Editorial

• Introduction

Most of this issue of *PLA Notes* is devoted to the use of participatory approaches to inform policy and shape institutions. The 'Participation, Policy and Institutionalisation' section draws on three workshops that were held earlier this year. The first two were held at the Institute for Development Studies, Sussex. They explored how PRA can be used to influence policy and how participatory approaches can become part of an organisation's culture.

The third workshop was held in Bangalore, India. It discussed the Attitude and Behaviour Changes which underpin effective participatory processes. This is known as the 'ABC of PRA'. It is central to any attempts to scale up participatory approaches and maintain the quality and effectiveness of PRA.

The papers, which are found at the end of this issue, draw on key materials presented at the three workshops and other, relevant papers received by IIED. They explore the opportunities and constraints to scaling up participatory processes and discuss how PRA can be linked to a wider and enabling policy environment.

PRA for policies and institutions is emerging as an important theme for practitioners. We welcome other contributions that address the debates raised by these papers or comment on the views expressed in this issue.

• In this issue

First however, this issue opens with a collection of more general articles. These fall into two main categories: agriculture and health. The first two articles share experiences of farmer-led farm trials in Africa and Asia. In the first article, four researchers from KVK in India (by T. Barik et al) reflect on four years of participatory research in Orissa. Their paper highlights the learning experience for farmers and researchers. It also demonstrates how the research agenda was focused and refined by farmer experimentation with two crops, groundnut and rice, in three successive trials.

On a similar theme, Ejigu Jonfa describes some of Farm Africa's experiences with 'Farmer Participatory Research' in Ethiopia. His paper demonstrates gender differences in cotton trial evaluation: men and women farmers used different criteria to evaluate various cotton varieties.

Continuing the gender theme, Wenny Ho shows how gender balanced participatory planning was promoted within an agricultural development project in Nicaragua. Her paper provides practical tips on how to empower women to contribute to the planning process.

Also in Latin America, Eleanor McGee describes the use of child health calendars with women in Honduras. She suggests that the pictorial approach is a practical way of keeping and monitoring child health records with rural women who are unable to read or write.

Carin and Duke Duchscherer describe an innovative way of assessing basic minimum needs. This uses a modified Venn diagram which enables communities to explore and prioritise village needs. This methodology can be used with different groups, such as women, extension workers and children, to contrast views on needs and priorities.

The '*Extracts*' section contains a diverse range of articles, including economics, conservation, evaluation and novel voting procedures. Cate Turton and Albert Aquino describe the heated debate that centred on a seasonal calendar on rice prices in Tanzania. They describe the

relationship between rice production, pricing and the policy implications of structural adjustment programmes on trading in agricultural produce.

Ute Reckers describes UNEP's approaches to participatory monitoring and evaluation. She describes how pastoralists evaluated different project activities in northern Kenya. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is an increasingly popular topic. In response to numerous requests, we would like to have a theme issue of *PLA Notes* on PM&E in the future. Please send us your experiences.

M. T. E. Mbuvi reflects on the naming of places after the natural environment. He describes how this can be an entry point for discussions and other methodologies (particularly transect walks) and can also be used in environmental education.

The last article in the *Extracts* sections is our only Northern case study in this issue. Carolyn Jones describes outsider and insider voting experiences from Scotland. This enables a comparison of the views of local people and facilitators and can also be used as training tool.

Our regular features are also included in this issue. The *Feedback* article explores a common problem among practitioners: how to undertake 'open-ended' appraisals without raising local expectations. This issue's example comes from Bart Pijnenberg and Daniëlla de Winter's work in Zambia. Because of extensive prior project experience in Zambezi District, local people were opportunistic and expectant of future project activities. In a thoughtful response from Senegal, Bara Gueye describes ways of 'evening up the stakes' so that local people become real partners rather than the objects of research and development processes.

For trainers in participatory learning, there is a useful 'Tips for Trainers' which relates to the Attitudes and Behaviour Change theme. Continuing our serialisation of the Trainers' Guide to Participatory Learning and Action, this issue looks at ways of preparing for training and facilitating.

As always, we welcome your comments and contributions on any of the issues raised in *PLA Notes*. In particular, the *In Touch* pages are your forum to share experiences and publicise networks, materials or training events. We look forward to hearing from you!

CALL FOR EXPERIENCES!

The next issue of *PLA Notes*, February 1997, is to be a theme issue on Methodological Complementarity, the use of PRA and other research and planning. Kathrin Schreckenberg's article in *PLA Notes* 24 (October 1995) described the use of RRA and conventional methods for her PhD research in Benin. We are looking for similar experiences that use a combination of methodologies but within a *development* context. Please send us your contributions for this issue.

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Reflections from farmer-led trials in India

T. Barik, R.N. Mohapatra, P.L. Pradhan and B.P. Mohapatra

• Introduction

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, (KVK), is a leading government organisation in the innovative transfer of technology in India. It is funded fully by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. This paper shares our experiences of participatory research, particularly farmer-led trials, over the last few years. The objective is to involve farmers in the decision making at all stages. Thus, trials are 'farmer-designed and farmer-implemented' with scientists acting as facilitators. Experiments are targeted towards Complex Diverse and Riskprone (CDR) villages.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was first introduced to the Farmer System Research/Extension (FSR/E) programme in 1992/93. The aim was to understand the local agricultural system in Salepali, a CDR village in Orissa, India.

For the PRA, a multidisciplinary team from the KVK moved to the target village. The team was divided into groups and different participatory exercises were carried out. These exercises enabled the scientists to learn about the different agricultural practices, problems and prospects in the village. Night stays were important for understanding village priorities and uncovering examples of community action.

• Shared learning

From the first PRAs, it was decided to concentrate on rice and groundnut as these emerged as the main village crops. Unique farmer innovations were recorded in groundnut cultivation. It was realised that the s

system had not previously been understood by the scientists and extension workers who held different opinions to the farmers. Various practices on groundnut cultivation were discussed among the group members. Table 1 shows how the views of the scientists and farmers differed in groundnut cultivation.

The scientists learned that the success of groundnut in the area depended on three things: sandy soil, timely planting and interculture (weeding) by plough. It appeared that without using the plough to weed, cultivation of groundnut may not continue, as hand weeding is too costly. The scientists also realised that farmers go on modifying the recommended cultivation practices until they become stable, sustainable and profitable for their particular farming system. These are good examples of how the scientists learned from the farmers and shows the importance of participatory research.

Various packages of practices for rice and groundnut were developed on the basis of the participatory trials. Their success depended directly on the ability of the scientists involved to learn from the farmers themselves.

This role reversal, with farmers adapting the researchers' practices, was very encouraging for the scientists. Initially the farmers did not believe that the scientists had come to the village to learn from them. When the farmers were told that the research station cultivated groundnut in a different way to local practices, they became anxious and repeated their cultivation practices. Some of the farmers even suggested coming to the research station to show the scientists how to grow groundnuts!

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Table 1. Differing views held by scientists and farmers in groundnut cultivation

Farmers' practices	Scientists' perspectives on practices)	Farmers' perspectives on practices
30 x 30 cm spacing	Normal recommendation is 30 x 10cm. The wider spacing reduces the number of plants and thus yield.	The trailing variety compensates by producing more number of branches and pods to fill the extra space and thus increases yield.
Trailing variety	Unsuitable for rain fed condition as uprooting will be a problem if the rain stops suddenly.	The variety gives high yield when sown at the right time. Plenty of family labour to irrigate in case of drought.
Cross ploughing for weeding purposes	Forces the farmer to adopt wider spacing which reduces plant stand.	The sunny weather needed for ploughing may only last for 2-3 days. Weeding can be completed if plough is used because it is quicker. Labour saved is diverted for work in paddy fields.
Urea topdressing	Urea ineffective, disrupts root nodulation	Yield is reduced if not topdressed.
Growing of groundnut and greengram on the same hill	It would reduce yield of groundnut	It meets family requirement of dal. If groundnut plant dies then greengram makes best utilisation of the applied farmyard manure and fertiliser.

- **Farmer-led trials**

Following the PRA, the farmers and scientists discussed options for on-farm trials that could address their problems. A first set of 'farmer-designed and farmer-implemented' trials was conducted in 1993/94.

At the end of these experiments, the farmers were impressed by the various treatments. Their stated priorities changed after reflecting on the outcome of these trials. This was encouraged by the scientists. Using the farmers' new prioritisation of problems, the hypotheses, types of trials and treatments were revised. This led to the designing of, and experimentation with, a secondary set of trials during 1994/95 and 1995/96. Thus, all trial modifications over the four year period were made at the request of local farmers.

The changing priorities were a direct result of the interactive trials. For example, the first problems that were investigated with rice were the 'use of poor quality seed mixes' and 'lack of knowledge about fertilisers'. In subsequent years, the rice problems addressed included: use of a urea topdressing, mixed cropping and growing of a longer duration variety.

An important feature of all the trials is that the farmers set the criteria for the way they are carried out (see Table 2).

Table 2. Farmers' criteria for trials

Activity	Rationale
Seeds should be supplied in early June	After onset of rain, when soil moisture is optimum, sowing will be finished within 3-4 days in the whole village
Size of each treatment should not be less than 0.15 hectares	This is the convenient size for doing various operations with bullock plough
Local method of sowing, interculture etc. should be followed	Other methods may not be suitable or economical

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- ### Research results

The results obtained and/or adopted on a larger scale by the farmers and for which follow-up programmes are being carried out during 1996/97 include the following.

- *Beusaning* is a common local practice of light ploughing in a rice field 25-30 days after germination. But in rice beusaning reduces the plant stand drastically. It is being replaced by manual weeding or herbicide applications;
- In-row sowing of rice behind the plough is better than broadcasting where the seed is scattered by hand. However, because the difference in yield is small, broadcasting is the better option if labour is short; and,
- For groundnut cultivation, those who do not possess much family labour could grow the erect, rather than trailing, variety (ICGS 44) with 30 x 10 cm spacing, and plough between rows only.

- ### Lessons learned about farmer-led trials

Scientists working with farmers should be dedicated and not enter the village with a superiority complex. People with skills in both agricultural treatments and participatory farming systems research should be included in the research team. Where possible, experienced lower-level staff (e.g. agricultural overseer) with extensive local knowledge should be brought into the research team.

An important skill for PRA practitioners is to be able to differentiate the information gained into fact, opinion, hearsay and assumption. Cross-checking information with different farmers in different places is one way of verifying information.

During the first year of experimentation both exploratory and repeat trials should be conducted. Scientists should remain present during sowing and application of fertilisers or chemicals because some farmers may apply the materials meant for the experiments in non-experimental plots.

When conducting farmer-led trials, those farmers participating get inputs for their farms. Other farmers, who are not included in the experimentation, may get jealous. Thus, a small village should be selected, so that most of the farmers can be included in the trials over a 2-3 year period. If this is not possible, then some other measures should be taken to involve the rest of the farmers e.g. through community natural resource management plans.

Agricultural officials must be aware of the PRA being undertaken by the scientists and extensionists. In this way, they will not be anxious about getting some important results at the end of only one season or year. They will understand that participatory approaches can take longer to deliver results. They should also not worry if the expenditure targets are not met during the planning phases. They need to understand that hurrying can lead to wrong decision making.

Scientists (mostly research station based), reviewing the progress of such projects should be aware of the objectives of participatory trials. It is important that new criteria are established to evaluate participatory on-farm trials.

- **T. Barik** Training organiser, **R.N. Mohapatra** Training Associate (Agricultural engineering) **P.L. Pradhan** Training Associate (Plant protection) **B.P. Mohapatra** Lecturer (Agricultural Extension), Regional Research Station, Chiplima, Orissa, INDIA 768025.

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Farmers' on-farm participatory research: experiences in Ethiopia

Ejigu Jonfa

• Introduction

FARM Africa is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) registered as a charity in Britain. One of its four Ethiopian project's is the Farmers' Research Project. This has been conducting projects in North Omo, Southern Ethiopia, since 1991 The project's aim, is to raise the incomes of resource poor households, by improving agricultural technology. Farmers Participatory Research (FPR) is the approach adopted by the project.

The Farmers' Research Project attempts to improve the institutional environment and level of knowledge about participatory research. It also aims to enhance the skills of the staff from government organisations (GOs) and NGOs in undertaking FPR. A number of project activities, such as studies and on-farm trials, are carried out to demonstrate and disseminate the approach.

Agricultural research, extension and development staff are trained in participatory approaches. This enables them to incorporate FPR into their own work programmes. By doing so, they can better participate with the farming community in the diagnosis, planning and implementation, as well as in the monitoring and evaluation of their projects. Thus, the project has played a facilitating role, enabling partner organisations to better assist farmers.

This paper presents the experiences and lessons obtained in conducting on-farm participatory research in the project area. It also highlights how PRA techniques are used in the on-farm trials programme.

• Farmer participatory research

Farmer participation in research is not a new concept. In Ethiopia, as in other parts of the world, experience has shown that technologies which are developed on research stations, are often not adopted by farmers. This is because the technologies do not meet farmers needs or recognise their constraints. Farming systems research has helped develop technologies that are more appropriate to small farmers, because farmers themselves actively participate in the generation and evaluation of technology.

For FARM-Africa, FPR is agricultural research in which farmers take part in making decisions about the research at all, or nearly all, its stages. This is considered as a development of farming systems research because more emphasis is placed on decision making by farmers. FPR uses existing research and information networks, incorporates farmers' knowledge, and helps farmers to undertake research.

• Experiences and methodology

One of the ways by which farmer participation is achieved is through conducting on-farm trials. These are discussed here according to the different research stages: diagnosis, planning, implementation, and evaluation.

• Diagnosis

A representative Peasant Association is selected in a given *wereda* (district) to conduct a diagnostic survey. This explores the farming system and identifies constraints to production. In most cases the 'representative' peasant association is the peasant association that represents a given agro-ecological zone (highland or lowland) in the wereda. The

peasant association is commonly selected in collaboration with other organisations operating in the area.

Site selection and methodology

Selection of the peasant association raises a number of questions: to what extent does the selected Peasant Association represent the agro-ecological zone under question? What are the relevant factors each in agro-ecological setting? In most cases information is not readily available and it is the local people's knowledge which plays the leading role in the selection of the study area.

At wereda level, the information available on the distribution of the Peasant Associations is assessed and discussed with farmers. The discussion encompasses the local category of the Peasant Associations, with respect to agroecology, and their views on the distribution of the peasant associations within these categories. Ultimately, a peasant association is chosen by the farmers which represents most, if not all, of the peasant associations.

For conducting diagnostic surveys, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques are used. Working with the chosen Peasant Association, the Farmers' Research Project staff make a visit to meet the community leaders, present the survey's objectives, set up an activity calendar and make an overview of the area.

The project staff and community leaders, together with the collaborating organisations, identify members of the community who will be involved in the survey. Other farmers are also met in the course of survey, in order to have representative groups (by age, gender and socio-economic settings). For the diagnostic survey, a multidisciplinary and multi institutional team, is formed. During the survey the members of this team facilitate and the farmers play the leading role.

Follow-up

After conducting the survey, reports are produced to disseminate the findings of the study. The report is also used to plan follow up action and on-farm trials.

For this project, the on-farm trial programme is driven by farmers interest. Thus, the subjects for research are the main problems identified during diagnostic surveys. The problems are tackled in the order of priority stated by farmers during in the survey. The prioritisation of problems was made by a large, mixed group of farmers, and, in most cases, there is consensus in their stated priorities.

Problems whose solutions can be addressed through research became the focus of the trials, provided there is sufficient evidence to initiate research. Sometimes, there is insufficient evidence to plan on-farm research. For instance, 'declining soil fertility' is one of the most important problems reported in a number of diagnostic surveys conducted in Wolaita (northern part of North Omo). Alley cropping and copper fertiliser trials were conducted in Kindo Koysha, part of Wolaita, to find a solution and investigate the soil fertility. However, the results from the trials did not show any effect in addressing the problem, or finding a solution.

Later on, it was realised that the evidence available of declining soil fertility (and its causes) was not sufficient to develop a solution. Hence, an additional in-depth study was carried out with increased farmers involvement. Its aim was to investigate the problem and its causes and developing alternative solutions. This is known as the 'Nutrient Cycling Project', a topical PRA, which was initiated within the framework of the Farmers' Research Project.

Problems such as cotton pests, sweet potato butterfly pest, shortage of fuel wood, shortage of livestock feed and erratic rainfall (drought) are those problems for which on-farm trials were initiated. The PRA techniques assisted an improved understanding of the farming systems and diagnosis of the problems. They also helped plan the on-farm research with farmer participation. Furthermore, better collaboration was attained and a collegiate relationship established in the subsequent on-farm research. The PRA process changed the attitude of the outsiders and enabled them to appreciate of indigenous knowledge of farmers.

The diagnosis stage helped identify farmers who could be involved in the follow up on-farm research. This has the advantage that they have already started the process and have directed the follow up action.

- ### Planning on-farm trials

The farmers are selected from the peasant associations where the diagnostic survey was conducted and from other peasant associations, which are found in similar situations. The farmers are representatives of different or same sex and age groups, depending on the type and objective of the trials. For example, in cotton pest and variety trials, a total of thirty five farmers are involved. Of these only six are female headed households. This is because cotton production is mainly the work of men in the area. By contrast, all of the people participating in the fuel saving stove trials were female. The problem of fuelwood shortage primarily affects women.

Once the farmers have been selected, those problems which can be addressed through research are further discussed. Group meetings are found to be a good way to learn more about the problem and possible solutions. Relevant research findings, specialists and literature are consulted to widen the range of possible solutions. Alternative solutions are discussed with farmers, as well as the type of trial to be carried out and its objectives. Finally, an operational calendar is set up, and agreement made on who is responsible for which activity.

- ### Implementation of the on-farm trials

In a group meeting, experimental methodologies, including the design, treatments, and data to be collected, are discussed thoroughly. Moreover, the importance of blocking, replication, as well as field variabilities, are carefully considered when selecting sites. These issues are discussed again during evaluation. Methodological discussions are held in the fields. This is not only practical but also helps raise the level of farmers understanding.

