

PART VIII

Tips for trainers



Why participatory research and how participatory?

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by **MARUJA SALAS**

MARUJA SALAS is a Peruvian anthropologist who has worked in Southwest China with a number of research organisations and NGOs on issues of indigenous knowledge and participation since 2000. She has dedicated her professional efforts to creating participatory learning events for trainers, researchers and farming communities. Her field of practice includes teaching participatory research and action at university level, designing community planning processes, as well as facilitation of different types of decision-making sessions. In her approach to participation, she has been influenced by the Latin American school of thought, mainly represented by Paolo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda. Maruja shares the conceptual understanding that we are all knowledgeable subjects, that groups can empower themselves through a flow of action-reflection-action and that there is an inextricable link between knowledge and power that can liberate the mind and society from the roots of injustice. Learning in a participatory way is a process of unlimited creative transformations!

My training tips are related to two epistemological questions: why participatory research and how participatory?¹ These tips are aimed at a team of trainers or facilitators who are engaged in building the capacities of development workers in participatory action research (PAR).

The main reason to train in participatory methods is because you and your team of facilitators believe in **cognitive justice**. You have seen with your own eyes the disturbing impact development has had on people's lives when action has been planned without previously consulting all

¹ Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature and scope/limitations of knowledge. It addresses the questions: What is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? How do we know what we know? Much of the debate in this field has focused on analysing the nature of knowledge and how it relates to connected notions such as truth, belief, and justification. It also deals with the means of production of knowledge, as well as scepticism about different knowledge claims. *Source: Wikipedia.*

actors involved. You do not want to do the same. You want to ensure that development is self-determined by people's visions and contributes to fulfilling their lives.

Participatory research training is a pedagogical approach concerned with making true the statement **'knowledge is power'**.² That means if people's ideas are expressed and reflected there is a greater potential to transform learning into action. Having the trainees' full consent to learning is an essential ingredient in this approach. The philosophy of participation is based on freedom of choice – a right that is very seldom considered in development. **Cognitive justice** means that learning is designed so trainees experience how invaluable people's knowledge about the reality they live in, in order to agree upon the transformations that can take place.

Action, reflection, action

Create ongoing opportunities to learn from **action, reflection, action (ARA)**. This will help your team of trainers to move away from more conventional development research approaches. Instead of collecting data, which is then interpreted by a group of experts, ARA is an interactive flow that moves human beings forward in life. It allows them to gain insights and draw their own conclusions. It is the chance to learn about how diverse reality is perceived and constructed by different actors and how this complexity is expressed in multiple voices.

To integrate ARA into your training, divide the available time into learning sessions (45 to 90 minutes). With your team, use exercises, games and group work to gradually explore the concepts and methods that form part of the training process. For example:

- Introduce the concept of participatory research.
- Organise a session of 30 minutes to explore this concept more deeply.

- Visualise one by one statements like: 'knowledge is a social construction', 'knowledge is power', 'participation involves a common understanding of a diversity of ideas', 'true participation encompasses mind, heart and action', 'voting is the most clear expression of agreement on an issue', 'no one knows everything but everybody knows a little bit'.

- Ask participants to express their agreement or disagreement with the statement and why.

- Repeat by discussing other different statements concerning the conceptual world of participatory research.

- After several rounds, ask participants to share their concluding thoughts in **buzzing modality**: divide the plenary into pairs giving them ten minutes to exchange their ideas and to come to a conclusion.

- Ask them to visualise their conclusions as reminders for the next learning unit. Be sure you give each pair a long card and a marker to write down one conclusion in a visible and legible form. Invite each pair to come to the front, read the conclusion aloud and pin up the card on a board.

ARA opens up opportunities to deal with a topic intellectually in an interactive way. It helps generate new ideas to guide your next steps. Enabling trainees to experience the flow of ARA includes allowing time to visualise their learning from experience. It should be flexible enough to go back and forth, in an iterative fashion, as in life. Such training is empowering. It helps to build self-awareness as it mirrors what should happen when trainees come to apply their learning in the field.

Tools for exploring perceptions of time, space and knowledge

The following participatory tools are designed to create space for your trainees to think about three dimensions of life in which every human being is immersed: time, space and knowledge.

