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Extracts

- **Coloured papers**

by Gerhard Baum

I recently began using small, coloured pieces of paper as tools to enable communities to present complex issues in an easy-to-understand, visual format. This can prepare a common ground of understanding and stimulate discussion within local communities. Different colours are used to represent different elements of the environment: for example, yellow for climate, blue for water, green for vegetation. A different coloured sheet of paper is introduced to explore the social and ecological impacts of an intervention, such as agroforestry.

- **Examples of use**
Management of natural resources: coloured papers triggered an intensive debate among populations bordering the Tai forest in the Ivory Coast. This led to the 'Green Barrier' against desertification, an initiative to protect the forest for the local communities. This approach was also used to promote discussion with village headmen on methods of improving the ability of the community to manage its natural resources.

- **Advantages**
Coloured papers are cheap, easy to carry and simple to use. (Hint: Carry drawing pins to fix papers to a variety of surfaces!)

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- **Learning in the field**

by Agnes Mulla

Agnes Mulla is a secretary at the headquarters of the Association for Better Land Husbandry. She had been involved with editing a number of PRA reports but felt she could do a better job if she investigated PRA in the field. This is part of her personal account of her first experiences with men and women farmers.

Following a preliminary visit the previous day, my colleagues and I visited members of Busala Self Help Group, Namusala village, Kenya. The occasion? A PRA session on participatory mapping and modelling. What struck me was the excitement and concentration among the participants. I was more than eager to see the session started as I could not imagine how the villagers would come up with a map. This was to become the height of my workshop learning. I couldn't believe it - but seeing is believing!

I feel that I am now better placed to edit PRA reports because I understand how local people can contribute to the development process. In our participatory approach we learned from the farmers. Our role is to try and help people identify and solve their own problems. Participatory mapping showed me how key problems can be identified. PRA opened my eyes to seeing the potential for local people to manage their own development.

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