For agricultural trials, the necessary inputs are distributed and site selection, layout and planting is undertaken. The trial is monitored, and observations are made primarily by farmers, but also by project staff. To improve the interaction between participating farmers and outsiders, cross visits are organised. Farmers visit each others trials and share their experiences with project staff.

- ### Evaluation of the on-farm trials

The main emphasis is on farmers' assessments. Evaluation of the trial starts from the time of planting. It involves individual farmer's observations and discussion during cross visits. Farmers' preferences are identified based on their own criteria. These are listed at the time of evaluation, especially in group meetings. The treatments are then ranked and/or scored against each criterion.

For example, cotton pest and variety trials were conducted for three consecutive years and each year the trials were evaluated. The three years' evaluations indicate that similar criteria are consistently used. Furthermore, farmers have several selection criteria, which are mainly associated with the quality and quantity of yield. Interestingly, the evaluation indicates that farmers' selection criteria do not lead to the selection of a single treatment. Rather, they select a range of options to suit their diverse situations.

In most of the on-farm trials, farmer evaluations were not only made by the trial farmers. The wives or husbands of the trial farmers also take part.

For example, in the cotton variety and pest control trials, farmers who were directly attached to the trials made the evaluation with respect to treatment performance. The women (wives), were also provided with a small amount of seed cotton from each variety for spinning. They made their evaluation based on the use of cotton within the home. The women indicated additional criteria to be considered, associated with the quality, strength and ease or difficulty of use for ginning.

In the case of fuel saving trials, the evaluation was conducted entirely by women as the use of fuelwood lies wholly within their domain.

However, the evaluation included those women who were directly involved and their female neighbours.

As part of the evaluation, quantitative data was collected and statistically analysed. An attempt was made to correlate the results of farmers' assessments with those of statistical analyses. Some of the statistical analyses indicate no significant differences between different treatment plots. This was the case in the cotton variety and pest control trial: statistical analysis suggests no significant differences between plots. However, farmers had already made their decision to multiply and extend the varieties grown in their chosen or preferred plots. Clearly the farmers could distinguish differences between different plots based on their criteria for evaluation.

• **Conclusions**

Approaches such as, mutual respect of both parties as experts, close contact, repeated discussion, meetings and cross visits, play an important role in improving the level of understanding (especially the trial design) and participation by farmers. PRA methods, used at different stages of the on-farm trials, have enabled the farmers to develop a feeling of ownership of the trials. Of the methods employed during evaluation, ranking and scoring seem to be the most useful tools.

The experiences of the farmer participatory research aroused better participation by farmers and researchers (outsiders) in the process of undertaking research. The approaches and methodologies are being practised with a view to continue improving them through time.

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3

And what about women?
Promoting gender balanced participation

Wenny W. S. Ho

• Introduction

I would like to share experiences gained in promoting gender equality in an agricultural development project in Nicaragua. They represent important lessons for gender sensitive participatory diagnosis and are applicable to other organisations eager to improve the effectiveness of development efforts.

PRODETEC, the 'Support to Generation and Transfer of Agricultural Technology Project' works with the newly created Nicaraguan Institute for Agricultural Technology (INTA). It is financed by the Finnish Government. The development objectives are: to increase food security, to increase revenues to farm families, to empower farm units and to consolidate and institutionalise the generation and transfer of agricultural technology. The project is underpinned by two approaches: farming systems and gender, although the primary focus has remained on agricultural families. However, as analysis uncovers problems relating to women, the project directs activities to solve these dilemmas.

• Rapid gender analysis

At the start of the project, a rapid gender analysis was carried out. This explored the broad differences between male and female production systems. It focused on the division of labour, structural constraints and opportunities. Particular emphasis was placed on access to and control over resources and knowledge systems. A key difference was the identification of different household types, with an explicit focus on female headed households.

• Participatory diagnosis

To facilitate a participatory planning process, participatory diagnosis was developed by the project staff. The planning process begins with a participatory diagnosis in each Recommendation Domain. This is a group of farmers with similar characteristics facing similar constraints and opportunities. The participatory diagnosis is undertaken before the start of the agricultural season. Its results feed into project planning, which ends before the main agricultural activities in the fields start.

Participatory diagnosis begins with a review of the characteristics of the Recommendation Domain. The session then moves on to identify and prioritise problems, continues with a discussion of possible technological solutions and ends with the selection of technological alternatives to be tested in the next agricultural year.

Participatory diagnosis is facilitated by extensionists. In spite of their efforts and those of project staff, the percentage of women participating in the diagnosis sessions is below that of men. It varies from session to session (and from extensionist to extensionist), from 10 to 40 %, with 25 % as an average.

• Looking for gender equality

Introducing gender equality to the project was a daunting task because gender affects a wide range of project activities. A first step can be to augment the participation of women in the activities organised. However, it is not enough to strive for equal number of male and female participants. To examine the quality of

participation, other indicators should be developed.

When to participate

It is necessary to analyse when farmers participate. To promote active participation, it is essential that women have access to decision making moments. Each organisation has key moments or activities which determine the process and contents of the institutional planning and evaluation. These should be identified and male and female farmer participation promoted at the key times.

For example, within INTA, the participatory diagnosis session is a key moment because plans for the generation and transfer of technology are determined for the next agricultural year. It is essential to facilitate active gender balanced participation at this stage if both male and female farmers are to influence project activities.

How to participate

The following practical tips were developed during a workshop held to refresh extensionist knowledge of participatory diagnosis. They are methods of improving active participation and female participation during diagnosis sessions.

- people are more likely to participate in a relaxed environment in which they feel comfortable. Ice breaking sessions and the seating plan are important for setting a relaxed atmosphere in which women feel confident.
- in meetings one frequently comes across people who are said locally to be *chispa*, literally 'sparks'. These people function as catalysts because they motivate other people. They can be used to initiate discussion and provoke other people to participate. It should be noted that the catalyst person for men is not necessarily the same person who can catalyse women.
- increasing the number of women present in a meeting makes it easier for them to express their opinions.

Fostering women's participation is not simply letting them say something or letting them speak more. People can often express their

practical needs more easily than other constraints. This means that a project can get caught in 'doing activities' because people often say what they think we want to hear. Verbal and non-verbal clues must be used to identify real priorities and needs.

How to speak and express ideas

Active participation is only possible if one knows what the discussion is about. An extensionist should enrich a discussion about technological alternatives with local and relevant information on the advantages and disadvantages of each option. It is also important to relate the information to different members of the farm family: who is going to benefit, who will have to work, who has to contribute (e.g. fertiliser or land).

Participation of specific members of a farm family can be encouraged by inviting them to share their local experiences in a discussion: For example: *Doña Carmen, you also have been using this new variety. What do you think about your harvest?*

In Nicaragua, women generally do the weeding in the maize. When the discussion relates to this topic, women can be invited to express their opinions or experiences. The results of the rapid gender analysis are useful for facilitation, identifying appropriate moments to invite women to participate.

Is asking enough?

Women have often lacked the opportunity to learn how to express their opinions and defend them. Women may speak in a low voice because they don't know how to express themselves in a clear and convincing manner. Often, we noted that people started explaining their ideas before a woman had finished her point. A group may also not be receptive to female contributions. At times, men may laugh because women are discussing a subject not thought to be within the female domain. Men may oppose an idea simply because it was suggested by a woman. Alternatively, they may make fun of it and so the idea is rejected.

The more important the discussion, the more one encounters these kind of group processes. To promote gender equality in participation, it

is necessary to make clear that it is the responsibility of the facilitator to listen carefully to all participants and to make others listen too. It is also his or her responsibility to ensure contributions are valued and participants' self esteem raised.

Apart or together?

Another way to augment female participation is to let men and women discuss issues in separate groups. This can create a better forum for women to prepare themselves for a plenary. The moment for separation should be chosen carefully. If not managed, gender groups can cause feelings of jealousy and interrupt the process. To avoid this, it is valuable to bring men and women together in a plenary after separation to exchange their ideas and opinions.

Consensus and majorities

It is important to distinguish between sharing ideas and looking for consensus. Experience suggests that there are dangers in certain approaches to group decision making. Often the one who is talking most or talking loudly can push through his/her opinion. Seldom is this person a woman.

More important is the inherent discrimination against women when decisions are taken, for example by counting, voting or consensus. When there are 20 participants of which 25% are women (the average in PRODETEC), this results in a situation of 5 women and 15 men. If we look for the majority vote, gender interests of women seldom will prevail.

An important characteristic of female agricultural production in Nicaragua is diversification. Women manage a wider range of crops and animals than men. Achieving consensus for women's interests is more difficult than for men (see Box 1).

BOX 1

In the project area, nearly all the men agreed that problems in maize and beans are the priority. By contrast, when women expressed their priorities, they listed many different problems. Individual women only agreed on two or three priorities. Thus, if the mens' and womens' problems are scored according to frequency, the problems identified by women may not appear on the group list. Unless one is aware of the diversification differences between men and women, women's problems appear less important.

- **Finally**

Using a gender balanced approach to participatory technology generation and transfer has led to a more gender sensitive understanding of farming systems for extensionists and technical staff. The question 'who does what?' has contributed to a better directed and more successful attempt at promoting female farmer participation.

In spite of these positive contributions, the gender approach in this project related more to the practical aspects of project activities than to strategic gender needs. To be able to identify and respond to strategic needs, existing structural gender inequalities need to be addressed specifically. This needs more than attention to who controls resources. It requires a change of attitude and a commitment to empower those who are at the bottom.

Donors often prioritise gender sensitive development. Our experiences suggest this may conflict with the working practices of national institutions. Conflicts can arise because gender policies are more donor driven than locally demanded. It is important to push for gender equality, but balance is important. A high or low profile gender approach should be adopted according to what is appropriate and sensitive to the local context.

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4

Child health calendars: a type of case history

Eleanor McGee

- ## Background

The women who took part in this exercise are the health representatives for a rural women's programme in Honduras. Each of them is selected by the base group she belongs to and attends workshops, the content of which she shares with her group in between visits from the core health team. The women had been attending these workshops for over a year at the time of doing this exercise, which served as a review of the programme. It enabled the women to explore patterns of illness and analyse them, drawing on the knowledge acquired by their participation in the programme.

Previous attempts to keep health diaries to record illness, and how it was treated, within their families and communities had failed. About a third of the health representatives and a greater proportion of all the women involved in the programme are illiterate. Because of this, drawing is a key method of recording and sharing information..

- ## Approach

The aim of this exercise was to take a case history of children under 5 years of age, recording both illnesses and developmental milestones over the previous 12 months.

First the women were asked to draw a picture to represent each month of the year, startingwith the previous month and working backwards. Months are the usual method of describing time locally but each month may be characterised by a local event, religious feast, or some aspect of the agricultural cycle. The idea was to give each woman the chance to draw something which evoked that month for her.

Below each picture, the women were asked to draw what was happening in the life of their youngest child during that time, for the previous 12 months. They were asked to include progress as well as illnesses. A few of the women had no young children so reported on a grandchild. When mothers could not recall when an incident had occurred they were encouraged to focus on pictures for each month to help them to recall what else was happening in their lives at that time. The calendar was used to represent the previous year, working backwards from the present time.

- ## Results

Generally, grandmothers could not recall as well as mothers, except in those families where the grandmother was the child's principle carer. Not all the women put a symbol for each month, or recorded an event in the child's life for each month. Many of the symbols represent national or religious holidays or festivals, and the agricultural cycles, but some have personal or family significance. The women come from different communities at different altitudes so the crops and timing of harvests differ too.

Table 1. A summary of three months from the collected child health calendars

Month	Symbol chosen by woman to represent the month	Number of women who chose the symbol	Event (illness suffered by child or developmental milestone achieved)[1]	Number of women with the same event for their child
December	Birth of Jesus	4	Swollen	1
	Posada (Advent tradition)	2	Crawling	1
	Nactamales (Christmas Food)	2	Malnourished, no weight gain, vaccinated	1
	Presents	3	Had a cold but carried on playing	1
January	Sacks of harvested coffee	1	Swollen (oedematous)	1
	Honduran Women's Day	4	Vomiting	1
	Friendship Day	1	Chicken pox	1
	Vegetables in season	2	Playing happily with his brothers	1
	The Bible	1		
February	School year starts	3	Problems with walking because of weakness	1
			Vomiting	1
			Now eating mashed potatoes	1
			Has parasites	1

[1] The women represented this with a picture and wrote or explained verbally the meaning.

Illness is almost certainly under-reported in the calendar, as many children suffer diarrhoea for a day or two nearly every month. Colds and upper respiratory tract infections are common but hardly appear in the calendar. Perhaps episodes of illness of longer duration, or those considered to be more serious are recorded in the calendars. This may reflect different perceptions of what constitutes illness. Furthermore, women are unlikely to remember all the ailments suffered by one of their many children over a year period. As the youngest child is in general sick most often, and receives a large share of the mother's attention, this problem was minimised by studying the youngest child.

A more accurate record for each child may be obtained by talking individually with each mother and checking what she recorded and its significance. In this case each women presented her calendar to the group and explained what it showed.

- **Discussion**

Only nine calendars were completed, yet even in this small number patterns emerge. The highest incidence of diarrhoea was reported in May and June when the rains are heaviest. The cases of malnutrition (described as 'swollen' or 'too weak to walk') were in December and January. This is before the harvest and when red kidney beans, which are both the chief protein source and a major contributor to overall energy intake, are at their most expensive.

Presenting their calendars to each other, the women began to comment on the patterns of illness and their own assumptions. For example, while one had attributed diarrhoea in June to eating 'new beans' there were two other cases of diarrhoea that month and one in a child which was barely weaned so would not have been eating large amounts. They began to question whether in fact this diarrhoea was linked to the onset of the rains.

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The women were very excited by what the calendars showed them. It is very difficult for busy mothers with a low level of literacy to keep any kind of health records. These calendars could perhaps be used sequentially to show how patterns of illness change with intervention in the form of health education or vaccination. In this form they provide data accessible to both professionals and the community affected.

In the project described here, people often stated that there were fewer cases of diarrhoea now that they had learnt about its causes and prevention. Calendars from consecutive years could be used as a form of monitoring and evaluation. This method is retrospective and its reliability can be questioned. However, I feel that by taking one month at a time and using a symbol to aid memory, its reliability is increased.

Through experimenting with this method, I have found that it helps to first build rapport with the group in order to gain meaningful data. This approach may be of limited use if it is introduced to a group who are not used to working together, or who have no previous experience with visualisation techniques.

I have found that women's availability or willingness to dedicate time to participatory learning and evaluation is limited. A woman's day in the rural environment tends to revolve around the demands of children and spouse, and the essential household chores. She may be able to spare an hour or two at a pre-agreed time. However, to have all the women in a community working all day on PRA exercises (as has been described with men) is not feasible in rural Honduras.

- **Summary**

I had not found satisfactory methods of keeping health records which work for rural populations. The calendars perhaps have the potential to do so. Unfortunately I was not with this project long enough to expand upon it or further explore its potential. In a new area it would be necessary to look at climate and food availability through-out the year; for this group it was already known.

The strength of this technique is that it is 'owned' by the participants. They decide how to represent the months (or other local time period used), and which illnesses are worth recording. It is a clear pictorial record, enabling them to see seasonal variations and, if used sequentially, annual ones. For planning health education it is potentially useful as it shows which childhood illnesses are the most common, or perceived to be the greatest problems, their seasonality and even their causes according to local beliefs. The women were not asked to record what they believed to be the cause of the illness but they often did offer an explanation. This insight into people's perception of illness and its causes is what is so often the key missing factor in health interventions. If people do not perceive something as a problem they will not be receptive to education about preventing it or alleviating it.

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Assessing perceptions of 'basic minimum needs': a modified Venn diagram technique

Carin Duchscherer and Duke Duchscherer

- ## Introduction to a BMN approach

The concept of Basic Minimum Needs (BMN) emerged in the late 1970s as an alternative approach to development. It aims to enhance the targeting of primary health care programmes which previously had limited success in reaching rural communities. BMN is a socially-oriented and community-based development approach to fulfilling basic human and community needs. Ideally, it represents a shift away from a sectoral view of development, towards a more holistic process. It strives for equity through democratic participation.

The objectives of the BMN approach include:

- improving the quality of life through enabling local people and communities to meet their own basic minimum needs;
- strengthening intersectoral collaboration among government sectors and encouraging partnerships between people, government sectors and NGOs; and,
- ensuring community participation and self-reliance in development.

Broad categories of BMN indicators have been developed. But as 'needs' are context specific, there are no universal standards by which BMN can be assessed. Each village's BMN must be assessed individually to ensure that appropriate problems, needs and opportunities are identified.

Yet there is a significant methodological weakness in the BMN process of involving communities in identifying their priority needs. Conventional surveys, in one form or another, have been the main tool used to conduct BMN assessments. These form the basis of project planning and implementation.

Approaches are needed that can be used by local communities to assess BMN. These should be simple to understand and appropriate to the local level of education and skills. Once delineated, they should provide a methodology for communities to assess their own problems, determine priorities, plan action and monitor and evaluate actions taken. We believe that a modified Venn diagram (used with a range of other PRA techniques), is an effective means for communities to assess their own BMN.

- ## The BMN venn diagram

Our modified Venn diagram is referred to as the *BMN Venn Diagram*. It enables villagers to identify perceived basic minimum needs, assess their relative fulfilment at village level and evaluate their relative importance (this is the first stage in priority setting).

In this approach, villagers are asked what they need for a good quality life. Symbols are collected (or drawn) by the participants to represent each identified need. An additional symbol is chosen to represent the village.

