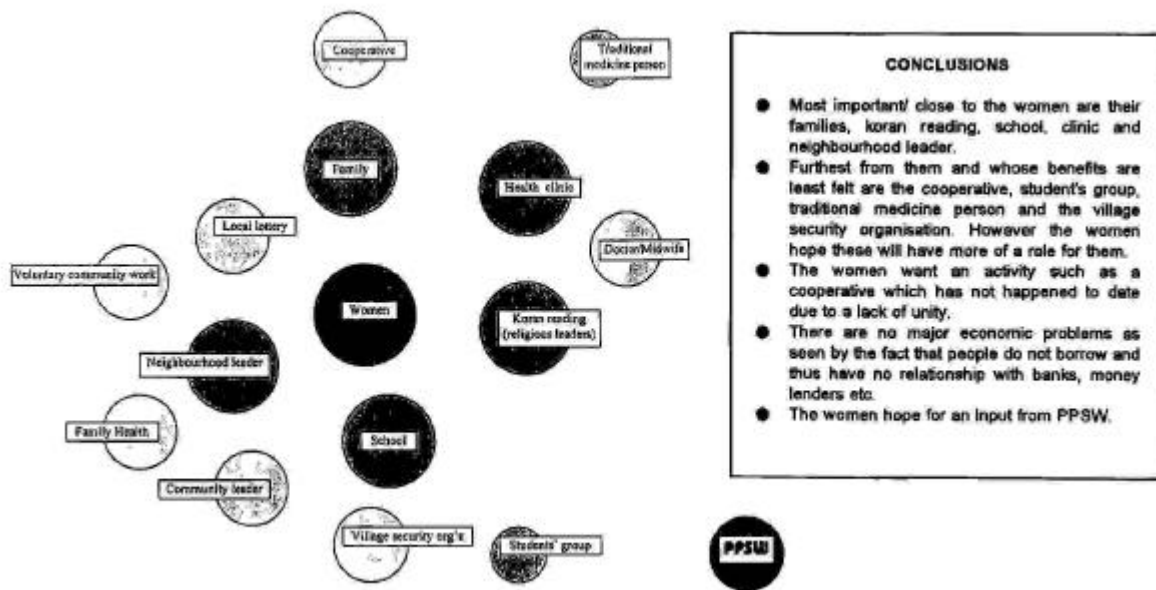
However the three PRA teams, each having its own area within Pondok Ranggon, quickly made contingency plans and began mapping and transects. Things began to fall into place and the community input started to show results. We learnt that:

- There was a lack of cohesion between the indigenous residents and newer arrivals.
- Women in these two groups varied in their use of time. The indigenous women have inherited skills for making '*pengki*', a bamboo scoop used by labourers and farmers to shift earth. The female newcomers lacked productive activities and have more 'empty' time but less social integration.

- The main source of employment for men is factories or offices in Jakarta.
- The residents' land is no longer used for farming but more likely to be used to build houses for their children or to lease out.
- Within community institutions, it appeared that women have no place in decision-making due to the strict segregation of men's and women's roles, perhaps more segregated than in traditional, farming communities in Indonesia due to the lack of productive roles for women in this transitional stage of urbanisation.

How did we get this information? A selection of PRA methods were used. Those judged to be most effective during the fieldwork were mapping, transects, Venn diagramming, time line, trend and change, daily routine and seasonal calendars. As shown in Figure 1, a Venn diagram completed with eight women revealed their interest in developing links with organisations in the area that had yet to have an impact on them or, alternatively, to establish their own group.

Figure 1. Venn diagram created at Pondok Ranggon, East Jakarta



The obvious next step was matrix ranking to determine how they could do this. However, three days was not enough for a full needs assessment and so this was followed up on a separate visit.

Meanwhile one of the other PRA teams used Venn diagramming quite differently, to look at who makes decisions in the home. Thus, in our post-training evaluation, we realised the flexibility of PRA tools.

• **Lessons learnt**

As usual we learnt more from our mistakes than from our successes:

- Do not assume that PRA can replace the normal culturally necessary approach that ensures a good entry point into the community.
- The inclusion of gender does not necessarily mean 'consciousness raising through PRA' but instead 'adapting PRA to ensure women's involvement in information gathering, ensuring women's voices, opinions, knowledge and information are heard, acknowledged and applied'.