² Pedagogy is the study of being a teacher or the process of teaching. The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction. Source: *Wikipedia*.



Photo: Timmi Tillmann

Photo 3. Biography of a Yi bimo (shaman) from Meigu County, Sichuan Province. On the right side are the basic elements of Yi cosmology and history, which form the concept of Yi culture.

Knowledge tools

Knowledge tools deal with ideas, feelings, sensual perceptions (we have at least five senses), opinions, memories, intuitions and visions that are individually different. You might find commonalities in a group. For example, the biography of a local knowledge specialist will show how a member of the community perceives and understands reality in that community's own cultural terms.

Triangulation or the rule of three

The rule of three (Robert Chambers calls this 'triangulation') is an approach that I have learnt from my experience as a trainer.³

• The structure of a training session should

cover at least three parts: concepts, methods and practice.

- Each trainee should learn to use at least three tools for covering each of the dimensions of time, space and knowledge.
- Each tool has three important aspects: its purposes, advantages and limitations.
- Each tool provides trainees with at least three opportunities for action, reflection and action: during the introduction, the visualisation exercise and while discussing the results.
- A tool can depict at least three pictures of reality: past, present and future.
- Each tool should be used to explore the viewpoints of at least three generations: e.g. youth, adults and older people.
- For political purposes consult at least

³ Triangulation is often used to indicate that more than two methods are used in a study with a view to double (or triple) checking results. The idea is that one can be more confident with a result if different methods lead to the same result. By using three methods to get at the answer to one question, the hope is that two of the three will produce similar answers, or if three clashing answers are produced, the investigator knows that the question needs to be reframed, methods reconsidered, or both. Source: Wikipedia.

three different types of groups in society, e.g. development workers, scientists, farmers.

- Explore opinions of at least with three different types of people according to power relations: the powerless, the powerful and those gaining power.
- Include at least three different types of 'knowers': those with common knowledge, knowledge specialists and those that others consider to be wise.
- If you have any training tips that follow

the rule of threes, please add them to the list.

And finally...

A trainer should always acknowledge the intellectual contribution of trainees by treating them as 'knowers'. This helps trainees to recognise how empowering that experience is in reality – and to learn to recognise others as 'knowers' in turn.

Thank you, good luck and enjoy being a trainer!

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Learning is more than training – experiences from PRCDP

by JOHANNA PENNARZ

When the Poor Rural Communities Development Project (PRCDP) began the implementation phase, it was confronted with an enormous task of capacity building due to the size of the project (covering 18 counties in three provinces) and the number of project staff involved. The project soon realised that it could only address this challenge through institutionalising a process of ongoing learning and practice on participation. The idea of a 'learning system' was born.

What is a learning system?

A learning system means institutionalising learning processes and sustaining them as part of an organisation's development. The purpose of a learning system is to build experience-based knowledge and capacities on participation. The key elements of a learning system include:

- **Emphasis on action and practice:** Practical application and field-based experience is at the heart of learning on participation. Practice of methods and tools during training and exchange of

experiences among practitioners help to develop an understanding of how participation could work and how it could contribute to better projects.

- **Ongoing reflection and sharing on practical experiences:** Ongoing reflection is important to deepen the existing knowledge, to draw conclusions from practice and to share working experiences. Reflection means to look into assumptions and patterns of behaviour, to analyse failures and successes and from that to abstract further insights and conclusions. Documentation of good practices is an important element of learning on participation. Reflection can be done best in like-minded groups that share a common background. Ongoing reflection can and should be something that individuals do. People will become reflective participation practitioners, with a habit of reflecting on the participatory aspects of what they are doing in their work while they are actually doing that work. This continual learning process develops individuals' knowledge.

- **Draw lessons for the future and incor-**

Photo: Johanna Pennarz



Practical field exercise in a Miao community – as part of a training course for government project staff in PRCDP.

porate them into future action: Reflection on challenges, achievements and good practices helps to draw lessons for the future. Practical lessons should be taken forward to the next stage. Learning is not a single cycle of train – do – reflect. There needs to be a series of learning loops – after reflection, lessons should be taken forward into further action. Participatory practices improve after each learning loop.

