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## Participatory methods for community-based coastal resource management

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A workshop or 'write-shop' on participatory methods for community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM) was held from 28 July to 8 August 1997 at International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines. The workshop documented field-tested participatory methods used by CBCRM practitioners. More than 30 community-based coastal resource management practitioners from four different countries prepared approximately 50 short papers on the theme.

While many of the methods documented were similar to those used in terrestrial settings, there were significant differences because of the focus on the coastal zone (see Box 1). It was this difference in methods that had driven the production of a publication on participatory methods specifically for the coastal zone. In addition to basic methods, multi-method activities were described (i.e. activities that employed the use of two or more methods) and their applications highlighted.

A few characteristics of the coastal zone were identified as having important influence on the general use of participatory methods. These include the heavy emphasis on common pool resources, the mobile nature of many of the resources, the temporal cycles that influence coastal communities and resources, the frequently strong gender differentiation in roles related to coastal livelihoods (e.g. fishers), and the dual influence of terrestrial and coastal livelihoods. The participants made special effort to describe the unique characteristics of the methods as a result of the coastal setting.

### BOX 1

#### ADAPTING PRA TO THE COASTAL ZONE

- Mapping tools suggest that the marine area that can be mapped is much larger than the terrestrial area;
- The use of community logbooks is seen as a useful method of recording events affecting the common pool resources of the coastal zone;
- The transect walk is usually oriented perpendicular to the shoreline and includes a 'walk through' and 'swim through' portion;
- Institutional analysis appears to be more complicated in marine areas as a result of multiple stakeholders and institutional arrangements found in these areas;
- Zoning plays an important role in coastal zone management because resources are 'common pool' and there is open access to 'state owned areas'; and,
- Assessment of income is complex because it needs to consider the seasonal dimensions of coastal activities.

The workshop produced a near final manuscript of 'A Source Book on Participatory Methods for CBCRM'. The target audience for the source book includes extension workers and facilitators from government and non-government organisations working with coastal communities.

The participatory workshop or 'write shop' approach has been refined over the last 10 years at IIRR and involves a cycle of writing, presentation, review and revision. A workshop team is employed to support the process and produce near final materials by the end of the two-week workshop. The participants serve multiple roles as authors, editors and reviewers.

The first section of the source book addresses the characteristics of the coastal zone, describes community based coastal resource management, and looks broadly at issues of participation. It also introduces some general guidelines for the use of participatory methods.

The participants felt it was very important to describe community-based coastal resource management as an approach that emphasises local participation in community capability building, sustainable livelihood development, environmental conservation, and education. It recognises the importance of food security, equity in access and control of resources, gender fairness, indigenous knowledge and multi-sectoral partner ships. Introductory chapters on these themes set the context for the remainder of the source book.

The degree of participation involved in each methods varied greatly. The participants recognised the value of all of the methods described rather than limiting the source book to those tools that involved only a high degree of participation. It was agreed that the various methods could complement each other, just as participatory methods can complement more formal academic research methods. It was generally believed that participatory methods are best suited to the early stages of projects when research questions have not yet been clearly formulated. Variations on certain methods were presented that would allow for greater participation.

Other factors affecting the selection of the appropriate methods include the availability of human and financial resources. In cases where methods were used in different ways by participants, the common steps were presented and the differences were described as variations.

In general, I felt that the methods presented were less participatory than those developed in terrestrial areas. It is unclear as to whether this can be attributed to the field of CBCRM itself or is an artefact of the specific experiences of the participants themselves. It may also stem from the lack of existing publications on participatory methods for coastal areas and the relatively recent arrival of participatory methods to coastal areas.

The participants at the workshop shared freely their experiences. The result is a source book that can help organisations currently working, or planning to work, in the coastal zone.

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#### NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For more information on the 'Source Book on Participatory Methods for Community-based Natural Resource Management' please write to Joy Caminade or Gregory C. Ira at the above address.

For book orders write to the Publications Unit, IIRR c/o Joy Caminade. The cost of the book is US\$12, mailing cost is US\$18.

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