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Figure 1. Basic minimum needs Venn diagram, Dajjeghona village, Bangladesh
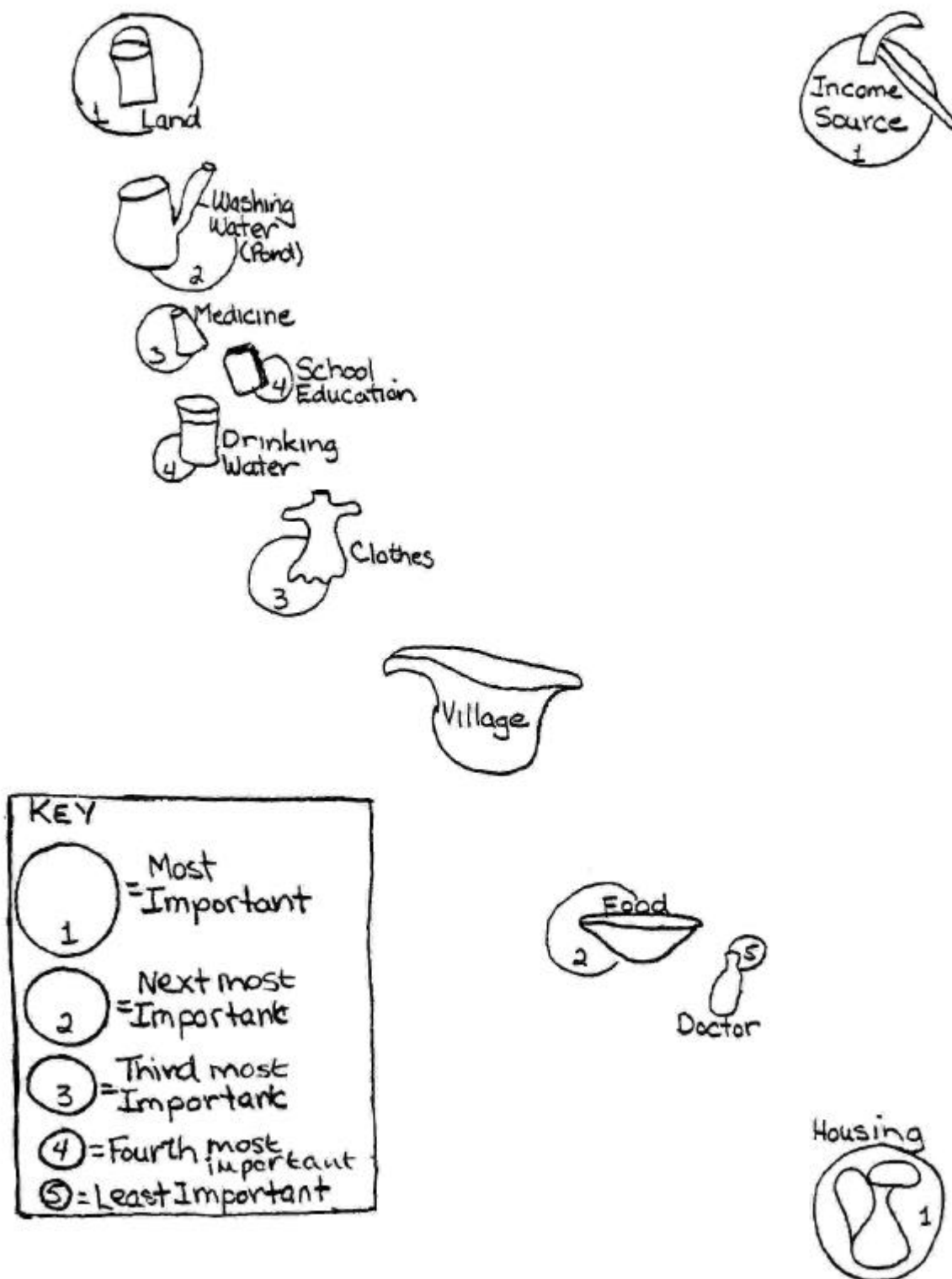
Note that a symbol close to the village means that the need for that item is being met.

(Participants included: Abu Kalam, Nur Lamen, Geb Anu, Aziz, Hussein, Deda, Slalom, Muajjem. Facilitator: Carin Duchscherer. Translator: Muajjem Hessain, April 1995)

Next, participants are requested to place the symbols in relation to the village. Each need's symbol is placed on the village symbol if the need is being met, far away from the village symbol if the need is not being met and a relative distance between these two perceived extremes if the need is partially met.

After completing this task, villagers are requested to rank each need according to its importance using conventional Venn diagram discs. A limited number of each sized disc (see below) is used to begin the process of priority ranking. After completing the diagram, more discussion is held to understand community perceptions and ideas in more detail.

The purpose and content of the BMN Venn Diagram is very easy for villagers to understand. Participants become quite spirited when arranging the symbols on the ground. An example of a BMN Venn Diagram is shown in Figure 1. In this case, land, housing and income are the most important needs, none of which are currently being met.

In our first attempts at using the BMN Venn Diagram, the participants had an unlimited supply of each sized disc. However, the largest disc (representing primary importance) was used most frequently and rarely were the smaller discs used at all. This had both advantages and drawbacks. An advantage was that, as outsiders, we were informed of the many community needs which were considered important. A drawback was that it was more difficult to undertake a priority ranking, especially when time is pressing. Thus, we later found it effective to limit the discs to 2, 3 or 4 of each size depending on the number of needs articulated. In this way priority ranking was expressed in the first diagram.

A clear initial question is crucial to the success of the BMN Venn Diagram. This is especially important when working with children as key informants. For example, there is a big difference between asking community members 'what is necessary for a satisfactory life?' or 'what do you need for a happy life?' compared with 'what do you need?'. The former questions bring forth broad categories of basic needs, the latter a 'wish list' which the

development agency may have trouble granting!

Groups do not necessarily base their prioritisation of needs on fundamental necessities (i.e. food, water etc.). Instead, they may articulate priorities felt at a village level. In Hathazari village, Bangladesh, people felt that their housing needs were not being met at all. This information seemed strange given that appropriate houses could be seen in the village. During the discussion, it was learned that the people were landless. They did not even own the land on which their houses were built. They felt they could be displaced at any time by the landlord. Thus, the criteria used for their housing need were strongly linked with security issues.

• **Similarities and differences**

The attitudes and perceptions of different people vary. The BMN Venn Diagram shows how stated needs, and the criteria used to determine relative fulfilment of those needs, may differ between different groups. Variations may be due to gender differences or geographical, social, cultural, environmental and economic factors which impact on a community's livelihood.

For example, in the Himalayan region of Ladakh, Northern India, most villages are isolated and cut-off by snow for several months of the year. In these areas, people's priority needs revolve around issues of access to basic services such as health, education and transport.

The BMN Venn Diagram was introduced to several groups of government health extension workers (medical officers, health assistants and family welfare assistants) in Bangladesh. Because they originated from different areas, we asked them to depict a 'typical' village. Each group participated in the construction of a diagram. Over the course of several days, a number of BMN Venn Diagrams were constructed and discussed by the different groups.

The groups were asked how they thought their diagrams would compare with those of other health extension workers and villagers. Most groups stated that 85% of villagers would have the same diagram as they did and *all* other family welfare assistants and health assistants would have exactly the same diagram as their own. They were quite surprised to see the extent of the differences, including omissions, additions, differences in priority ranking etc..

By participating in this process and comparing their results with villagers' diagrams and those of other groups, a process of attitudinal change began. Many health extension workers felt the exercise was helpful for effective programme planning and implementation. This was summarised by a health assistant who said '*first we must know the needs and ideas of villagers and then we can act*'.

Children in a variety of villages in Northwest India had the opportunity to share their perceptions of what they need for a satisfactory life. The top two priority needs of these children were parents and education. Children thought that parents were important because they provide them with food, clothing and other items. Interestingly, they stated that parents are also important because they can take over some of the work, allowing children to study! However, most village children in this area considered that their education needs were not being met satisfactorily. They were able to share some ideas as to how to improve the situation.

• **Conclusion**

Our experiences highlight that a 'community' is not a homogenous unit. Different groups may have different ideas on what constitutes 'basic minimum needs'. When the degree of heterogeneity is relatively high (i.e. caste, class, religion, communal distinctions, etc.), it may be necessary for different groups to construct separate BMN Venn Diagrams. These can serve to educate and increase awareness about differences in perceived needs. Used together with other PRA tools, BMN Venn Diagrams can assist in the protracted process of consensus building for community-wide action plans.

The BMN Venn diagram gives village women, men and children the opportunity to express their basic minimum needs in a manner that is meaningful to them. The diagrams and discussion can provide an entry point for the community to contemplate, discuss and reach consensus on the most significant needs in their area. The BMN Venn Diagram is proving a useful PRA tool as it enables a community to begin prioritising their needs and move from assessments to planning for action.

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Participation, policy and institutionalisation
An overview

John Thompson, Jo Abbot and Fiona Hinchcliffe

• Introduction

Over a five day period, more than 70 PRA practitioners from over 30 countries, representing a range of government and non-government agencies and a cross-section of disciplines, took part in two related workshops at the Institute of Development Studies, UK (13-17 May 1996). The theme of the workshops was participation, policies and institutions. The aim of these twin events was to take stock of current trends, review best practice, and explore how recent participatory initiatives have led to policy changes and the transformation of organisational systems, structures, procedures and cultures.

This section of *PLA Notes* includes some of the key papers presented at the two workshops and draws out some of the main conclusions of the working group discussions. Demonstrating a more general interest in policy and institutions, this section also includes papers on these themes which were submitted independently to *PLA Notes* (see articles by Warner et al., Wilkie and Nacionales, and Steinich in this issue).

In *PLA Notes* 24, Victoria Johnson encouraged those engaged in field level PRA work 'to consider how this does or does not, and can or can not, influence policies. It is in the influencing of policies that lasting changes can be brought about'. She also suggested that linking PRA field research to external policy work `must be coupled with an internal process of understanding and capacity building'. This is the institutionalisation of PRA: the process by which organisations, and individuals working within them, adapt themselves to facilitate and promote participatory learning at all levels. The collection of papers in this issue suggest that the policy environment and institutional culture within which PRAs are undertaken are important factors that influence, if not determine, the long term success, sustainability and replication of participatory processes.

• Participatory approaches and policy change

The first workshop examined the influence of participatory approaches on policy formulation and implementation. One question that emerged is how appraisals undertaken to explore policy related issues can be participatory. Many of the papers noted that few (if any) benefits accrue to local people through undertaking these appraisals.

Policy formulation is a lengthy process. Direct benefits from policy change are only likely to accrue in the long term. During appraisal, information is more likely to be extracted from local communities than shared. Policy-related research tends to be more of a 'one-off event' than a process of dialogue. Furthermore, the agenda for discussion is clearly set by outsiders. Thus, policy-related appraisals tend to be more RRA than PRA. Many of the authors discuss their use of either term in the context of their study. This reflects different perspectives and the specific circumstances under which the studies were taken.

The emerging themes from the policy workshop can be summarised into three main areas:

• The use of RRA and PRA to inform policy;

- the use of RRA and/or PRA to help local people understand how policy changes affect them; and,
- the use of PRA to link local people better to the process of policy formulation.

RRA/PRA to inform policy

There are two main ways in which participatory approaches can help to inform policy. Firstly, RRA can diversify perspectives and help focus the policy debate to local realities. Secondly, including policymakers in an RRA team can be an effective way of exposing them to local people's realities.

Karen Schoonmaker Freudenberger's article draws on her experiences from Madagascar and Guinea where both these approaches were used. She notes that the information obtained through RRAs helped to ground the policy in real world issues. However, because these studies are usually carried out in a few communities, policymakers may choose to disregard the information on which it is based. It is difficult to convince those who are entrenched in the idea of sampling frames of the benefits of information gathered using RRA.

This is why involving policymakers in the research process is such an advantage. They are more likely to understand the data and be able to defend its use within an organisation. A number of articles support this view (e.g. Pimbert et al., Box 3), suggesting that the experiential learning gained through RRA enables policymakers to accept and value the diversity of views that may be raised.

It is important to note that the results from RRA in a few communities should not be directly extrapolated to a larger population. Rather, RRA provides the context and sets the framework for the policy debate. It demonstrates the diversity of local situations which policy should be able to take into account. The challenge for policy makers is to strive for socially-inclusive policy that incorporates this diversity and is more responsive to the needs of those people who have traditionally been marginalised.

The use of PRA/RRA to inform policy has also been the main aim of the World Bank-sponsored Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs, see Box 1). Tony Dogbe's article describes in detail a PPA in Ghana. This article suggests that PPAs increase local capacity in participatory research. However, they failed to build progressively on the information gained, consolidate learning and follow-up sufficiently on the PRA findings.

Many of the papers, including those on PPAs, emphasise that it is difficult to link RRA or PRA directly to a change in policy. Policy making is often an opaque, complex, non-linear process. There are many influencing factors. It is difficult to identify the impact that any particular study or event has had on the decision-making process. However, there are often other 'spin-off' benefits from participatory research, such as capacity building. These are discussed in many of the papers (see, for example, articles by Tony Dogbe and Karen Schoonmaker Freudenberger).

PRA to explain policy to local people

Markus Steinich's article shows how PRA can be used to present complex policy changes to local people. He describes how local people can explore their relationship with a range of institutions that impact upon their lives. He uses interaction diagrams to bring people into an institutional change debate and enable a local evaluation of various organisations.

Linking local people to policy formulation

The ultimate goal of participatory approaches is to ensure that local people have a say in policies that affect them. The article by Michel Pimbert et al. on human/wildlife interactions highlights the grim results of policy making uninformed by local people. In two protected areas in India, local people were excluded, depriving them of their livelihood base. National Park policy making was simplified by excluding people but its implementation was more complex because local people were angered by the process. In this case, the policy making process continues. Joint management agreements are now being developed between the government agencies, conservation agencies and local people.

> ### BOX 1
> ### PARTICIPATORY POVERTY ASSESSMENTS
>
> Participatory Poverty Assessments (PPAs) are rapid, qualitative assessments, promoted by the World Bank and supported by national governments. They are designed to gather poor people's perceptions of key issues related to poverty reduction. The premise is that involving poor people in the analysis will ensure that the strategies identified for poverty alleviation will reflect their concerns, include their priorities and identify the obstacles to development.
>
> PPAs have been carried out in a wide range of countries in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and especially Africa. Participants at the IDS workshop heard five detailed reports of experiences with PPAs, four in Africa (Ghana, Zambia, South Africa and Mozambique) and one from the Caribbean (Jamaica), as well as insights from several other country cases. As these case studies made clear, all of the PPAs conducted to date have been diverse in both objectives and outcome, but they do share certain common attributes, including:
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> enriching the poverty profile through illustrating dimensions of the experience of poverty and vulnerability which conventional poverty studies based on statistical analyses tend to ignore;
> expanding the understanding of the impact of public expenditures and services on the poor through eliciting their perceptions on the accessibility and relevance of social and economic services;
> illustrating the constraints faced by different social groups when trying to take up market-based opportunities;
> contributing to policy formulation through outlining the impact of restrictive regulations on poor households and groups;
> understanding appropriate public policy on 'social safety nets' for vulnerable groups by examining local experiences in the operation of formal and informal social support systems;
> illustrating the capacities of poor people to act independently through local organisations.
>
> PPAs have helped senior decision makers to recognise the importance of including qualitative information in their analysis of poverty. Bank officials and government decision makers treat seriously the data gathered through the PPAs. As a result, this information has helped to shape the development of key policy documents. Beyond that, however, there has been a sporadic commitment to follow-up, attitudinal shifts or institutional capacity strengthening in the countries where the PPAs have been undertaken. Consequently, the inclusion of all stakeholders and the follow-up at all levels (within the World Bank, with policy makers and poor people) has remained limited.

Michael Warner et. al. show how information gathered using PRA can be presented in a form that is coherent to policymakers. Drawing on ideas from conflict resolution and environmental impact assessment, the authors describe the 'Conflict Analysis Framework'. It is a method of linking information gained from PRA with local people to the policy formulation process.

The article also describes the use of community action proposals (CAPs) which are designed 'to address the problem of policy-based PRAs raising false short-term expectations'. They 'seek to bring rapid and tangible benefits to the participating communities'. CAPs are local project activities that are identified during the Conflict Analysis Framework. They are projects that the community can undertake with limited resources and support.

Mechanisms for influencing policy through PRA

Many of the papers provided insights into effective approaches for influencing policy to become more participatory. Anil Shah describes the role that NGOs can play in influencing public policy. He suggests that entering the policy arena is important for NGOs as it enables them to encourage governments to streamline bureaucracy and facilitate bottom-up development processes.

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However, he is realistic about the difficulties of influencing policy. He describes the policy arena as a 'full bus': policy makers are pre-occupied, busy and are bombarded by a plethora of lobbyists. One needs, therefore, to be very strategic in the way that policy change is targeted. His article outlines in detail the steps that are required. This is also illustrated in Box 2 which describes a Ugandan NGO's experiences with influencing policy changes for more participatory health care. It demonstrates the protracted negotiations that occur prior to policy changes.

BOX 2
EXPERIENCES IN POLICY INFLUENCING, UGANDA

In early 1992, debate began on how to make the Primary Ministry of Health Care (PHC) more comprehensive with greater emphasis on community participation. A small Inter-Ministerial/Agency task force was established, comprising key officials from various ministries, local government, UNICEF and an NGO, the Uganda Community Based Health Care Association (UCBHCA).

Their remit was to draft a National Strategy Document and guidelines for Community Participation in primary health care. This was completed and presented to the Government at the end of 1993. However a long period elapsed before the final document was finalised. This phase involved consultative meetings, short workshops, waiting for comment from senior level policymakers and advisors, dialoguing, correspondence and re-drafting work.

The rather long period of waiting for final approval was characterised by uncertainty and a need to re-confirm the facts, processes and procedures proposed. Many people feared the unknown implications of the guidelines. The top bureaucrats were worried that a step towards active community participation and empowerment would result in their loss of power.

Formal and informal lobbying and advocacy culminated in the publication and final approval of two main Government of Uganda Health Policy documents:
The Three Year Health Plan Frame 1993 - 1996 (officially recognised NGOs as key partners in health care delivery)
The National Guidelines for Community Participation in Primary Health Care, 1993 (provided justification for community participation and ways of ensuring it within the health care system).