The most important aspect of a learning system is that it takes a progressive approach, starting from lower levels and aiming for ongoing improvement in all aspects of the organisation. While in principle this is an infinite process it is important to ensure that learning is not happening by default, but that it is part of a systematic approach to capacity building and organisational change.

Methods for learning in PRCDP

In PRCDP, the project provided a platform for learning through the continuous docu-

mentation and sharing of experiences and practices, both within the project and with other projects. The purpose of the learning system was to build experience-based knowledge and capacities within PRCDP which will enable and improve the innovative approach to participatory poverty alleviation.

The basic elements of the learning system in PRCDP were:

- **Systematic training on methods and skills for facilitation:** Country staff have provided several cycles of training for township and village facilitators throughout the project areas. They developed their own training material and adapted their methodological toolbox to local practice.
- **Horizontal sharing of practical experiences among facilitators:** The provinces and counties organised regular meetings and workshops to share experiences as well as study visits to other project counties and provinces.
- **Local ‘pilots’ and cases on innovative**

Box 1: What is 'good practice'

'Good practice' can be defined as an affordable and practical approach that has been effective in particular situations to support development processes and has been assessed, validated and documented for possible use by other communities, counties or provinces.

Validation of good practices through joint peer review is part of the learning and sharing on participation in PRCDP. The review should not only focus on what worked well and what did not and why; it also needs to establish the extent to which a practice should inform other practitioners and decision makers.

practices: PRCDP actively encouraged innovation and documentation of practices which were shared during regular meetings, newsletters and progress reports. Good practice notes (see Box 1) became an important tool to support innovation and learning.

• Monitoring for sustained and improved quality of participation: A team of external facilitators monitored the quality of participation through annual surveys. An important part of the monitoring component was the feedback sessions where facilitators from all counties participated.

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RESOURCES

The PRCDP Participation Manual (see In Touch, p. 194) includes a wealth of good practice notes.¹

The Foreign Capital Project Management Centers (FCPMCs) of all three project provinces (Sichuan, Yunnan and Guangxi) prepared a large number of good practice notes.²

The proceedings of the Kunming workshop include a number of case studies on good practices, some of them included in this issue of *PLA*.

The Guangxi office contributed an article to this issue of *PLA* on its experiences with the learning system (see Part IV, Article 28).

¹ www.itad.com/PRCDP

² www.fcPMC.org

Training in the Chinese context: tips and resources for trainers

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by WANG JIANPING, DENG WEIJIE, SUN DAJIANG and JOHANNA PENNARZ

Introduction

Being an effective participatory rural appraisal (PRA) trainer requires more than just being familiar with PRA theories and tools. Developing a good training programme takes careful planning and an understanding of the organisation's and individual learner's needs and, most importantly, the local context – culturally, socially and economically. This section draws on Chinese PRA trainers' experience in training and developing materials, and offers a collection of resources and useful links for other PRA specialists, trainers and facilitators.

The training materials and publications introduced here were designed and developed by leading research institutions and NGOs in China that have been actively involved in integrating PRA concepts and theories in the Chinese context and have contributed greatly to the popularisation of the PRA approach in China over the last few decades.

Three evident phases can be identified from the development of these institutions

and the shifting of their training strategies. From the late 1980s to the early 2010s, most institutions focused mainly on translating and importing the new concepts and methods of PRA, as well as introducing some advanced experience from other countries into China. Workshops and trainings at this time were usually delivered by professional trainers invited from well-known international institutions, such as the United Nations or universities from the UK or the USA.

From the early to later 2010s, based on years of intensive project experience in China, some institutions in China were able to summarise, reflect and develop some localised teaching materials that were more suited to the Chinese context. Compared with the teaching materials translated from English, the materials developed during this period were proven to be more practicable by emphasising the integration between classic PRA theory and the local context. A good example is the *Handbook for health education in Chinese rural community*

developed by the Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family in X'ian (SRAWF). Some methods such as 'peer education' and 'targeting middle school' were combined with traditional PRA methods.