- Do not overburden the community with your presence. Although we took our own food and so on, without doubt the community carried the burden of our temporary residence there. In Indonesia, strangers are usually accommodated by the local neighbourhood leader which can be reinterpreted to mean that his wife takes care of guests.
- The three PRA teams found differences in the circumstances of the community in their respective areas despite these areas being directly adjacent to each other. For example a shortage of bamboo in one area resulted in less '*pungki*' production and thus under-employment for local women. Thus we recognised that each area is unique and the results in one cannot be transferred to others.

Overall, we were impressed with the suitability of PRA techniques for working with women. For example, daily routines proved to be a valuable tool for determining the timing of meetings and activities with women, within the planning of a programme, and for identifying the real amount of women's available time for the development of small businesses etc. But we still felt that gender needed a more specific place in the training, so we set about.....

• 'Genderising' the training

Back in the office we evaluated our efforts and, in small groups, set about analysing what we had learnt and experienced so that we could make the training more gender-oriented. A selected team then met again with the LPTP facilitators to revise their module. The main adaptations are summarised below:

Each word in the term PRA should be looked at in a gender sensitive manner. In short: *participatory* means participation of men AND women; *rural* means village or farm communities that consist of men AND women; *appraisal* means assessment, information gathering, measurement etc. of aspects of the community that affect men AND women.

Thus PRA that does not involve women will lead to discrimination and is incomplete. Maybe this seems obvious to those used to working in a gender sensitive manner, but for those who are not, we feel sure that if they just learn to use PRA they will simply apply it in the framework of their usual way of working, including 'gender blindness'. In Indonesia, involving women requires special efforts as men usually 'represent' their communities in all meetings with outsiders. Thus the awareness process needs to commence with the very definition of PRA, so that field-workers are proactive in involving women from day one. The gender aware PRA 'outsider' will thereby affect local beliefs and values (Scheuermeier, 1991) by virtue of how s/he involves people.

'Gender' requires its own explanation and a separate session for the concept to be clarified before the introduction to PRA. Implementation of gender sensitive PRA training involves continuous attention to the issues of:

- *Timing*. When can women join in activities?
- *Location*. Where are women allowed to meet? Where will they feel comfortable and able to speak?
- *Representation*. Are women represented in the PRA local team?
- *Topics*. Are issues covered which are relevant to women (in their eyes, not yours) eg. schooling, children's health, food seasons, rituals and celebrations?

- *Equal roles*. Are women able to have an equal voice in mixed meetings, perhaps with the facilitator's help? Or will separate meetings for men and women be more effective? (But giving equal weight to the information from both).
- *Marginalised women*. Are minority groups of women seen and heard: widows/divorcees, disabled, elderly?

These issues need to be stressed in the context of each technique as it is learnt and practised and are especially important in the preparation for fieldwork.

• The next stage and an unresolved query

Further field experience of using PRA adapted to PPSW's gender-focused approach is obviously necessary to test and strengthen it. Other tools that were not covered in the training but which are valuable for gender analysis, such as mobility mapping, could also be used. Should this prove to be effective, PPSW and LPTP will offer the adapted PRA training to other Indonesian NGOs.

We also need to develop contact with other NGOs that are using PRA in Indonesia to 'cross check' our limited learning. Most importantly, we need to ensure that what we learnt from the people in Pondok Ranggon does not remain 'our learning', but helps the community reach decisions about PPSW's involvement in their development.

Meanwhile we were left wondering about the field element of the training. We were lucky to have a ready made 'laboratory' given the request for extension of PPSW's work in Pondok Ranggon. But we were still left with a feeling of 'experimenting' on the community, the antithesis of the basic principles of PRA. We therefore wonder whether in-class training could be followed by '*magang*', Indonesian for 'apprenticeship' or 'placement', by the participants, in projects that are currently undertaken by NGOs using PRA. This could minimise the effect of errors and the failure to meet expectations that are raised in the community.

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