Lessons learned:
effective policy influencing requires patience and persistence;
alliances should be formed with other lobbying groups and reconciliatory rather than confrontational approaches should be used at all times.

Action plan for the future:
maintain existing close working relations with all related organisations;
build the capacity of government and NGO staff in participatory learning approaches.

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- **Institutionalisation of participatory approaches**

For over a decade, participatory research and development approaches have proven their efficacy for local development. Whatever type of organisation employs them, participatory approaches have implications for management style, operating procedures and organisational culture. Participatory approaches are now being adopted by large, government bureaucracies, donor agencies, development banks, large NGOs and universities. Such scaling up offers tremendous opportunities for expanding the active involvement of poor people in major development and research programmes. At the same time, however, there is also a real risk of misuse and abuse as approaches and methods that have been used at the local level move into the mainstream.

The scaling up of participatory approaches is occurring at such a rapid rate that there has been little opportunity for research and learning on its implications. The second IDS workshop focused on best practice for institutionalising participatory approaches to development.

- **Issues**

Scaling up and scaling down

We need to recognise that the adoption and institutionalisation of participatory approaches may have implications not only for large organisations, but also for local groups and community-based organisations on the ground. We need to learn how to scale down to meet local needs while applying on a large scale.

Kamal Kar and Sue Phillips describe their experiences of institutionalising participatory approaches in the slum improvement projects in India. Their article highlights the risks of standardisation that can occur when scaling up. It also demonstrates how follow-up activities can easily be neglected, so that PRA remains at the appraisal stage. Their article suggests `scaling down' to success stories where the PRA is not an end in itself but leads to project activities. The article also outlines their experiences of innovative and experiential

learning by allowing slum dwellers to describe directly their life to project staff.

Larry Nacionales and Maxwell Wilkie describe the experiences of a European Union project in Guimaras Province, the Philippines. They outline the efforts made by the project to avoid the standardisation of PRA in scaling up participatory approaches to the provincial level.

Lack of quality assurance

Nilanjana Mukherjee describes the process of incorporating participatory approaches into the nation-wide system for development planning in Indonesia. This article outlines the real problems of maintaining high quality participatory learning within a system of tight deadlines and national planning structures. In this environment, 'participation' became manipulative, coercive and regimented.

It remains very difficult to assure quality in training, practice or promotion, as there are no commonly held standards on which to judge performance (see Box 3). Anybody can claim to be an 'expert' in participatory approaches and there is no sure way to determine his/her authenticity until after the work is done. As participatory approaches are institutionalised and applied on a large scale, there can be a drift towards standardisation and a loss of quality.

Somesh Kumar reviews a recent workshop in Bangalore. This addressed many quality issues through its focus on the 'Attitude and Behaviour Changes' that should accompany PRA. The workshop suggested ways in which training, institutionalisation and scaling up of participatory approaches can ensure that appropriate attitudes and behaviour are prominent. The workshop culminated in an appeal to donors and governments to "take a close, careful and self-critical look" at the importance of creating the mechanisms which support appropriate attitudes and behaviour and ensure "true and lasting participation". It is reproduced in this issue of *PLA Notes*.

Contradictory donor policies

Participatory approaches are extremely popular among donors who remain interested in saving money and achieving tangible results quickly. These approaches are increasingly included in

terms of reference and project guidelines, whether appropriate or not. Some donors have begun to push their programmes and projects to use PRA or work 'in a PRA-like manner', without necessarily understanding the implications of what this entails[1]. Donors of NGOs have also been rushing to do the same.

Unfortunately, many continue to set short-term physical 'targets' (e.g. kilometres of rural roads built, hectares of irrigated land rehabilitated, etc.) and use financial indicators (e.g., amount of allocated funds spent in Financial Year X) as measures of success. At the moment, institutions are attempting to adopt participatory approaches without changing their existing operational procedures.

This makes it difficult for programmes to employ participatory approaches appropriately, as they are still expected to initiate viable - and visible - projects almost as soon as funds are allocated. Project money is spent on infrastructure and other capital improvements to show results quickly and ensure the continued flow of funds in future years. Furthermore, most project proposals and budgets are written prior to understanding or exploring the needs and priorities of local people. Such contradictory policies are pulling public agencies in opposite directions.

Bureaucratic inertia

There are clear cases of institutional resistance among some agencies to an approach whose outcomes cannot be predicted. Some of these obstacles are structural: top-down systems have difficulty handling a bottom-up approach. Some are professional: some agency staff view participatory approaches as too demanding (in terms of personal commitments and human resource investments), too challenging and, therefore, too professionally risky. They want to know the answers before they begin working on the problems. With an open-ended, iterative, participatory approach, knowing the answers

before you start is - or should be - an impossibility.

Mechanistic applications

Linked to the previous two items is the rigid, mechanistic and unimaginative way some institutions are now applying participatory approaches. Simply because an institution has made a policy decision to employ a participatory approach does not necessarily mean that it is using it in a responsive, dynamic and flexible manner. This is exemplified in the article by Kamal Kar and Sue Phillips where PRAs were rigidly applied from 9 - 10 am each day!

All too frequently, 'participatory' approaches are being applied within rigid, top-down, standardised frameworks that constrict decision-making, limit the range of possible development or research options, and, ultimately, diminish the effectiveness of the efforts. The focus is on *product* (i.e., measurable results) rather than on *process* (i.e., the manner and means of achieving those results). This holds true for both training and field practice.

Lack of capacity to strengthen capacity

The demand for participatory training support, training materials and teaching aids is growing rapidly. Unfortunately, there are few agencies anywhere in the world with the capacity to strengthen other institutions' capacities in the training and application of participatory approaches on any significant scale. This leads to the few qualified agencies becoming overwhelmed by requests for assistance. Moreover, various 'expert' consultants and institutions step in to meet this training demand, sometimes with disastrous consequences

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[1] Without deriding the attempts of donors to embrace and apply participatory approaches, few of them recognize that you do not 'do' a PRA. All participatory approaches must be seen as part of a broader *process* of institutional reorientation and transformation, not simply a collection of 'tools' to be applied by external consultants for gathering information quickly.

BOX 3
REFLECTIONS ON PRA IN ETHIOPIA

I share my experiences of how PRA is learned, internalised and diffused within an institution. It is based on my experiences with Save the Children Fund, Ethiopia.

PRA is not easy to spread successfully. In terms of maximising the policy and institutional impact, PRA should be adopted through senior managers, planners and policy makers. These people influence the processes of adopting and diffusing the practice of PRA. PRA reports read by unenlightened decision makers are likely to be dismissed as of doubtful quality. Those who have been trained in PRA will understand much better how it was prepared and appreciate its value. Moreover, the spread of PRA may be hastened because it is supported by higher levels.

But, how much emphasis is given in trainings for attitude and behavioural changes? The easiest part of PRA is teaching its tools, e.g maps and chapatti diagrams. The most difficult part is teaching the fundamental principles which demand a change in behaviour and attitude. How much can people change long standing behaviours over the course of a training event? I fear that PRA may be hijacked as development dscourse. We may speak PRA while doing different things. The current demand for PRA is as high as the price of trainers/facilitators. A quality-contolled training approach is required: short trainings cannot change attitudes in the long term. Without change, poorly facilitated and performed PRAs might result in incorrect analyses and conclusions.

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This can lead to disillusionment and frustration on the part of some agencies. They expect to 'scale up' the new participatory approach quickly because they soon encounter this shortage of skilled trainer-practitioners.

The search for shortcuts

Participatory approaches are not substitutes for thorough preparation, long-term planning, constructive dialogue and sustained interaction. Yet many agencies naively assume that a single, brief, participatory exercise with a group of local people will lead to positive and lasting change. What is abundantly clear is that *no* participatory approach offers a quick solution to complex problems; there is no shortcut to success.

The first participatory encounter between an external enabling agency and a local community should be seen as a beginning, not an end in itself. It is the start of a long, complicated, but mutually beneficial journey of joint analysis, self-critical awareness (for both insiders and outsiders), capacity strengthening, resource mobilisation and, ideally, the initiation of a sustainable development process.

NOTE

The IDS workshop papers are currently being compiled into two books which should be published in the near future. One book focuses on the PRA and policy theme `*Whose voice?* and the other on institutionalisation of participatory approaches `*Who changes?'.* For further information on the workshops, papers or books, please contact: Jenny Skepper, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, UK.

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The use of RRA to inform policy: observations from Madagascar and Guinea

Karen Schoonmaker Freudenberger

• Introduction

Over the past five years I have been involved in several initiatives using RRA[1] to inform policy decisions at the national level In the two cases from which I draw examples here (Madagascar and Guinea), the governments were considering changes in the national land or resource management laws. USAID financed the services of the Land Tenure Center (LTC, University of Wisconsin) to provide technical assistance to the governments as they carried out their policy reviews. This article reflects on the potentials and pitfalls of using RRA case studies to inform policy discussions.

• Reasons to use RRA to inform policy discussions

RRA can bring village perspectives to the debate

Policy debate most often takes place between high level people of different opinions or between people at different levels of government. Rarely are the voices of people at the grassroots level heard explicitly in these

discussions. By listening to what local people have to say and looking at issues from their perspective, RRA helps policy analysts to focus on the real impact that policies have, or might have, on grassroots communities. RRA case studies add another dimension to policy debates and help to anchor any discussion in local realities.

RRA empowers local communities

Villagers who participate in an RRA study undertake a systematic analysis that addresses the impact of policies, or proposed policy, changes on their lives. Having done this, they are generally better able to discuss their situation and views in a logical and coherent fashion that policy makers can understand.

For example, in Guinea, representatives from communities that had been visited were invited to regional workshops. They expressed themselves eloquently and persuasively on the policies being discussed.

Village participants in the RRA studies frequently stated that, while they had in some sense 'known' all the pieces of information that were delivered to the team, they had never thought about it as a whole or contemplated its implications. This in itself can be empowering.

Following the RRA study in one Guinean village, villagers confronted the local authorities. They demanded that they cease abusing their rights on land distribution. They were supported in their claim by government officials who had been on the RRA team. It has been reported that the procedures have stopped, in that village and in the region.

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[1] There is much confusion about the use of the terms RRA and PRA. I prefer to reserve the term PRA for an extended process in which community members (with or without outside collaborators) take the lead in carrying out studies of their situation and search for solutions to the problems that are identified. For me, RRA best describes discrete case studies, such as those described here, in which the objectives and format of the study are principally defined by outsiders. We should be clear, however, that community members were actively involved in these studies, which used a broad range of participatory techniques to elicit their views and their analyses.

RRA challenges preconceived notions

While many government officials have their roots in rural life, most have spent years (if not decades) in formal educational systems that belittle indigenous knowledge and `backward' customary systems. In many cases, the principal frame of reference for these officials is not the local reality in their own country but Western, urban approaches. Some people are so entrenched in these Western/`modern' ways of thinking that no amount of alternative exposure can expand their horizons. For many, however, participation in RRA allowed them to reactivate their own cultural intuition and value their personal indigenous knowledge.

In Guinea, nearly all the officials we worked with began the process with the attitude that customary tenure systems no longer existed in their country. This assumption was challenged from the very first day of the first RRA. Over the course of a year, most of these functionaries came fervently to believe that customary tenure systems exist. Furthermore, they realised that they had to be acknowledged, or incorporated, in any revision of the land code.

Most of these officials must have 'known' at some level that customary tenure systems continue to exist in rural areas. Almost all hold land in rural communities or have close relatives who do so. And yet, they had been so oriented toward formal systems regulated by laws, codes, and decrees that those became their reality in spite of all their experiential knowledge to the contrary. Challenging long held assumptions was a discomforting process. However, many officials ultimately seemed to find the process a liberating one. It exposed, acknowledged, and legitimised a reality that they had been expected to deny.

• Linking RRA to the policy debate

In both Guinea and Madagascar, a series of case studies was carried out over approximately a one-year period. In Guinea, after conducting several case studies in a region, a regional conference was held to discuss the cases and to integrate the views of local officials, NGO workers, etc. In Madagascar, the cases were discussed at a national forum at the end of the case studies.

While the two projects took similar approaches, there was one notable difference: the composition of the research team. In both cases, the majority of the researchers were nationals, although LTC staff and consultants facilitated the process. They also provided methodological and research guidance throughout the process.

In Madagascar, the Malagasy team members were young professionals. They were selected for their experience with tenure issues, resource management, and their willingness to endure tough conditions and a demanding schedule. They came from diverse backgrounds (both academia and development) and were hired to conduct and write (with LTC staff) the series of case studies that would be presented to the government.

The Guinea project took a different and, I am now convinced, better approach. Most of the team members were mid- to upper-level government officials from a range of ministries responsible for writing and implementing the landcode. People were selected who: expressed an interest in the process, would play an active role in the policy debate, had the personality to work in a team and were willing to adopt the respectful and open-minded approach necessary for effective RRA. Nine people were selected who met these criteria. They undertook an initial training in RRA and tenure and participated in four case studies over the course of a one year period.

The key difference in the approaches was that in Madagascar we, as a team of outsiders, presented our results to government officials. We asked them to review the information and incorporate our findings into their policy decisions. Our success depended on the willingness of key government actors to accept the credibility of the information, and to internalise it in their deliberations. The LTC team was in the position of trying to 'sell' our information and our approach.

In Guinea, the research was undertaken by an influential subset of important decision makers within the government. They had been deeply

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touched by what they had learned and were convinced of the importance and relevance of the information to the policy debate. Once the process was launched, LTC did not have to persuade anyone of anything. Instead, Guinean officials had the task of convincing their colleagues, based on their own experiences.

• Advantages of including policy makers on the research team

The learning process is more effective

Spending two weeks in an RRA study (or eight weeks in a series of studies) may not be the most efficient way for policy makers to learn but it is undoubtedly one of the most effective. Policymakers have and will continue to benefit from RRA reports prepared by outsiders for their consideration. But learning is more profound and lasting when it comes from personal experiences. From their first day in an RRA, policy makers begin questioning, reflecting, and debating at deeper levels as they confront real situations that challenge their orthodox views.

Our experiences highlight the importance of extending the learning process over a period of time. While one RRA can expose people to new information, rarely is it sufficient to move them into new ways of thinking. This requires a more cumulative and reinforcing process. Officials are typically very excited by the information they gain during an RRA study. In most cases, however, when they return to their office and the dominant paradigm of their workplace and colleagues, they tend to revert back to their old habits and ways of thinking. There is progressive learning but the greatest gains are only evident after several field experiences (see Figure 1).

There is a trade-off between including a greater number of policymakers in RRAs or including fewer people, as we did in Guinea, but working with them over an extended period of time. Instead of taking nine people through four RRAs, we could have selected new team members each time. We would, therefore, have worked with over 30 officials during the year.

However, the amount of learning for those involved would have been significantly less. Which route is more effective probably depends on what is being studied: the more deeply entrenched the assumptions that are being challenged, the more important it is to prolong and reinforce the process of learning.

Figure 1. Policymaker learning curve
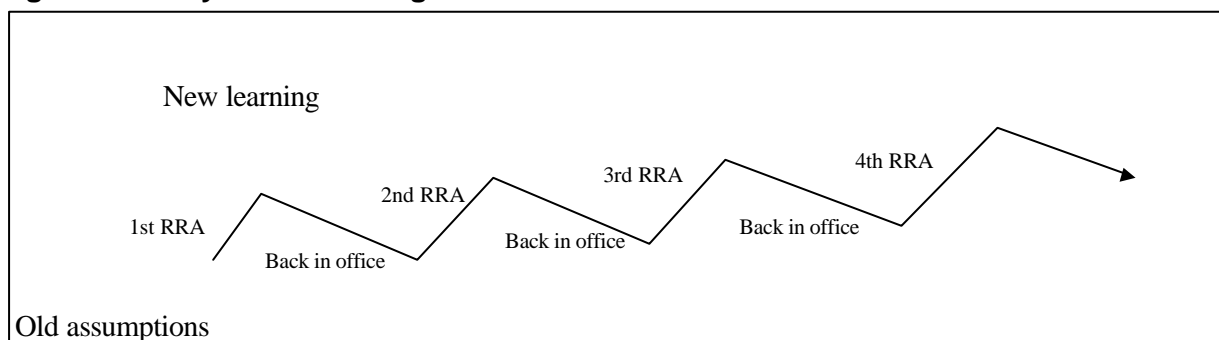
Perceptions of policymakers and villagers change dramatically

In many countries, relationships between villagers and government authorities have traditionally been adversarial. This was certainly the case in Guinea. The RRA provided a first opportunity for the two groups to sit together and discuss serious issues at length. The villagers were astounded that the officials were so 'human', approachable, and willing to listen. Government officials expressed equal disbelief about the hospitality and sophistication of the village populations.

The effects of increased dialogue cannot be measured in the short term. But these types of interactions can only be beneficial in promoting more approachable and responsive political systems.

The credibility of the study is increased

It is easy for sceptical officials to discount the information gathered by outside research teams if it does not meet their conventional (usually statistical) standards of rigour. But when the decision makers are the researchers, they have been personally exposed to the information and the rigorous qualitative process of gathering it. Hence, they are unlikely to question its validity. Indeed, many became fervent defenders of the studies in the face of more dubious colleagues.

• Linking policy studies to local action

Policy studies using RRA may contribute to the long-term well-being of local communities. However, many fail to provide immediate and tangible benefits to those who participate. Our studies attempted to address this issue by including NGO representatives on the teams, and ensuring that at least one came from the zone where the case study was carried out. This diversified perspectives. It also helped to ensure that information collected in the studies could be used immediately by local development practitioners.

There were numerous examples of this in both Guinea and Madagascar. In some cases, NGOs stepped in to respond to specific needs identified in the studies. In others they refined and improved their projects on the basis of information gathered. In addition, in each feedback session to the village at the end of the RRA, the teams opened a discussion about how the information gathered might be used by the local community itself.

• Problems that arise in using RRA to inform policy

Sampling

One practical issue that arises from using RRA is the small number of sites that can be sampled by these intensive, qualitative methods. Good RRA takes resources: time, money, and (especially) energetic, inquisitive researchers.