From the late 2010s to the present, some more experienced institutions in China started to specialise in capacity building. A number of professional training institutions were established, designing training programmes, developing training materials and curricula – for example, the Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) in Beijing and the Gender Development Solution (GDS) training team in X'ian. These have highly qualified trainer teams, and have broadened the targeted learner groups, and adapted training methods and contents to specific training needs to provide efficient capacity building experience. The *Handbook for female village officers* was developed by GDS.

Although all organisations mentioned have incorporated PRA methods into their activities and strategies their objectives as well as their target learner groups vary. Most of the organisations have more expertise in providing consultancy services to various national and international development projects, such as the Community-Based Conservation and Development Research Centre (CCDRC) in Guizhou, and the Rural Development and Biodiversity Conservation Centre (RDBCC) in Gansu. Usually these organisations provide PRA training to local project partners, village organisations or farmers, as part of the necessary capacity building element of the project. Therefore, materials prepared for these trainings are mostly issue-focused and student-centred, using simple graph or pictorial explanations and focusing more on the PRA tools and procedures and less on theoretical discussion. This also explains why most of the material is not formally published or openly available, but rather provided as part of the training/consultancy service.

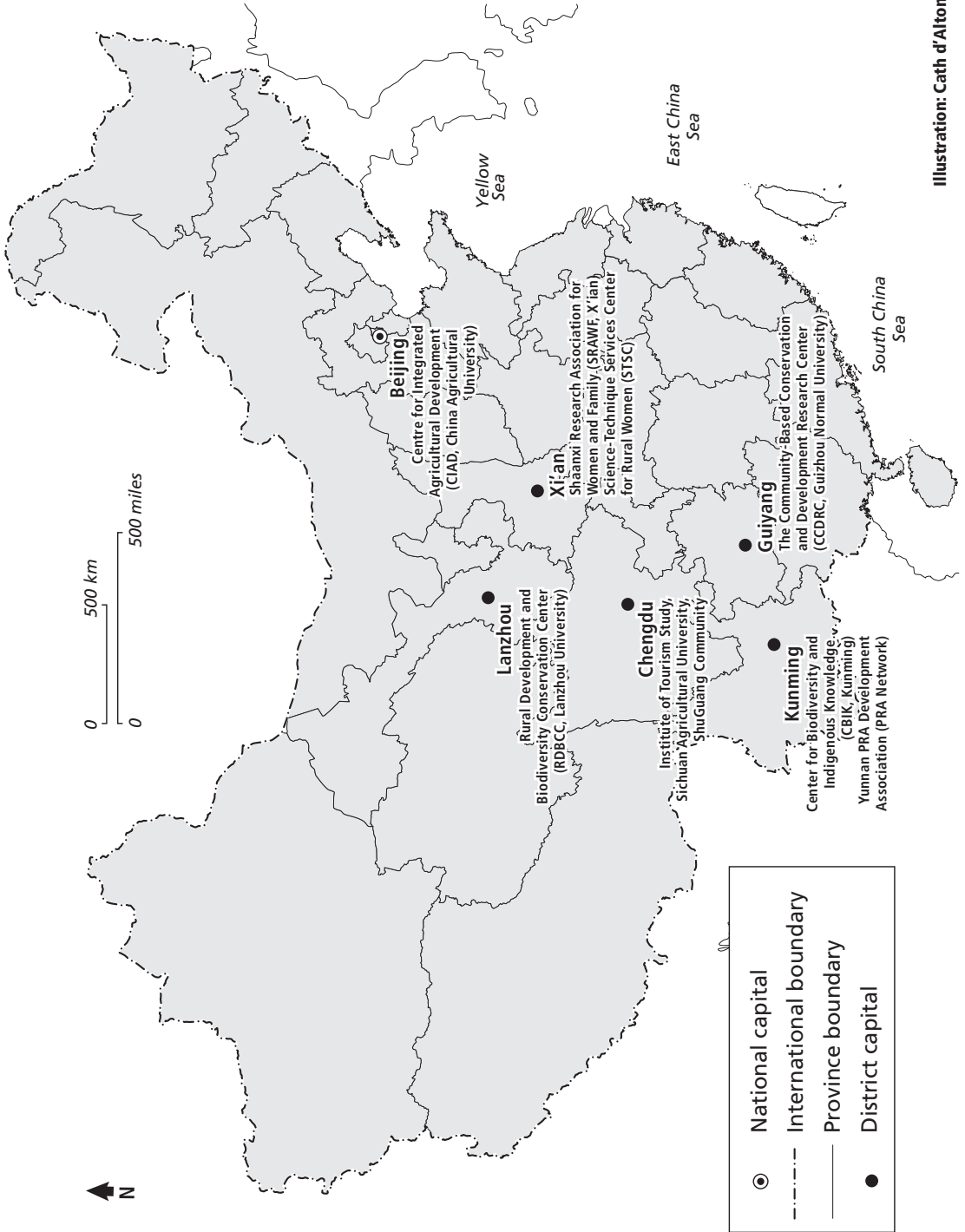
Others are more research and education focused, such as SRAWF and the Science-Technique Services Centre for Rural Women (STSC) in Shaanxi. Because their target groups are mainly trainers, NGO staff and project managers, more structured and comprehensive PRA training and teaching materials were developed to meet the needs.