Unless large numbers of people are brought into the process (which raises issues of quality control and the comparability of results across villages) the number of sites that can be sampled is limited. Even if multiple RRA teams are dispatched continuously, the number of sites will still be small compared to the total number of villages in most countries. It can be difficult to satisfy those who doubt anything that is not based on statistical significance.

While this issue continues to plague me, I have found that, in practice, it poses more of a conceptual than a real problem. In the studies with which I am familiar, most have sampled less than a dozen sites. Yet the results have been extraordinarily useful for decisionmakers. The key is not to view RRA sites as producing information that can be directly extrapolated to a larger population. Instead, the relevant question is 'what types of information are we getting and what sorts of issues are arising that need to be factored into the policy debate?'.

In Guinea, for example, the local tenure systems varied dramatically from site to site. Perhaps the most impressive finding from the eight sites was the immense diversity that was observed. In each of the sites there was strong evidence that some sort of local/customary/traditional tenure system was active.

If national policies failed to consider both the existence and diversity of these systems, the consequences would be serious. Since policy makers had begun the study process denying that local tenure systems existed (and therefore had no intentions of even considering them in writing the new texts) this in itself was a major finding.

RRA is highly effective at understanding the reasons why people behave in one way or another. This should be a critical concern in policy discussions. However, RRA is less effective in understanding the scope of certain practices across a region or country. When used to inform policy, it is therefore often most effective when it is combined with other methods that are more effective at capturing this broader spatial dimension.

These other methods may include quantitative surveys, which can be used to address key questions across a broad population, or remote sensing techniques (e.g. satellite imagery or aerial photography) which detect issues such as land use patterns across broader areas. Surveys and remote sensing are effective at providing rather superficial information across large areas or populations. RRA can provide much greater depth in a limited number of sample sites. Combining these methodologies gives policy analysts an attractive combination of range and depth of information.

Cost

RRA is generally considered as cost effective relative to more drawn out research methods. However, the costs of undertaking a series of well conceived and implemented RRAs across several regions and involving a sizeable number of people is high. Precise costs vary from country to country. But the overall expense of gathering this type of information and sharing it in regional or national level policy workshops is not insignificant.

The expense involved often means that one of the major donors is involved. This usually implies a certain political agenda as well as dependence on the donor's continued interest. Both of these can be problematic.

Working with policymakers

I advocate the inclusion of policy makers in research but I acknowledge that this is not the easiest approach. Some of the problems are logistical. Others are related to potential government reorganisations and restructuring. For example, in Guinea, we were confronted by ministerial changes part way through the process. This meant that our carefully selected representatives of key ministries changed posts.

More difficult problems relate to experience, attitudes and assumptions. It is certainly easier to work with a hand picked team of people who already have experience in research, field work, participatory approaches, etc.. Most of the policy makers with whom we worked had village roots, but some had never spent a night in a village. Certain team members spent more time defending their ministerial interests and trying to impose their views on the rest of the group than listening to what villagers were telling us. But all these problems worked themselves out as the process advanced. In the end the benefits of working directly with policy makers far outweighed the difficulties and challenges that the approach entailed.

• Credibility of qualitative methods

The purpose of conducting these RRA studies was to inform a policy debate and turn policymakers attentions to the implications of their decisions on rural populations. But research can only have this impact if the results are viewed as credible and worthy of consideration.

RRA results often contradict the orthodox perspective or challenge entrenched interests. The reaction of the challenged party is invariably to question the methodology or approach. This usually involves questioning the small number of sites and the credibility of information that is obtained by `informal' tools such as participatory mapping (as opposed to precise cartographic representations).

I do not resent people challenging participatory research. Given the poor quality of many RRAs, people are fully justified in questioning how the methods have been used. This means that researchers must be rigorous

in their fieldwork so that they can convincingly defend their use of the methodology. This requires that deliberate and systematic steps are taken to ensure that methodological principles are followed with the greatest attention and the process is well documented.

It is important to carefully explain the process by which the sites were selected. Efforts to reduce bias, through triangulation of team members, village respondents, and the use of diverse tools must be demonstrated. These explanations defuse most criticisms of the methods, allowing people to focus on the substantive results of the work. Where information from other methods (surveys or remote sensing techniques) can be brought in to corroborate particular aspects of the qualitative findings, this helps to further persuade the doubters.

Including village representatives in meetings where case studies are discussed can provide a powerful validation of research findings. In more than one instance, villagers have leapt to the defence of the research team.

In one case a doubting official suggested in a regional workshop that the findings from the study could not be accurate. A village elder was quick to respond. He proceeded, with great dignity, to refute the challenge, noting that the team had conducted a serious study that captured the reality of their village. He added that he would be happy to take the bureaucrat (or any others who doubted the results) back to his village to show them the situation. I don't think the official took him up on his offer, but neither did he cause any further problems during the workshop!

- ## In conclusion: the challenges of confronting complexity

The implicit assumption in this paper is that the results of RRA studies will help policy makers in their decision making. I will end these reflections by noting that the result is exactly the opposite. It is much easier for policy makers to make decisions without information from RRAs. Good RRAs expose competing interests, challenge orthodox assumptions, and reveal complexities that make decision-making very difficult.

One can only hope that policy makers who have access to greater information can struggle through the challenge of using it to improve their decisions. A further (and perhaps even more optimistic hope) is that they will use this information to become more responsive to poorer rural peoples. It is their concerns that have been consistently ignored or misunderstood in policy deliberations.

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`The one who rides the donkey does not know the ground is hot'

Tony Dogbe

• Introduction

During a discussion with a focus group on their perception of poverty, a man in Komaka, a village in the Upper-East Region of Ghana, said, *'the one who rides the donkey does not know the ground is hot'.* He meant that the rich man cannot know or feel the poor man's problems unless he gets off the donkey and walks on the ground or unless he asks the poor man.

I have chosen this proverb as the title for this paper because it captures the essence of the Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) exercises that my organisation, the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) played a major role in organising during 1993-4. One of the reasons for our PPAs was to 'hand over the stick' to the poor to lead the discussion on poverty and the strategies which should be adopted to mitigate it. On a subject such as poverty, it is the poor who can best give us insight into what it means and how it can be tackled. PRA methods were used during the PPA exercises to elicit these insights, but have also been adopted subsequently to get the policymakers and others removed from the ground to listen to the voices of the poor.

• PPA studies in Ghana

The Ghana PPA series was initiated by the World Bank as part of a series of research initiatives under the *Extended Poverty Study.* The assessment was conducted in three phases, each lasting two to three months, spread over a period of more than two years, from May 1993 to November 1994. Phases 1 and 2 gained insights into the living experiences of the poor, focusing on perceptions of wealth, poverty and well-being and understanding the needs and priorities which must be considered in the formulation of policies and programmes directed at reducing poverty. Phase 3 explored access to and utilisation of basic social services by the poor.

• South-South skills share and networking

At the time of the PPA, we were not aware of anyone in-country who utilised PRA methods widely. Thus, two experienced trainers from India were brought in to do the training. This was in itself significant. Coming from another 'developing country', with conditions similar to those in Ghana, it was easy for the trainers to convey their experiences, conviction and enthusiasm to us, the trainees.

Furthermore, the training materials such as slides, videos and handouts were based on Indian experiences. We saw many parallels with our own circumstances which convinced us that these methods were applicable in Ghana. I doubt if two trainers from the North could have had the same impact and suggest that such South-South skills transfer should be encouraged.

It is also worth noting that the Institute for Development Studies (IDS) in Sussex, England facilitated this skills transfer. They did not send their own staff when contacted for trainers, but recommended the two Indian trainers. I would like to see many more Northern institutions, especially the bi-lateral agencies, shift towards this approach. As a citizen of a poor country, it gives me pride and dignity to see someone from a similar background share their experiences and knowledge with us.

• The RRA-PRA spectrum

Since CEDEP was introduced to PRA methods, we have used them in a number of policy-oriented studies with communities, to identify and plan the implementation of project activities. My observations suggest that when used for research, the approach is often more RRA than PRA. This is because: the research teams come for a short period of time, tend not to live in the community, raise expectations (which are not fulfilled) and, in most of the studies, have not given feedback to the community. This makes the process extractive.

However, when participatory learning activities are used for project activities, the participation of the community is increased. The process is less extractive because raised expectations are met with project activities and follow-up.

Because of the differences in the approaches, process and outcomes of research and project activities, I suggest that participatory learning is a spectrum, with RRA at one end and PRA at the other. We need to be honest where our work falls in that spectrum. This enables us to accept the limitations of what we can or cannot do with the community with which we are working.

• Face-to-face interaction

An important aspect of PRA is its capacity to influence the attitude of the educated and urban elite towards the poor, illiterate and rural people. During PRA training, trainees are often sceptical as to the capacity of the poor to carry out intelligent assessments. Yet after a few hours in the community, their doubt often changes to respect and admiration. For example, after a PRA exercise with Ministry of Health officials, a district officer, who had been opposed to the PRA team, conceded that it is not a community that is 'difficult'. He recognised that the problem often lies with official attitudes towards communities and their influence on district teams' strategies. From this experience, the participating officials requested that training be repeated in other districts, so that more officials could learn to listen and learn from the villagers that they once looked down upon.

• Presenting PRA-style studies

While presenting the PPA findings, I realised that direct quotations from the poor had the greatest impact. These 'voices of the poor' awakened the officials and staff whose lives are often far removed from these conditions. Many were surprised at the insight and depth of analysis of the people they had been speaking for. Clearly, they had under valued and under estimated the ability of the poor to speak for themselves.

In one workshop, the staff who worked in the communities agreed with almost everything the people had said, including criticisms of their performance. It is important, therefore, that reports of PRA-style studies should endeavour to capture not just the letter, but also the spirit of what people are saying.

• Policy influence

It is too early for us to evaluate whether our PPA, and other PRA-related studies, have had any direct and appreciable influence on the policies of government, non-government, bilateral and multilateral organisations. As one of a number of poverty studies in Ghana, it would be difficult to attribute any policy changes specifically to the PPAs.

However, the PPA process contributed to the World Bank's Extended Poverty Study in several ways. It provided an extensive representation of alternative views of poverty, including discussions of vulnerability and seasonal dimensions of poverty. It represented the views of poor communities and their priorities for poverty reduction and strategies for moving out of poverty. Finally, it contributed extensive material on local access to, and the quality and relevance of, social services from the perspective of PPA participants.

In addition, the PPA contributed to the following policy priorities within the World Bank. First, and deriving from priority ranking exercises, an emphasis was placed on the need for a long-term focus on rural infrastructure, including improved water supply and rural roads. This resulted in the World Bank developing a Rural Infrastructure Project, which

will attempt to deliver resources to the community for this kind of initiative.

Secondly, the PPA's thorough and extensive analysis of priority issues in education for poor rural and urban communities revealed an urgent need to improve the quality of basic education. The World Bank country department is developing a major initiative, with other donors, to provide free basic education.

Thirdly, the PPA emphasised the barriers experienced by the poor in accessing public health services. This contributed to the instigation of a multi-donor initiative to support a Sector Investment Programme in health.

Fourthly, the PPA contributed to greater awareness of the need to develop mechanisms for improved targeting of poverty-focused interventions, with measures proposed for a possible 'social fund' type of programme. Finally, in relation to poverty monitoring, the World Bank study acknowledges the need for pluralist approaches, including qualitative, participatory analysis as a well as questionnaire-based methods.

At the national level, CEDEP has not evolved a mechanism for evaluating the use of the PPA studies. This is an area we hope to turn our attention to in the future. There are, however, recent Government initiatives that reflect areas of emphasis in the PPA output. The Ministry of Education, for example, has now directed that all communities should form School Management Committees (SMCs), with grants available to match funds raised by communities to implement their plans. CEDEP has been asked to assist SMCs in drawing up plans for improving he quality of schooling in sixty pilot communities.

An area of frustration for many planning officials of government, bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organisations is the lack of information on the state of affairs on the ground. For example, the last population census in Ghana was in 1983. Thus, as a result of the PPAs, PRA has been acknowledged as a worthwhile approach for collecting timely information relatively quickly. This enables planners to get an overview of the situation on the ground and take some interim decisions or actions. This is evident from the kind of studies

we have been called to undertake. As I write, CEDEP has been asked to assist the Department of Social welfare to come up with Poverty Profiles of five districts in the Ashanti Region under a project being funded by Save the Children Fund, UK.

A strength of PRA studies is that there is little scope for officials to dispute findings which are people's opinions. If ordinary people have the 'wrong' impression or perception, then, it may be that the agency involved is not explaining itself well enough or not supplying the necessary information. It could also be that a policy or programme is not having the intended impact.

• **Conclusions**

Compared to countries in Asia, PRA is relatively new in Ghana. My organisation, CEDEP, was introduced to it only three years ago but it has become an integral part of our way of gathering information and working with communities. We have an increasing number of requests from various organisations for us to undertake PRA studies and training. It is evident that PRA is gaining popularity as a tool for eliciting the views of the grassroots and channelling that information into programmes for policy formulation.

For PRA to continue to meet the needs of the grassroots, policymakers and programme designers in a country, practitioners must seek to truly represent what the people are saying. With time and as we gain more experience, we should be moving towards a situation where ordinary people can present their own findings. Remember: 'The one who rides the donkey does not know the ground is hot'. Making the voices of the poor heard is one of the major strengths of PRA and it should not be lost. To minimise this danger, there is a need for PRA practitioners to network and share their ideas and experiences.

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9

Village voices challenging wetland management policies: PRA experiences from Pakistan and India

Michel Pimbert, Biksham Gujja and Meera Shah

• The context

This paper focuses on people-wetland interactions at two sites of international importance for conservation: the Ucchali wetland complex in Pakistan and Keoladeo National Park in India. Management plans for these wetlands were drawn up following western scientific principles and the internationally agreed guide lines of the RAMSAR Convention (Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat).

In both cases effective protected area (PA) management has been hampered by the passive or active opposition of local communities living in and around these wetlands. The threat of worsening conflict between local people and conservation authorities created a context in which consultations with local communities was deemed necessary for effective wetland management.

Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA) were carried out in several villages neighbouring each wetland. In each case the purpose of the was three fold:

- To assess the social impact of PAs management on local communities and make the assessment available to all stakeholders;
- To revise the PA management plans in the light of interactive dialogue between local people and outsiders; and,
- To initiate a dialogue on the policy reforms needed to involve local communities as equal partners in wetland conservation.

Both PRAs were designed to involve key government and conservation agency staff in experiential learning. Throughout the training workshops and appraisals it was emphasised that 'participation' is not simply the application of a 'method'. Rather, it is part of a process of dialogue, action, analysis, conflict resolution and change.

• New insights

PRA findings from the studies have major policy implications for wetland management. These are discussed for each site below.

Keoladeo National Park (KNP), India

KNP is a RAMSAR and World Heritage site protected under national parks policy. It is a major tourist destination in India. The PRA exercise with local communities raised five issues which relate directly or indirectly to the implementation of national parks policy.

Grazing. Local people believe that buffalo grazing inside the wetlands contributes to habitat management. Villagers argue that it is needed to sustain their own life style and the biodiversity of the wetland. National parks policies ban livestock grazing. Yet scientific evidence suggests that wetland grazing is required to control the water weeds.

Fodder collection. Local collection of grass is not permitted under the national policy. Yet the Park has to cut grass to prevent fires.

Tourism. Local people receive few benefits from tourism. They feel resentful that the park authorities appear to manage the park more for tourists than for local people.

Water. According to local people, the park has priority on water from a nearby dam. They feel their water rights have been violated and challenge the water distribution policy.

Access to Temples. Park policies restrict the entry of local people into the park. People challenge the violation of their traditional rights to visit the temples inside the park.

Ucchali complex, Pakistan

The Ucchali complex is an internationally recognised site for wetland conservation in north central Punjab, Pakistan. It consists of three interdependent wetlands, Ucchali, Khabbaki and Jalar. PRA revealed a profound mismatch between local experiences of the social and ecological history of the wetland and the perceptions of outsiders.

External organisations and professionals tend to assume that lakes Ucchali and Khabbaki are natural features of the landscape. Yet according to villagers, Lake Khabbaki is a disaster flood zone rather than a lake. They state that the wetland is of very recent origin, formed by heavy rains over the last 50 years. It sits on prime agricultural land owned by neighbouring villagers.

Currently, Khabbaki is managed as a sanctuary for undisturbed breeding of wildfowl with no public access. Local people's prior land rights have been neglected in conserving the wetland, creating conditions for conflict between the state and local communities. They feel the polices that regulate and restrict their access to the RAMSAR site need to be reformed.

During PRA mapping, the villagers drew the boundaries of the wetland. These were compared with those of natural scientists involved in wetland management planning. The scientists tended to focus on species of special concern for international conservation and the wetland habitat *per se.*

By contrast, the villagers shared a wider analysis of the wetland. They explored the connections between forests in the watershed, land use history, livelihoods and the White Headed Duck's only overwintering site in Pakistan. Complex issues such as patterns of migratory bird activity, changes in water quality, rates of sedimentation and the relationship between ground water levels and wetland presence were locally monitored and often well understood.

PRA revealed many social and ecological differences between the three villages visited. This local level diversity suggests that standard and undifferentiated approaches to wetland management planning and implementation are inappropriate. There is a need to combine the general application of ecological management principles with the site specific knowledge and innovations of local communities.

PRA discussions highlighted that farmers who had lost land and/or traditional rights over resource use could not appreciate the value of 'long term' conservation benefits for society. In their view, conservation benefits should be immediate and quantifiable. Villagers felt they should get a fair share of the benefits accruing from the successful management of the wetlands or a fair compensation for loss of productive resources.

To avoid further conflict, the PRA findings suggest that: village proposals for management should be incorporated into the existing management plan, legal matters should be clarified, (i.e. local rights on land under the lake water), and joint management schemes should be developed by increasing dialogue between villagers, conservation agencies and government departments.

• Policy implications

The two exercises at Ucchali and Keoladeo raised several issues which are directly related to policies on wetland conservation in India, Pakistan and elsewhere.

National parks and people

The national parks policy in India is categorical in 'banning' livestock grazing. This is based on a universal assumption that people and their livestock damage biodiversity. At Keoladeo, local communities directly questioned the national policies.

Although they are fighting for their traditional rights, villagers argue that livestock grazing inside the wetland maintains biodiversity. This is supported by research. After a decade long study, scientists have concluded that grazing is needed in the park, although they did not suggest any changes to national park policies.

Tourism and local people

Many tourist policies are based on the assumption that it will help local people. The outcome of these PRA studies seriously questions such assumptions:

- The net loss to local people in establishing the national park is significant;
- Tourists are subsidised by the government in visiting the park; and,
- Tourism revenue reaches a different segment of the population to those who bear the burden of the national park.

Declaring RAMSAR sites

The Ucchali experience leads us to question the RAMSAR convention and its policies of declaring internationally important wetland sites. The PRAs revealed that the local people own part of the Ucchali wetlands: the lakes are gradually expanding and people are losing their private lands. The RAMSAR site declaration made by the Government of Pakistan clearly contravenes its own policy of protecting private property.

Wise use

The concept of wise use of wetlands has been around for the last ten years. But in practice, wise use is defined, implemented and evaluated by government experts and international consultants. The PRA exercises indicate that if local communities are given the opportunity, they can define, design, implement and evaluate the wise use of their wetlands. Wise use policy should be based on peoples' priorities, knowledge and management systems.

• Changes in policy and action

The extent to which the PRAs have encouraged shifts away from normal top down practices can be assessed in terms of three sets of criteria (Box 1). Stage A comprises criteria that evaluate the design and implementation of PRAs and PRA training. Stage B evaluates how well the recommendations that emerged through initial appraisals are followed up e.g. the strengthening of local institutions. Stage C relates to higher level policy changes needed for the devolution of power and planning to the local level.

In terms of Stage A, both the Ucchali and Keoladeo experiences with PRAs have been highly successful. Local government officials and NGO staff were trained and information was exchanged with local communities. Reports and other outputs have had a positive impact in international fora (see below). In terms of Stages B and C, we cannot yet evaluate the long term implications of the PRA. For example, the following questions remain unanswered:

- Did the PRA change anything on the ground?
- Did local people derive any substantial benefits?
- Have steps been taken to share resources arid conservation benefits more equitably?

It is also too early to see if national wildlife conservation policies at a national level will change to incorporate:

- differentiated approaches to highly site specific situations e.g. the three lakes forming the Ucchali complex;
- the recognition of prior rights and the granting of rights of access and use to some PA resources (e.g. grazing resources in Keoladeo National Park, India);
- the adoption of enabling legislation for joint protected area management in Ucchali and Keoladeo National Park.

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BOX 1
EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF PRA

Stage A. Implementation of the PRA.
This stage is normally successful. The experiences of the workshop are used by the institutions conducting the PRA exercise.

Stage B. Short term follow-up to the PRA.
The workshops and the exercises prompt a series of recommendations which can be followed up by different institutions. This stage builds local confidence that outside institutions will function for local benefit.

Stage C. Long term follow-up to the PRA.
The ideal objectives of the PRAs include the following:
• The PRA experiences will be used to advocate bigger policy and institutional changes;
• Local communities are empowered;
• Planning is democratised and decentralised;
• The knowledge systems advocated by the Western and urban institutions are questioned.

This stage is a great opportunity as well as a challenge for the institutions and individuals engaged in the PRA. Radical changes in the approaches of institutions presently involved in PRA could occur.

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A central challenge facing policy makers is to consider people-park conflicts more historically and try to resolve them more imaginatively. Differences in the scale of opposing stakes and claims were revealed as village voices reconstructed the local social and ecological histories of the wetlands for outsiders. Yet PRA exercises should not be limited to conflict resolution. The experiences emerging from these and other PRAs in different countries suggest that a major policy shift in the conservation of natural resources is required. PRAs or similar processes should ideally lead to new, socially acceptable, policies.

Policy reforms need to acknowledge that some stakeholders' claims to resources are illegitimate because they ignore previously existing rights of long term local residents. Enabling policies for joint protected area management will need to address larger questions of land alienation and land scarcity (Ucchali) and grazing rights (Keoladeo). For

villagers these are the crucial policy issues. Should they be left out of the policy reform, inequities will perpetuate the conflicts which the proposed joint management schemes attempt to mediate. It is against these yardsticks that the ultimate 'success' or 'failure' of these PRAs should perhaps be judged. In both wetland contexts, village voices are calling for these profound policy reforms.

A still greater challenge for policy makers is to ensure that the initial location and planning of PAs is based on local peoples' knowledge, analysis and priorities *from the outset.* The PRAs described here should not be seen as examples of how governments can rectify poorly designed and socially insensitive PA schemes. Instead, we hope these examples support a different participatory approach in which local people exert more democratic control in PA design and management. In both policy and practical terms, their realities and voices must count more than those of outside professionals and their national or foreign based institutions.

Costs and benefits

PRAs require considerable preparation and planning by professionals working in the conservation organisations. But the overall cost of completing one exercise is relatively cheap. In each case the benefits were training, capacity building and the revision or preparation of protected area management plans.

Both exercises have drawn key staff from government departments into the process. This is not a small achievement. The training process for the government officials creates new possibilities for the further spread and scaling up of these participatory approaches.

• Learning from the process

A number of important lessons may be learned from these wetland studies.

Firstly, the PRAs provided professionals from government and conservation agencies with first hand experience of the impacts of PA policies and management schemes. The experiential learning in the villages provided a

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moment in their professional lives to reflect on the perverse impacts of standard approaches to PA design and management. They gained a better understanding of villagers' knowledge and own readings of the landscape and local history. The value judgements, biases and ideologies behind conservation 'expertise', top down planning and national policies for wildlife protection were partly or fully exposed through dialogues with villagers.

Secondly, the national policy implications for wetland management were raised to an international level by showing a video describing the participatory appraisals carried out in India. This was shown at the Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties of the RAMSAR Convention (Brisbane, Australia, 19-27 March 1996). In the recommendations of this international meeting, both the Ucchali and Keoladeo national park experiences were noted as "models for active and informed participation of local people in the wise use of their wetland resources". The Contracting Parties (country governments) were called upon to facilitate from the outset the participation of local and indigenous people in the management of wetlands.

Lastly, the PRAs have stimulated heightened awareness of the variety of alternative futures and policy frameworks for conservation and natural resource management. Villagers' analyses often deeply question the assumptions of current protected area management policies. Through village voices, conservation becomes a central political question linked with the enduring debates over the distribution of wealth and power. By framing the policy issues in this way, local people challenge conservationists and policymakers to rethink the distribution of land, economic rights and ecological responsibilities in and around protected areas. This process is long overdue and we hope that future PRAs in this area will contribute to it.

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Linking PRA to policy:
the conflict analysis framework

M. Warner, C. Robb, A. Mackay, and M. Brocklesby

- ## Introduction

This article outlines a new technique which we hope contributes to a 'basket' of approaches designed to link PRA to policy. The technique is the *Conflict Analysis Framework*. It was piloted with communities in two Game Management Areas in Zambia in December 1995[1]. The PRA team comprised experienced facilitators, and extension workers from the government wildlife authority and an NGO (WWF-BWP). This article describes the technique and some of the lessons learned from the case-studies.

An important issue is how to meaningfully link the information gained through participatory analysis with local people, with the actual process of policy formulation. Three problems stand out:

- the danger of local values and perceptions becoming distorted when PRA facilitators 'interpret' the information for policy-makers;
- the lack of residual benefit for the participating communities, i.e. PRA delivering 'information extraction' rather

than direct benefits to local people in the form of problem solving or empowerment; and,

- the logistical, cultural and political difficulties of physically bringing local people round the policy formulation table.

A means is therefore needed to: faithfully represent the views of local people within the policy formulation process and provide some immediate and tangible benefits to the community participants. The Conflict Analysis Framework seeks to meet these objectives.

- ## The conflict analysis framework

The Conflict Analysis Framework aims to promote a systematic and participatory analysis of the use of resources by local people. The results are summarised in a matrix (Table 1). The principles lying behind the analysis, and the design of the summary matrix, are based on ideas drawn from conflict resolution and environmental impact assessment.

The tool was developed to aid sustainable resource management in protected areas. However, it holds potential to help link PRA to policy formulation wherever the policy in question aims to address issues of conflict over finite resources. Thus it might equally apply to new policy on the use of infrastructure (e.g. transport, electricity etc.) or to improving access to education and health services.

Goal

The Conflict Analysis Framework was used for policy formulation for protected areas. The overall goal was to devise a means to

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[1] The pilots were undertaken at the invitation of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Zambia County Office, the WWF Bangweulu Wetlands Project (BWP) in north-east Zambia and the Zambian National Parks and Wildlife Service. The technique was developed to facilitate community involvement in the formulation of resource policies and related management plans for Game Management Areas (GMAs) across Zambia. GMAs are areas that support natural resources important to both wildlife conservation and the livelihoods of local people.

summarise the conflicts that local people perceive to exist between their use of natural resources (wildlife, fish, water, timber, fertile land, fuelwood etc.) and the use of these resources by other external stakeholders (e.g. government conservation authorities, tourist and safari operators, forestry and water resource departments, district council etc.).

Table 1 shows an extract from one of the summary matrices generated in the Zambia pilot studies. The exploded cell demonstrates the importance of providing a full, and where possible quantified, explanation of the conflict or concern (see below).

The first column in the matrix summarises the principal livelihood activities of local people. The second, those natural resources important to each activity. PRA techniques useful in completing this analysis include historical profiles, time trends, transects, resource village maps, institutional Venn diagrams, daily routine and seasonal calendars. Information about the timing, location and users of resources are documented separately.

To bring the community perspectives alongside those of external stakeholders, it is necessary to precede the PRA fieldwork with an early and separate institutional stakeholder assessment. This is the idea of combining PRA (essentially an assessment internal to a community) with an external assessment of the conservation, economic and political forces acting upon the resource base of local people (see Warner 1995 in *PLA Notes* 23). Where external conflicts concern resources that are also the root of community perceived conflicts, the issue is entered into the matrix in the third column.

Conflicts and concerns

Conflict resolution emphasises the need to find 'common ground' to build consensus between stakeholders. Thus, the forth column in the matrix records not only community-perceived conflicts, but also 'concerns'. 'Concerns' are resource issues of importance to local people, but which are not the cause of direct conflict with external stakeholders. Examples might include contaminated drinking water or local labour shortages.

The importance of analysing 'concerns' is to provide the policy formulation process with additional options. In its simplest terms, this takes the form of introducing additional bargaining chips to the policy formulation process.

For example, a programme of well construction could be initiated in return for local people restraining from wildlife hunting. However, experience has shown that such unrelated arrangements are invariably unsustainable. It is better practice to develop implementation programmes that are clearly associated with the proposed policy. An example would be creating an administrative structure to deliver a policy of wildlife protection, based on safari hunting revenues being paid directly into the hands of those attracted to poaching (e.g. the Zimbabwe CAMPFIRE programme).

Prioritising

The final column of the matrix prioritises the community's resource conflicts and concerns. Drawing on the discipline of environmental impact assessment, each conflict/concern is divided into its 'magnitude' and 'importance'. The 'magnitude' of the conflict is a percentage figure in the top-left of the end cells, e.g. 50% (see Table 1). Working with major users of the resource, the aim is to reflect the proportion of a resource or service that is collectively perceived to be lost or absent as a result of the conflict. For example, if, on average, 50% of farmers' maize crops are lost to elephant, bushpig or buffalo trampling each year, then the magnitude of the conflict is 50%.

If there is no direct conflict, but instead the community perceive a development 'concern' (such as poor firewood supplies in the wet season), it is still possible to identify the associated % magnitude of the problem. For example, taking the dry season fuelwood supply as the norm, it might be estimated by those regularly involved in collecting firewood that only two thirds of domestic fuel needs are met in the wet season from December to April. Thus the magnitude of this concern entered in the matrix would be 33%. A full explanation of the seasonality and nature of the concern would also be documented.

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The % figures simply indicate the scale of the conflict or concern. However, to arrive at the figure, it is necessary to explore the impact of the problem on the lives of those affected by it. On its own, the single % figure is a clear and simple way of raising the awareness of external stakeholders as to the impact of the community's existing resource conflicts.

The heterogeneity of any community means that different groups of local people are likely to be involved in the utilisation of different natural resources. However, for ease of interpretation the summary matrix gives only the primary community stakeholders - those directly dependent upon a particular resource in terms of either employment, gender, wealth etc. Other cases may require different divisions or levels of disaggregation.

The second means by which a resource conflict/concern is described is to identify its 'importance' to these primary stakeholders (bottom-right of the end cells, see Table 1). This figure is required because the magnitude of a conflict does not necessarily reflect its significance. For example, the hungry season may coincide with the onset of the wet season (e.g. before the maize crop can be harvested). Elephant trampling of the annual cassava crops at this time may be considered highly important, even though the crop loss, in terms of annual yield may be small, e.g. 10%.

The 'importance' of resource conflicts and concerns to the primary community stakeholders is represented in the matrix as:

H   indicates resources of *high* importance to sustaining livelihood security or protecting human welfare;

M   indicates resources of *moderate* importance to sustaining livelihood security or protecting human welfare;

L   indicates resources of *low* importance to sustaining livelihood security or protecting human welfare.

These definitions are intentionally open ended. This leaves room for the primary stakeholders (or community as a whole) to determine what the criteria for importance should be. PRA techniques useful for prioritising conflicts and gauging 'importance' include: pairwise

comparisons, direct matrix ranking and cluster ranking. As with the 'magnitude' figures, the 'importance' classifications are indicative only. Associated with each classification, explanatory documentation is provided. This details the types of resources affected, their location, the periods of their collection or use, issues of uncertainty and risk and the rational behind the magnitude and importance classifications (see Table 1).

Resolutions

The Conflict Analysis Framework is not a tool for policy formulation. It is a means to bring the community perspective into a wider process of consensus-building between all stakeholders likely to be affected by, or influential in, the policy. However, it can be used to encourage local people to investigate options for resolving their perceived resource conflicts.

The idea is that these options can then be used as starting points for wider negotiations over policy. The Conflict Analysis Framework categories conflict resolutions into one of three types. These are indicated in the middle of the end cells (see Table 1) as follows:

R*i*   policy resolutions able to be implemented *internal* to the affected stakeholder group and which are readily available, affordable and socially acceptable;

R*e*   policy resolutions requiring *external* financial or technical assistance;

R*p*   *prohibitive* policy resolutions (due to financial, social or environmental cost).

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Table 1. Extracts from a summary matrix

Community activities	Community resources	Conservation conflicts	Community perceived conflicts/concerns	Primary resource stakeholders	
				Men	Women
Shifting Cultivation	Land with adequate regrowth	Elephant habitat loss	Distance/time	25% Rp M	25% Rp M
	Logs for charcoal	Elephant habitat loss	Loss of regenerative potential of forest	50% Rp H	50% Rp H
	Cassava crop	Elephant habitat loss	Crop damage (elephants)	40% Re L	40% Re L
Fishing	Fish stocks	Loss of food sources for endangered bird species	Progressively reduced catches and size of fish	50% Ri M	50% Ri M
Hunting	Buffalo and other game species	Declining "game" populations	Hunting restrictions	80% Re* M	- -
Firewood Collection	Time/Labour	Biodiversity and elephant habitat loss	Not availability during wet season	- -	50% Re H
Permanent agriculture	Fertiliser		Late delivery (1 month)	40% Re H	-

* see Table 2

Supporting Documentation

Community Activity	Community Resource	Conflict/Resolution
Permanent Agriculture	*Fertiliser* - according to the elders in the village, in the mid 1960s cheap synthetic fertilisers were introduced to aid the cultivation of maize. This led to a switch away from organic (grasses and manure) fertilisers, resulting in a growing dependency upon synthetics.	*Magnitude* - Land holders are dependent upon the delivery of fertilisers by outside agencies, and over the last few years the lack of status of the village has meant that fertilisers arrive late (average delay 1 month). This has lead to a decline in the yields produced and a corresponding reduction in the cash earned from maize sales. Participants suggested that the late arrival of fertilisers leads to a 40% reduction in maize yields which more than wipes out their profit margins. In addition, fertiliser costs have risen steadily, which when combined with the reduced yields, has lead to an increasing number of villagers taking on debt. *Importance* - As the primary source of cash income, the late arrival and increasing price of fertilisers for maize is of critical importance. Given that maize production (and to a certain extent household income expenditure) is the preserve of men in the village, the critical importance of this concern is perceived less by the women and waged labourers of the village. The concern of the former is more with food security, and therefore cassava. *Resolution* - It is perceived that it would be difficult to return to organic fertilisation given that a financially supported transition period of 3 to 4 years would be needed to overcome the decrease in natural soil fertility that has now arisen. However, where this is possible, it would remove the dependency and increasing debt burden of those villagers relying on imported fertilisers (Re).

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- **Community action proposals**

The Conflict Analysis Framework supports the development of community action proposals (CAPs). These provide an incentive for local people to participate in the policy formulation process. They also build trust between communities and the external stakeholders, CAPs are project or action outlines that seek to bring rapid and tangible benefits to the participating communities. They are intended to be implemented without the need for wider stakeholder agreement, or for substantial financial or technical assistance.

CAPs address the problem of policy-based PRAs raising false short-term expectations by limiting themselves to information extraction. Table 2 is an example of a CAP. Shading is used in the summary matrix in Table 1 to highlight those resolutions taken forward by the participants as CAPs in Zambia.