Due to the small number of organisations in China that have sufficient professional experience in development, as well as solid and broad cooperation and partnership with both international development organisations and local governmental organisations, their capacity to advocate the participatory approach on a larger scale and make concrete changes through the institutionalisation of participatory methods within the formal governmental system is still comparatively weak. Mostly, rather than working directly on advocating PRA concepts, they opt to broaden the impacts of participatory development approaches through development consultancies or research, occasionally providing training for governmental officers. This type of organisation includes CIAD and the Yunnan PRA Development Association.

Most of the training materials mentioned in this section do not just introduce the concepts, theories and tools of PRA to learners, they also move one step further by combining PRA with socially and culturally-appropriate teaching methods to meet specific training needs. These materials show how the Chinese trainers offer an interactive approach, engaging learners in the learning process to achieve efficient capacity building.

The profiles of the PRA training organisations give some background on each institution, their strategy, mission and specialised fields, and, where available, information on training materials. The contact information is listed at the end of each profile.

We have included some other useful books and references relating to the PRA approach in China in our In Touch section.



The geographical distribution of the institutions actively involved in PRA training in China.

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CENTRE FOR INTEGRATED AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (CIAD), CHINA AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY

The Centre for Integrated Agricultural Development (CIAD) was established in 1988 and is the first non-profit institution in China with integrated rural development research, training and consultancy activities. With its team of 40 professional staff members, CIAD plays a major role in institutionalising participatory development approaches in China.

Working closely with many international development organisations and international NGOs over the past 22 years, CIAD has developed a participatory, development needs-oriented and multi-disciplinary methodology package and built up a professional reputation in the field of rural development in China and internationally.

Main activities

Development research: developing appropriate approaches and methodologies for rural development in China;

Development training: training rural development workers and staff in participatory approaches;

Development consultancy: providing development policy consultancies to governmental organisations and overall project consultancies for Chinese rural development programmes.

Besides providing consultancies and developing research as a knowledge pool for methodology innovation, CIAD has demonstrated that training is an effective instrument for disseminating knowledge and expertise to various target groups, and it is also an approach for institutional

capacity building and human resource development for development projects, governmental institutions and private sectors. During the last two decades, CIAD has delivered a number of training workshops to participants from different sectors and on different levels, including government officials, researchers, technicians and extension workers, social workers, NGO staff, farmers and community leaders.