Table 2. Example of a community action proposal (CAP)

	Buffalo Habitat Enhancement Scheme
WHAT	The granting, by the Ministry of Tourism, of a "special licence" for the community to hunt buffalo (quota of 50 per annum) within local area, in return for enhancing buffalo wildlife habitats through forage planting and refraining from further forest encroachment
WHY	In medium term (3 to 5 years) will increase population of buffalo in the protected area as well as enhancing habitats for other species
WHO (implements)	Village Wildlife Management Sub-Authority to co-ordinate team of conservation workers from community
WHO (benefits)	All households who consume bush meat, and in the longer-term the whole village through increased safari hunting revenues re-distributed to communities
WHERE	Forest encroachment halted to south of village in areas of buffalo and other wildlife migratory routes. Also forage planting along migratory routes, and along river bank where buffalo and other wildlife congregate during dry season
WHEN	Maximum efforts to prevent forest encroachment targeted in October/November. Forage planting concentrated in December to deliver habitat and food refuges in dry season
HOW	Village conservation teams to be provided with seeds and tools for forage planting, and village scouts hired in October/November to monitor for forest encroachment
COST	US$ 10,000 per annum
TIME TO BENEFITS	1. Special license for village buffalo quota delivers bush meat to village (for consumption or sale) within six months of application.
	2. Increases in buffalo and other wildlife populations from habitat improvements expected to give rise to increases in safari hunting revenues in years 3-5.
	3. Payment of village scouts in October/November provides benefits to certain villagers.

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• **The Zambian context**

It was not the explicit intention of the Conflict Analysis Framework to influence policy formulation (although the results are currently being used to support funding applications for future community/wildlife programmes by WWF-BMP). The Conflict Analysis Framework was piloted:

• to test the concept of a framework methodology for linking PRA to policy formulation in the field of *parks and people*;
• to determine the range of appropriate PRA techniques for this purpose; and,
• to expose the Zambian National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and WWF to the possibilities of acting as facilitators to resolve conflicts between local livelihoods and conservation.

The findings of the pilot studies were distributed to the participating communities, NPWS and WWF. In addition, the report was sent to all relevant development agencies (e.g. district council, forestry and agriculture departments, USAID, other NGOs) who might wish to review their regional policies or lend their support to implement the specific resolutions forwarded by the communities.

At the time of writing, NPWS are awaiting confirmation from USAID of funding for a programme of GMA management planning across Zambia. If granted, there is every possibility that the *Conflict Resolution Framework* will play a role in strengthening the participation process.

• **Lessons learned**

Some of the key lessons learned from the pilots are as follows. First, before its application, screening criteria should be employed to determine the feasibility of applying the technique. Most of these criteria would apply to all uses of PRA for policy formulation, and include:

• adequacy in skill and experience of PRA facilitators[2]
• a pre-arranged process whereby the results of the PRA rapidly feed into policy formulation;
• political willingness for policy to be influenced by the local level;
• a capability for external stakeholders to negotiate collaboratively; and,
• adequacy of human and financial resources for the CAPs to be implemented.

Secondly, the Conflict Analysis Framework highlights the debate over the extent to which PRA should exclusively promote 'indigenous knowledge', or alternatively encourage the transfer of 'outsiders' knowledge to local people. When introducing the resource conflicts perceived by external stakeholders to the community, care needs to be taken not to unduly influence the goal of presenting the local perspective.

Thirdly, the matrix is intended to be simple and yet meaningful. In order to achieve this a trade-off needs to be made between promoting meaning (by disaggregating each community into all stakeholder groups) and promoting simplicity, by limiting the disaggregation to the major social divisions, e.g. gender, wealth, education.

Fourthly, we feel that the introduction of a more systematic approach to PRA (by drawing on conflict resolution and environmental impact assessment techniques), improves the quality of the information generated. The matrix enables the relative importance of different conflicts to be made explicit.

Outsider interpretation of local perspectives is a problem that currently faces efforts to link PRA to policy. It is important that facilitators faithfully represent local perspectives in both the summary matrix and background documentation.

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[2] Facilitators may be the conservation authorities. If antagonism with local people is too great, other facilitators, viewed by local people as independent, may be used in collaboration with conservation authorities. To raise awareness and build trust, it is important that the facilitation team should include conservation authorities, if possible.

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The Conflict Analysis Framework is part of a wider participatory framework methodology called the *Framework for Consensus Participation in Protected Areas* (FCPPA). This broader methodology builds the Conflict Analysis Framework into a comprehensive process of strategic resource management planning for protected areas.

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NOTE

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Challenges in influencing public policy: an NGO perspective

Anil Shah

• The need

Participatory development aims to enable individuals, groups and communities to plan execute and manage development that improves their living conditions. They often need technical, administrative, organisational, financial and legal support in their endeavour. Some of these support services lie in the public domain and may be cumbersome or obstruct the development processes. They therefore need to change. The need for the public to inform and influence policy changes arises mainly from grassroots experiences: PRA often raises important issues that can be resolved only through policy changes.

For example, in June 1990 an order of the Government of India on Joint Forest Management was secured. This occurred only because an NGO spent three years lobbying the government to remove policy bottlenecks from its fieldwork. Senior administrators in charge of policy formulation are removed from the field realities and may not have first-hand knowledge of participatory processes. NGOs have such experience. They need to, and can, influence policy to further participatory development.

Apart from the constraints arising in the field due to inappropriate or inefficient policies, NGOs may like to engage in policy influencing for other reasons:

- To encourage better implementation of a government programme that has the essential components of a participatory approach. NGOs may work to promote more appropriate mechanisms and procedures within public agencies. For example, the Watershed Development Programme of Ministry of Rural Development in India has all the features of a participatory programme and NGOs can contribute to more satisfactory implementation activities.
- To ensure that participatory features are integrated into policy formulation, an NGO may try to associate itself to a programme to influence policy changes.
- To persuade public agencies to put issues that are important for a participatory approach onto their agenda. For example, by promoting gender awareness in development programmes.

The action required to influence public agencies is arduous and daunting. NGOs need to commit considerable time to take up the challenge. Instead, many NGOs prefer to continue their work, hoping that the quality of their project will attract the attention of public agencies, who will eventually appreciate the need for providing supportive policy changes.

• What needs to change

Public policy is embodied in a country's constitution, legislative acts, rules and administrative instructions. These are prescribed in manuals, guidelines and orders issued at government level, or by government bodies/officers at different levels. But pragmatic policy decisions are also made at a more local level when the policy is actually implemented. Policy-change advocates should know precisely which of these need to change to facilitate development.

• The bus is crowded

Those who decide policy changes, are usually preoccupied in implementing existing policies and considering a plethora of proposals for

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changing current policies. Proposals for change emanate from a wide range of sources: influential political parties/leaders, interest groups, committee recommendations, research findings, public spirited experts and citizens writing letters to the editors of newspapers/magazines. Policy makers are continually bombarded with proposals for change. They are not waiting for good ideas. Their basket is full, the bus is crowded.

• **Selecting issues**

Development agencies should select a few issues for advocacy out of the many that emerge in the course of their work. Such issues should have the potential to have a large impact on furthering the cause of development, particularly for the deprived areas, communities, groups and families. Even if convinced of the need for change, decision makers will take months to change administrative orders, years to modify legislating provisions and decades to amend a country's constitution. Development agencies should, therefore, give priority to ideas that require a change in practice, administrative orders, manuals, rules, acts and a country's constitution - in that order.

• **Plan of action**

After carefully selecting ideas for policy change, a development agency will need to work out a plan of action for familiarising and influencing the decision maker to accept and act upon the proposal.

- Build up a strong case for proposed change, why it is necessary, important or urgent and who will benefit and by how much.
- Explore, in detail, the present policy that requires change, who is authorised to decide on the proposal and the process that will be followed.
- Contact like-minded organisations and individuals likely to support and join in the presentation of a proposal.
- Formulate the proposal which should incorporate: information about the organisation(s) making the proposal and their motivation, identify the problem in the field that is blocking the development

and articulate precisely the policy that needs change.
- Request a personal meeting to explain the details of the written proposal.
- Send a copy of the proposal to other people interested in the issues or whose support may be required.

• **Strategy for drawing attention**

Since policymakers receive many proposals, a strategy should be devised to draw attention to it. The strategy may:

- Identify an officer whose acceptance of the proposal is crucial and those people whose opinions are valued by the policy maker.
- Identify an officer who is important and sympathetic to the development programme promoted by the development agency. Take his/her advice on the best strategy for success.
- Contact influential people and take their advice and help on how best to influence decision makers.
- Request important officers to visit the NGO to better appreciate the work being undertaken and the context for the proposal. During such visits, presentations should be made by those who undertake PRA exercises to strengthen the case for policy change.
- Use the media to create a favourable climate for the acceptance of ideas in the proposal.

• **In the event of rejection**

If the key officer is not impressed by the proposal, rejects it or is likely to reject it, work out a strategy to overcome the obstacle. The agency may approach higher levels in government to direct the officer to consider the proposal sympathetically and expeditiously. The agency may have to wait until the unsympathetic officer is transferred or a more favourable situation develops.

• **In the event of a favourable response**

If, and when, the response of the decision maker is favourable, the agency should work

to ensure that the formulation of the proposed policy change will meet its requirements.

- Suggest the appointment of a policy drafting committee, with NGO representation on it, for preparing the draft of the proposed change.
- Offer services of the NGO to work with the officer who is responsible for drafting the government order/instruction.
- If such offers are not welcome, retain informal communication with the implementing officers.

- **Follow-up**

Government decision-making on policy matters involves several levels in a department. In more important matters, several departments are involved, particularly, legal, finance and personnel. The agency should follow the progress of the proposal until the desired order is issued.

- **Acknowledgement**

Acknowledge and thank those who have helped, with and without enthusiasm, in the progress of the proposal.

- **Processes for promoting participatory development**

The effort required to initiate policy changes is enormous. For example, the NGO that moved the Government of India to adopt more participatory approaches to forest management, used 49 different contacts, including personal meetings, letters and telephone calls.

Participatory approaches are being integrated into more programmes in India. Yet government bureaucracies have little experience of participatory development systems and processes. It is essential that governments recognise that participatory development requires modification to the acts, rules, administrative and accounting procedures and roles and responsibilities of personnel. Adoption of participation will require an environment conducive to free and frequent interaction with those outside government.

Drawing from John Thompson's (1995) article, the following lists some activities that will help promote the necessary institutional change.

- Appointment of Working Group for each programme as a forum for open dialogue, critical reflection and continuous learning. The Group should consist of senior officers, NGO representatives, academics studying the programme and representatives of community based organisations.
- Policy Resolution affirming Government's commitment to participatory approach in a programme.
- Strong leadership with long term commitment and capacity to learn.
- Specific responsibility entrusted to a senior officer to develop the new programme.
- Pilot projects as 'learning laboratories'
- Action plan indicating tentative broad targets, delegated authority and training needs.
- Process Documentation Research to provide continuous feedback about development and emerging issues in the field. The system of monitoring and evaluation should include equal concern for quality as quantitative targets.
- Fostering a culture of consultation and participation at various levels within an organisation and with stakeholders outside the organisation.
- Organising National Support Group (NSG) outside Government but with active involvement of key officers of concerned Government department, donor agencies, NGOs and academics active in the programme.

There is an NSG for Joint Forest Management in India, which provides support for innovative initiatives and research. It is also a forum for exchange and dissemination of experiences and ideas. Similar NSGs for Watershed Development and Participatory Irrigation Management are under consideration.

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- **Daunting - but rewarding**

The Indian Government policy on Joint Forest Management initiated in June 1990 has led 16 states to issue detailed government orders on the procedures to be followed for implementing the policy. About 2 million hectares of forest lands are now being managed by nearly 15 000 forest protection committees.

Working closely with the government of Gujarat, India, the Development Support Centre has facilitated a policy declaration for Participatory Irrigation Management. This has triggered changes including: appointment of a Working Group, starting pilot projects, simplification of the procedures for facilitating participation by NGOs and farmers, more delegation of power to field officers and liberal incentives to farmers' organisations to take responsibility for managing government irrigation projects.

The process continues. Policy influencing by NGOs is arduous, but I consider it to be essential and rewarding.

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12

Participatory shaping of institutional landscapes

Markus Steinich

• Institutions

Development projects cannot be sustainable without functioning institutions. Moreover both effective self-help and the empowerment of local people need a strong institutional base. Thus, appropriate institutions underpin the challenges of development. But what kind of institutions[1] are needed? Governmental or non-governmental ones? For-profit or non-profit organisations? Local, regional or national ones? Or do we have to think of an appropriate mix which considers institutional landscapes in their totality? Subsidiarity helps to answer these questions.

> Subsidiarity: organisational principles for making decisions at the lowest possible administrative level (decentralisation) and organising the state away from public ownership.

This article shows how local people can analyse and evaluate their relationship with a range of institutions that impact upon their village. This process can be used to enable the village to better organise itself to direct its own development.

• The promotion of subsidiarity

We were mandated by the German Development Service (DED) to find practical ways to promote subsidiarity. We started our co-operation with *Molibemo*, a peasants' federation which encompasses 75 villages on the Dogon-plateau in Mali, in September 1994.

Subsidiarity will be most effective in a political administrative setting which encourages private initiatives (whether they are profit-oriented or not) and favours local government. Mali, being formally democratic since 1991, is undertaking a profound restructuring of its administrative system.

Autonomous governments are to be introduced at all administrative levels. They will be endowed with a mission and resources and legitimised by the people through the election of councils. Currently, however, the rural areas are administered by public officers who are nominated by the state and are strictly dependent on central government.

• Co-operation with Molibemo

Our co-operation with Molibemo aimed to:

- provide villagers with information about the current decentralisation process and initiate a process of discussion;
- encourage villagers to articulate and analyse their problems with the current administrators of their affairs (e.g. the centralised local administration, donor projects, the activities of NGOs, village-co-operatives and village-based self-help-groups or small enterprises);
- stimulate the villagers to find solutions to their institutional problems by comparing the efficacy of the various organisational forms and discussing the comparative advantages of local self-government (be it in the form of a self-help-group, an enterprise, a village, a village-co-operative or the *commune* of the future); and,

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[1] In a strict sense, institutions and organisation are different. The former represent the 'rules of the game' while the latter are the actors. However, as in common practice, the terms are used interchangeably in this article.

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- accompany the villages on their way to realise their solutions.

• Promoting participatory institutional landscapes

We used a combination of Action-Research (AR) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). AR can be characterised as:

- cyclical: AR consists of a permanent cycle of 'research-decision-action-evaluation-research-etc.';
- participatory: the core of AR is its feed-back-system, a common learning-process based on local knowledge is possible;
- change-oriented: AR does not stop with data-collection; it aims at identifying problems (research) and at solving them (action);
- efficient: data are only collected to facilitate a process of change. This minimises data-imperialism where researchers from the North exploit the database of the South; and,
- multidisciplinary: qualitative and quantitative methods are to be employed according to their usefulness and applicability.

We found the tools and ethics of PRA highly compatible with AR. Thus we applied a combination of AR and PRA which we describe as *change-oriented PRA*.

We used standard visualisation tools (e.g. Venn diagrams, Box 1) and developed them to suit our purposes (e.g. Interaction diagram, see below). Diagrams were useful because the drawings attracted attention in an area where papers and pencils are rare. They offered a visual structure to discussions and enabled us to describe communities and compare findings between villages.

Diagrams enable the analysis to be undertaken within the community. This offers local peoples the chance to take it forward and develop workable solutions to local problems. Furthermore, the analysis empowered local people as they realised it is not necessary to have a formal education to analyse complex topics.

BOX 1
VENN DIAGRAMS

Venn diagrams use visual symbols to enable individuals to understand institutional linkages and relationships. Paper circles of different sizes are used to represent different institutions and these are mapped according to the interactions between them.
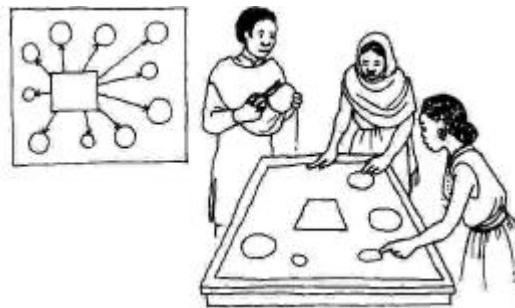
• In the villages

Table 1 describes the approach used in each of 44 villages. We started with an Information Campaign to establish contact and initiate discussion. This provided details of the on-going decentralisation process in Mali and the objectives of our project (Step 0).

Three weeks later, a team of two facilitators arrived in each village and stayed for a period of ten days. The schedule for this varied from place to place but usually contained:

- meeting to present the project and gain permission to work from the Village Chief;
- meeting with the Village-Assembly to present the project and plan the interviews according to the availability of the interview-groups; and,
- group interview with the Village-Chief, the Village-Council and the chiefs of the traditional village-based self-help-groups (*tumos*). A Venn diagram was used to list the organisations with which the village was in contact (Step 1.1).

Six separate group interviews with chief and council, old men, young men, women, entrepreneurs and members of the self-help-groups were then undertaken. Using the Venn diagram developed in Step 1.1, village relationships with different organisations were

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described (Step 1.2). We analysed each organisation's role according to the following criteria (this example uses the Livestock Department).

- purpose of interaction (vaccination of animals);
- method of interaction (coming unexpected and forcing the villagers);
- kind of goods and services received (money per sheep, food);
- degree of satisfaction (not satisfied);
- reaction in case of dissatisfaction ('we prayed to God'); and,
- desired changes ('we want to do it on our own').

Table 1. Village procedures

Steps	Actors
0 Contact Phase	
0. Information Campaign	Village Assembly
1 Research Phase	
1.1 Reveal the organisations with which the village has contact (Venn diagram)	Village Chief, Village Council, tumo chiefs
1.2 Describe and analyse the contact between the village and organisations in group interviews (Interaction diagram)	Village Chief and Village Council, old men, young men, women, entrepreneurs, members of self help groups.
1.3 Compare the results of analysis of the different organisational forms	
2 Action	
2.1 Sketch organisational solutions for the unsatisfactory cases	Village Chief and Village Council, old men, young men, women, entrepreneurs, members of self help groups.
2.2 Sketch a procedure to realise these solutions	
2.3 Vote the priority list	Village Assembly
2.4 Charge a committee with the detailed elaboration of solutions	
2.5 Develop operational details of the solutions	Village Committee, and other decision making units in the village and external facilitators
2.6 Develop a procedure to realise solutions	
3 Realisation Phase	

Figure 1 is an example of an Interaction Diagram. This is a methodology developed by us to enable local people to visualise and explore their relationships with different organisations. It describes and evaluates the interaction between a village (depicted as a hut) with the local administration (flag) and donor projects (car). The mode of interaction (e.g. notes for paying taxes; syringe for vaccination) are supplied with a plus or minus depending on whether the villagers are satisfied with the good/service received or not.