Areas of training:

- Methodology and tools for participatory development studies (PRA for rural development)
- Project planning, project management and monitoring and evaluation (M&E)
- Gender and rural development
- Management of local resources
- Micro-finance for poverty reduction and rural development
- Training of trainers for development planners and community workers
- Rural extension
- Inter-cultural communication
- Presentation and moderation techniques
- Leadership and strategic planning for business management

Training methods

Participatory and interactive training methods have been developed and applied by CIAD trainers. These methods include:

- Multimedia aided presentation
- Visualisation of the training contents by using pin boards and meta-plan cards, etc.
- Participatory workshops
- Group work for case studies
- On-site methodology exercise in pilot communities

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SHAANXI RESEARCH ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN AND FAMILY (SRAWF)

The Shaanxi Research Association for Women and Family (SRAWF) was founded in 1986 and has over 100 members including 20 full time and part time staff. Its core mission is to deal with the difficulties and obstacles rural women face in poverty, health, education and participation in community affairs, and it aims to empower women. In particular, it works to improve the status of rural women by providing emotional and legal support to those women dealing with marriage and family problems. SRAWF promotes public awareness on gender issues as well as empowering women, in order to promote gender equity and create a supportive social environment in China to nurture civil society organisations that deal effectively with domestic violence.

Training programmes and materials

Over the last two decades, with the aim of integrating the concept of participatory approaches, empowerment and capacity building into projects, more than 50 training programmes have been designed and delivered by SRAWF to team members, volunteers, project managers, government

officers, local partners as well as targeted groups and other stakeholders. At the same time, SRAWF has developed localised teaching materials for workshops, such as:

- *Handbook for health education in the rural community.*
- *Handbook for teaching assistants in rural women's health schools.*
- *Handbook for improving women's capability in participating in political decision-making.*
- *Handbook for community capacity building.*

Gender development

Based on the existing rural community development team, health development team and civil society team of SRAWF, a new institution – the Gender Development Solution Studies (GDS) was founded in 2008 to respond to its commitment to gender development and providing more professional training. In 2011, the GDS training team was founded, specialising in designing training programmes, developing training materials and curricula. After four years, GDS is now a leading non-governmental organisation for research, intervention and communications on gender development in China.

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SCIENCE-TECHNIQUE SERVICES CENTRE FOR RURAL WOMEN (STSC)

The Science-Technique Services Centre for Rural Women (STSC) was founded by female agriculture technical specialists from the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry (A&F) University in 1997. Currently 128 volunteers are working in STSC, the majority of whom are agricultural science and technology experts.

The focus of STSC is gender-based participatory technology application for promoting women's development. The strategic vision of STSC is using participatory learning approaches to share agricultural technology and advocate equal opportunities and gender equality.

Since its foundation, STSC has been dedicated to the provision of training. During the last ten years, more than 38 training events and workshops on gender

sensitive participatory technology for agriculture extension workers have been delivered by STSC. It has also conducted participatory training on rural women's leadership building in 62 villages and participatory farmer associations in 87 villages.

Training materials

- *Training manual for gender sensitive participatory technology extension*, 2002, Northwest A&F University Press.
- *Training manual for participatory farmers' associations*, 2010, Northwest A&F University Press.
- *Participatory training manual for gender and women leadership building*, 2010, Northwest A&F University Press.
- *Theory and practices of participatory technology extension*, 2009, Northwest A&F University Press.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION CENTRE (RDBCC)

The Rural Development and Biodiversity Conservation Centre (RDBCC) has been based in the School of Economics at Lanzhou University in Gansu Province since its foundation in 2004. It aims to integrate community sustainable development with biodiversity conservation through community participation, and has been involved in various development projects. RDBCC has received strong support from the Chinese National Environmental Protection Bureau, the Chinese National Philosophy and Social Sciences Fund, the China Ministry of Forestry, as well as some international institutions, such as the European Union and Care International. RDBCC has carried out several projects, including public participation in environmental impact assessment in Xigu, Lanzhou, community-based natural resource management; social benefits evaluation in official nature conservation areas using participatory approaches; community action on biodiversity conservation, PME practices in natural protection areas

in Gansu, evaluation for community-based conservation, etc.

Training programmes and materials

Over the last few years, the centre has carried out several training events and developed corresponding training materials.

- Training course on participatory social investigation for university students
- Training on PRA concepts and methods in Northwest China, particularly in Gansu Province
- Training on participatory conservation of species for the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF)

Training materials were developed for the courses, including:

- Case studies for community-based forestry resource management
- Participatory planning for forestry-based community development
- Assessment on agricultural nature resources in rural China
- Assessment on rural eco-systems in China
- Teaching course on rural environment science
- PRA theory and practice for poverty and poverty reduction in China

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CENTRE FOR BIODIVERSITY AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE (CBIK)

Background

The Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge (CBIK) in Yunnan was established in 1995 as a membership non-profit organisation. CBIK is a participatory learning organisation, with over 100 members, including research professionals, development practitioners and resource managers. The organisation is dedicated to biodiversity conservation and community livelihood development, as well as the documentation of indigenous knowledge and technical innovations related to resource governance at community and watershed levels.

CBIK aims to explore alternative development approaches, working directly with indigenous people and communities to enhance their livelihoods and maintain cultural and biological diversity through the application of indigenous cosmology, knowledge, and innovative technology in the environment of rapid change and uncertainty faced by local people in Southwest China.

CBIK also works to promote local and regional intersectoral and intercultural dialogue and communication among rural communities, NGOs, academia and governmental agencies. For this purpose, it conducts interdisciplinary research, facilitation for participatory development, consultation for cultural identity, networking for information sharing, and capacity building for watershed governance and livelihood development.

Methodologies

From 2003 to 2006, CBIK promoted participatory approaches to technology

development and extension workers in the animal husbandry sector and forestry section in Yunnan. Participatory Development Technology (PTD) was developed since the **farmer first** (Chambers *et al.*, 1989) concept which was first introduced in the late 1980s. Later on, as a farmer-centred research or more widely called participatory research method, it received increased attention and recognition (Jiggins and De Zeeuw, 1992).¹

Training materials

The Field Manual on Participatory Technology Development: Linking Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity for Sustainable Livelihoods was written by three CBIK experts, Maruja Salas, Xu Jianchu and Timmi Tillmann, to aid field practices within ethnic communities in Southeast Asia and Southwest China by providing training materials for the capacity building of community facilitators, researchers and technicians. It is based on an adaptation of the PTD approach in a learning process undertaken in eight villages in Xishuangbanna, a tropical rain forest in an area of Yunnan populated by several ethnic minorities whose livelihoods are undergoing externally driven changes. PTD aims to strategically enhance indigenous knowledge as a means of generating indigenous innovations and to support indigenous innovators in their sociocultural and biophysical contexts.

The manual outlines the key processes of PTD which consists of six major steps. It also highlights how PM&E is adopted in each step. The manual adds a special focus to the existing PTD literature by prioritising the potential of indigenous people's knowledge as a means for improving rural livelihoods in Southwest China. It provides

¹ The basic idea of PTD is that farmers and professional researchers have different knowledge and skills, which may complement each other and that by working together the two groups may achieve better results than by working alone (Hoffmann *et al.*, 2007). Ideally, the strengths of one group would compensate for any constraints and limitations of the other groups. Thus, it is developing ways to involve farmers in processes for generating economically and environmentally sound technologies, and managing natural resources more sustainably, and more equitably (van de Fliert and Braun, 2002).



practical tools and methods to support the implementation of the Convention on Biodiversity and its regional counterpart in the Yunnan Initiative by promoting

indigenous knowledge.

It outlines each step of the PTD process and the procedures required to carry out and motivate development institutions to interact creatively to improve the livelihoods of local farmers and ethnic minorities based on their own knowledge and decisions.

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YUNNAN PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION (PRA NETWORK)

Background

The last decade has witnessed a growing recognition of the need for socio-economic development programmes to take into account the needs and aspirations of local people. As a result, there has been a rapid expansion of efforts over recent years to apply participatory approaches to promote policy change in China. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), with its focus on identifying and addressing local people's needs and empowering them in the development and planning process, has formed a major part of this.

The concept of PRA was first introduced to China by Robert Chambers at a workshop hosted by the Yunnan Rural Development Research Centre (RDRC) in November 1993. In October 1994, the Yunnan PRA network was established with the sponsorship of the Ford Foundation and in March 2010, the Yunnan Participatory Development Association was set up with formal approval from local governments, indicating a new phase in the practice of the participatory approach in China.

Training materials

Handbook on PRA Training (Available in Chinese only)

Written by the members of Yunnan PR network, this handbook shows the use of the participatory approach as a tool for empowering rural individuals and communities, and is a product of inputs from various individuals and institutions, including several universities and research institutions in Yunnan who have been actively involved in PRA practices in Southwest China over the last ten years.



This handbook was commissioned to fill a gap in the current Chinese literature on PRA training. It is a practical guide to setting up and running PRA training projects in China. Based on the authors' experiences using PRA tools in rural areas of Southwest China, it offers an outline for facilitators to explore how to use teaching materials to encourage a lively, efficient learning process. It provides several case studies that illustrate in practice the process of conceiving, designing and implementing PRA. They list results of these approaches, providing examples and detailing successes and challenges.

The methodology and tools proposed by the PRA handbook have been tested in several training workshops held in Yunnan, including the Social, Gender and Mainstreaming workshop, Project Management workshop and Farmer's Association workshop. While the handbook is primarily an educational and reference material to be used during training workshops for PRA in China, it can also be used as a guide for PRA work in general.



Handbook on Whole Village Advancement, Poverty Alleviation and Development Planning (Available in Chinese only)

The Whole Village Advancement programme was initiated by the Chinese government in 2001 as an important measure for poverty alleviation. It aimed to improve the landscape of poor rural areas, narrow the urban and rural development gap and build a harmonious society.

The handbook was written by two PRA experts – Mr Song Haokun and Ms Wang Wanyin from the Yunnan RDRC. They realised the significance of integrating the participatory approach into the programme to enhance community

¹ See also the Prologue to this issue for more background information.

engagement and enable the local community to benefit from this critical event.

The methodology described in this handbook outlines ways of involving local people in decision-making processes.

It specifies the activities, participants, outputs and action tips related to the whole planning process. It presents a step by step approach to participatory planning, starting from programme initiatives, village meetings, followed by poor householder meetings and villager congresses, then ends with the feasibility study, primary planning, plan adjustment and modification, examination and approval. In this way the reader is able to see how local people can plan, implement, supervise and monitor the whole planning process. It also looks at message and discussion theme creation as well as the principles of participatory approaches, methods and tools used in the planning process.

The processes described in the handbook have been tested in several case studies undertaken in rural Yunnan. Development workers who read this handbook will learn how to transform and use this framework to design and implement participatory approaches appropriate for their project situation. In addition, they should be able to set up a management system for training field staff, monitoring and documenting the implementation of the strategy and tools.

By integrating the participatory approach into specific village planning, the handbook filled the gap of training manuals in the Chinese language. It provides practical guidance and ideas for carrying out participatory planning in local communities and gives a framework of planning and tips that can be used in the context of China.

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THE COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Background

The Community-Based Conservation and Development Research Centre (CCDRC) was founded in 1999 and is based in Guizhou Normal University. It aims to explore participatory theories, methods and tools and promote the PRA approach to extend to the field of environment protection. It has implemented many development projects related to community-based conservation and development through cooperation with local nature reserves. At the same time, the centre works closely with several national and international NGOs and foundations, such as the Canadian Civil Society Project, Ford Foundation, Oxfam Hong Kong, International Crane Foundation (ICF), World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) and the Environmental Protection Bureau of Guizhou Province, to promote and popularise the PRA approach in biodiversity conservation in Guizhou Province.

Training methodologies

CCDRC uses participatory methods when developing projects related to sustainable natural resource management, environmental management, biodiversity

conservation, based on community development with particular focus on communities within and around natural reserves in China. So as to build the capacity of the government agencies working on environmental protection, CCDRC has developed a set of simple, practical analysing and training tools to train local government agencies. Training topics range from PRA tools, project management, PM&E, gender training, and leadership training.

Training manuals

A series of training manuals has been developed, including:

- *Handbook for rural development and management* (2003).
- *PRA training material and curriculum for 10 years planning for the poverty alleviation in Guangxi poverty alleviation office, Guangxi Province* (2002).
- *Handbook for project management* (2006).
- *Handbook for Guizhou environmental protection and sustainable development management* (2008).

The Guizhou Provincial Forestry Department and the Nature Conservation Bureau are becoming interested in participatory environmental protection and are beginning to hold related trainings on participatory protection.

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