The last section of each interview or meeting encouraged the villagers:

- to compare different organisational forms, taking into account their different capacity to satisfy people's needs (Step 1.3: "We are always satisfied with what our self-help-groups offer while there is permanent dissatisfaction with the state's agencies");
- to suggest a more adequate organisational form (Step 2.1: "We want to do the vaccinations on our own"); and,
- to propose a direction of how to achieve this solution (Step 2.2 "First of all we have to organise a village-assembly").

When all the interviews are completed, each group presented its findings during a village-assembly. Building on the findings, a list of problems with the present-day administration (e.g. vaccination, forest management, taxation,) is compiled by the facilitators, discussed and voted by the assembly (Step 2.3). This list formed the preliminary workplan for a village-committee which is elected by the assembly (Step 2.4).

The committee is charged with defining the village organisational proposals more precisely (Step 2.5: "In order to manage the vaccinations on our own, villagers have to be trained and pharmaceutical equipment has to be available"). Furthermore, the Committee must develop an implementation strategy (Step 2.6: "Who do we contact for training?, Which villagers will we send?") and oversee the realisation of the objectives. The committee is not a decision-making body but an advisory-council to the village. It is assisted by external facilitators who visit the village each month.

Figure 1. Interaction diagram
The figure is copied from the findings of the young men of Eze by Dingué Nantoumé.
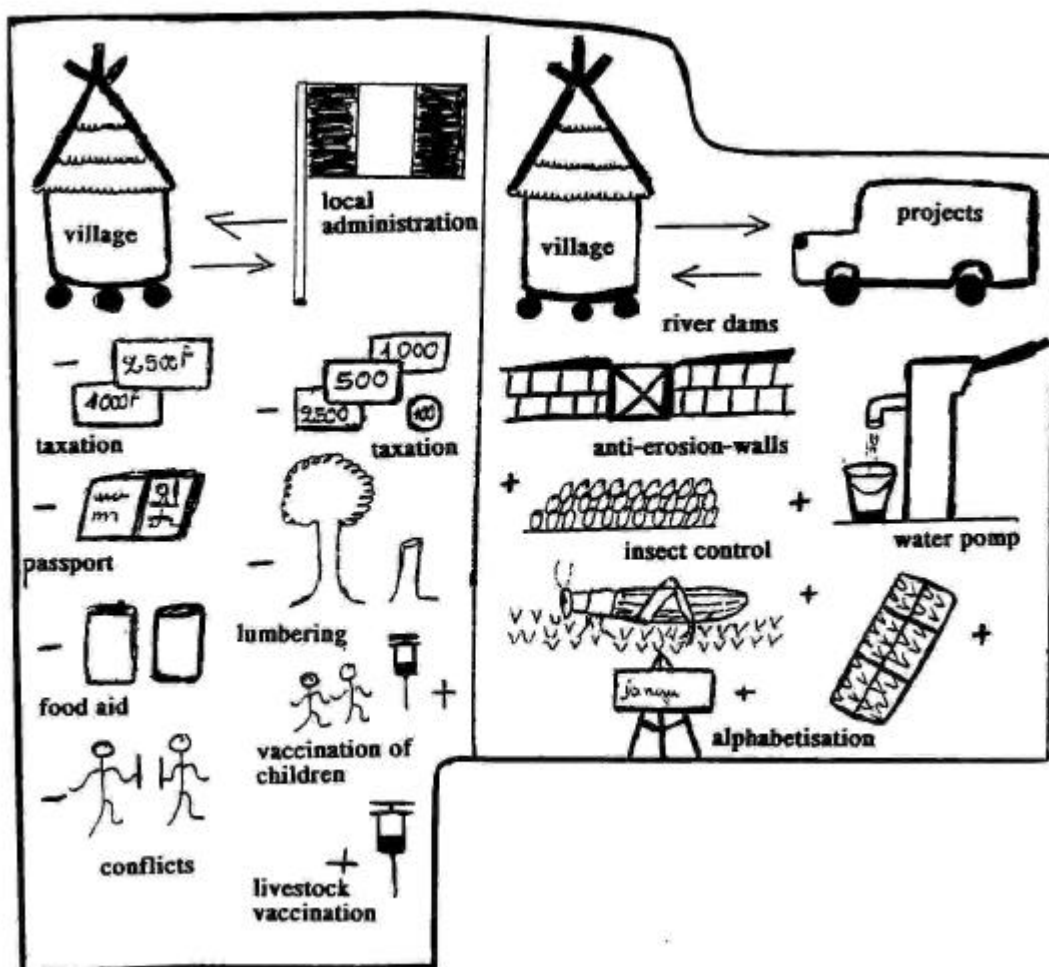
• **The integration of women**

Institutional change requires the full participation of all villagers. We tried to enhance the integration of women who, in the Dogon-context, are marginalised in decision making process and in their access to and control of resources.

When establishing the priority-list of problems (see Step 2.3), we rated the statements of the women (one group) and the three male groups (chief and council, old men, young men) as 1 to 1. We tried to enhance a strong representation of women in the committees. For certain topics we encouraged the committee to address women separately.

Finally, we constantly supported the participation of women, especially the female members of the committee.

• **Achievements**

An evaluation in December 1995 found many of the village committees to be dynamic in terms of the activities undertaken e.g. contacting other villages, preparing proposals etc. Furthermore, the committees have been elected by the village and not appointed by the elders. There are many young people, men and women on the committees mandated to discuss issues of self-governance and present proposals to the local administration. However, the committees still value the external facilitators both for the information

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and motivation they provide. As funding for this project draws to a close, the village committees will work directly with the personnel of Molibemo for information.

On a village level, the change-oriented PRA empowered the people not only to discuss decentralisation, but to look actively for solutions that promote self-administration. On an inter-village level, the frequency of contacts has increased. This is the first time that village have met to discuss novel topics, such as self-administration. Previous meetings had addressed traditional topics of organising religious festivals or resolving conflict.

Villages have developed proposal to address their problems with the current administration. These have concerned a wide range of issues, including forest management, health, infrastructure, legal conflicts, food aid and livestock vaccination. Until the autonomous local self government structures are in place, these proposals have had to be implemented at the village or inter-village level. For example, in forest management, some villages elected a village forest policeforce, decided on protected areas and negotiated with other villages the mutual acceptance of these measures.

• **Conclusions**

Local institutional landscapes have to be shaped according to the principle of subsidiarity if long term development benefits are to accrue to local people. This example suggests that an abstract concept like subsidiarity is practicable in development co-operation.

We were neutral in our facilitation, however, villagers oriented their solutions towards the principles of subsidiarity. This may be because approaches, such as decentralisation and self-reliance, are compatible with the traditional mode of administration. Furthermore, villagers are totally alienated from public administration.

It is not possible for the villagers to return to a pre-statal administrative situation. However, negotiations with the administration about the transfer of resources and areas of responsibility are initiated by the project. This

is made possible in the framework of the current decentralisation-policy.

The process of institutional change in Mali is long-term and still in progress. We have learned that successful devolution of an administrative system requires people to be empowered as stakeholders in the process.

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13

The rush to scale: lessons being learned in Indonesia

Nilanjana Mukherjee

• Introduction

UNICEF became involved in integrating participatory approaches into the nation-wide system for village development planning in Indonesia about 18 months ago. This paper is a chronology of the events to date. Readers may draw their own conclusions from the story. This is, perhaps, a good example of what can happen when participatory approaches are institutionalised, what it takes to make a difference, how far one can expect to go and things that can and cannot be controlled and why.

Formulation of annual plans for village development has been a feature of rural life in Indonesia for more than a decade. Every January the Department of Home Affairs sets the process in motion. Sub-district administrative chiefs notify village heads that they should schedule community consultation meetings to come up with proposals for village improvement. The proposals usually include resource sharing commitments between the villagers and different government departments. These are examined and progressively consolidated at sub-district, district, provincial and national levels. Information about approved proposals passes down the same levels in reverse order and funds follow. What is requested is not necessarily the same as what is received. The process takes 12-14 months.

During the planning of the 1995-2000 country programme of collaboration with the Government of Indonesia, UNICEF was requested to help improve the quality of this bottom-up planning process. Joint reviews of the existing process were undertaken in six provinces in early 1995. They revealed that the process needed to focus more on human development, involve larger community groups

(particularly more women) in decision making and be based on better analysis of the causes of local problems. A training programme for village level 'facilitators' of the improved planning process had already been prepared by a foreign consultant using ZOPP methodology. However, its field testing during March-April 1995 did not satisfy all the requirements.

The Department of Home Affairs has a group of national trainers. They wished to gain wider exposure to the participatory planning methods being used in other developing countries and adapt what was relevant to the conditions in Indonesia. In response, UNICEF arranged a one-day exposure seminar in April 1995 for national government personnel, including presentations from a range of international PRA practitioners and Indonesian NGOs. As a result of the seminar, the Government Departments and PKK (Women's Family Welfare Movement: a nation-wide women's NGO that includes the wives of all government personnel) requested longer and more in-depth learning about PRA.

UNICEF supported a two-week study visit to India for key government officials and trainers from the Departments of Home Affairs, PKK, Adult Education, Social Affairs and Health. The 12-day study programme on 'PRA applications for rural development' was organised by OUTREACH at Bangalore, India during August-September 1995.

• Training targets

The national trainers had been instructed to re-write the training module developed and tested in April 1995. They did this by referring to available manuals and books documenting PRA and RRA experiences. The training manual was completed before the study visit.

A central government directive was sent out to all 27 provinces of the country in early June. This instructed local government that, starting in the 1995-96 cycle, bottom-up planning in villages of Indonesia would follow a participatory process called the 'P3MD' *Perencanaan Partisipatif Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa,* which means Participatory Village Development Planning.

Training modules were scheduled to be produced centrally by October 1995 and despatched to provinces, districts and sub-districts. Provincial trainers and village council heads would be trained in December 1995. Following this training, village council heads were to facilitate participatory planning in their villages during February-March 1996. Government funds had been officially allocated for this 4-day training in over 60,000 villages within the 1995-96 budget year ending in March 1996.

From the outset, the planned schedule, target group for training, budget and the 4-day training plan appeared to be beyond discussion and possibility of modification. The funds had to be utilised before March 1996. Furthermore, the provincial government had been given explicit instructions along with the June directive on how to use the funds based on the 4-day training plan. However, upon return from Bangalore the national trainers' team decided to re-write their earlier training manual. This was achieved under close supervision of the Director and real pressure of meeting the printer's deadline.

The 11-volume training package was in press by November. This allowed very little opportunity for consultation with anyone outside the four members of the writing team. Field testing was not feasible, given the time frame.

Compromises had to be made to fit all the officially specified contents into the 4-day training module for trainers and the 3-day module for village heads. Field-based methods inevitably became classroom-based and the time constraints allowed only "teaching" rather than learning. Attitudes and behaviours received little attention in the module because departmental trainers at provincial and district levels had had prior training in communication skills.

The new elements in the module were the incorporation of three techniques from the PRA repertoire: resource mapping, seasonal calendars, Venn diagramming. Information from these methods was to be transferred into a series of 11 tables for processing into a Village Development Plan.

Everybody agreed that the product and the planned process left much to be desired. However, it was felt to be sufficient for the current year in fulfilling the government's commitment announced in June 1995. It was also felt best to learn through experimentation and that improvements could be made the following year, based on the experiences in the current year.

There was no way to stem the tide of instant replication and mass scale training. The planned schedule was implemented relentlessly in 27 provinces and the budgets duly spent within the financial year. We were invited to observe the process and provide feedback to central decisionmakers.

The trainers observed were generally unprepared for their role. They agreed with the objective of empowering the community but were unaware of how to foster the process of empowerment. During the training of village heads, the trainers: tended to rely on overhead transparencies reproducing text directly from the training manual, provided too much direction for exercises to be completed by community groups, asked leading questions and provided lengthy 'correct' answers themselves. The fundamental principles of learning and discovering together with their trainees seemed incompatible with their own perception of their role as trainers.

Trainings were conducted for 60 to 70 people at a time in order to meet the deadlines. Reports from observers of the village level planning that followed show that little has changed in terms of process and outputs this year as compared to previous years.

A summary of observations and lessons learned has been compiled at the Department of Home Affairs, using all the feedback received from departmental as well as external observers. To date there has been no review dialogue on the subject. However some basic premises have

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been revised. For example, the village teams of analysts are to trained in the next phase rather than just the village heads. The five-person team will also have to have at least 2 women, including the village PKK (women's NGO) leader. The core national trainers' group is working on revising the training modules again, within their small, select group.

• What can we learn from our experience?

We began with a situation where there was, allegedly, institutional support and interest in participatory approaches. The political climate was turning more favourable. Terms like 'participation' and 'empowerment' of the community were becoming popular in national policies and plan documents. There was a sense of urgency in the highest levels of government to bring about visible and rapid change towards more equitable development. An overall institutional thrust towards decentralising the responsibility for development was (and still is) gathering more momentum as the country approaches the next general elections in 1997.

Here was a nation-wide system to promote participatory approaches to improve the quality of life of the rural poor. The planning process was designed to learn more about how to achieve this objective. We felt that our appropriate response should be to assist this quest and shift the focus of village development towards the situation of women and children in the village.

We were aware that the 'institutional support' had to be taken at its face value. If we wished to influence the system, we had to enter when and where we were invited and try to make a difference from that point onwards. With hindsight, perhaps, it may have been useful to emphasise the implications of adopting participatory approaches more explicitly with top-level decision makers. This could have helped avoid unrealistic time-schedules and mismatches between processes and structures. However, by doing this we could have alienated top level decision makers who are keen to bring about rapid innovations. The government could also have approached other consultants that would provide the required deliverables: manuals, materials and training. We hoped to make a difference by increasing the number of

people who supported our approach and building up a critical mass of opinion. We will continue to support dialogues, promote alliances and reflection, bringing more and varied people into the picture

An interactive learning environment is alien to most bureaucracies, especially large government systems. Training programmes are easy to design. Fostering an interactive learning environment is infinitely more difficult, particularly in top-down, hierarchical organisations where unquestioning respect for authority is integral to social and cultural life. To achieve an interactive learning environment, the change must come from within and it is important to respect and go along with the institutional culture. We frequently found ourselves limited by the institutional norms of our counterparts. For example, we tried to promote reflective dialogues but were asked to send our inputs in writing for consideration by the Ministry. Clearly written memos are a one-way flow of information and do not lead to genuine interaction.

Cultural codes of conduct may inhibit open discussion of what did not work. Attempts to do so may ostracise the 'insensitive foreigner' and fail to lead to collective learning. Discussing sensitive issues with key persons prior to official meetings can help, but sometimes leads to dilution or distortion of the main point. Significant contradictions and questions involving conflicting opinions may never be opened for discussions. Under such circumstances it can get extremely problematic to define what is and what is not 'uncompromisable' according to one's personal code of ethics. It seems to help to keep the longer-term potential in mind, even if the immediate present seems too "compromised".

Institutional capacity building in participatory approaches is beset with the chronic problem of staff transfers. Adoption of participatory methodologies needs a critical mass of people. However, we found that just as the group is beginning to develop the required work culture, it may be broken up by staff moving to different sectors which are to far apart to support each other. Within strongly hierarchical systems, such disruptions may never allow participatory learning to establish.

How does one address the problem ? We have yet to find an effective solution. It seems better to run field based training for people from several ministries/disciplines together. Sensitising people in a multi-disciplinary environment provides more contacts to follow up later. We have proposed, but have not yet succeeded in establishing, a communication and interaction forum/network covering both government and NGO practitioners. The two still tend to work in isolation. Strengthening institutional training centres that handle mainstream staff training for government personnel is another potentially promising strategy. We have made a step in this direction with the staff trainers of the two national training centres of the Directorate of Community Development in Indonesia.

Learning continues.

Progress with PKK womens' groups is very encouraging. Within three months of PKK's national consultative meeting in February 1996, two major provinces have organised learning workshops for PKK's district and sub-district level trainers. Their plan is to work out ways of using the PRA methodology for improving rural womens' health. Despite commendable economic progress over the past decade in Indonesia, maternal mortality remains unacceptably high. The President has recently called for urgent action to accelerate a reduction in maternal mortality.

PKK has joined with local NGOs in the provinces, to work out appropriate PRA applications for village level assessment of womens' health and participatory analysis of direct and underlying causes of maternal deaths. This is to be followed by action planning for prevention as well as proper management of obstetric emergencies at family and community level. UNICEF's support to these initiatives is limited to technical assistance for training, participatory research and alliance building among community organisations, specialised NGOs and the providers of health services. In both provinces, local government personnel have attended the field based learning workshops and recognised that PRA goes far beyond the *'playing with sticks and stones',* as commented by a Jakarta based public health specialist earlier this year.

• **Conclusion**

Experiences with the institutionalisation of PRA seem to turn into an exercise in compromise. It is critical to recognise where to draw the line and prevent a slide into manipulation. On the other hand, the institutionalisation of PRA can reach many more people who can make a difference than a perfectly conducted two-village PRA exercise conducted by good field activists. The benefits may not be immediately discernible. But over the long term the sheer volume of new thinking sparked off by good institutional exposure to PRA, tends to yield unexpected bonuses from many quarters.

There is a very real risk associated with working on an institutionalised scale such as a government system. This is the risk of generating community initiatives and empowerment before the institution is ready or willing to respond. Those of us engaged at this level cannot disown the responsibility of continually seeking the most operationally (as well as ethically) acceptable compromise, keeping both the short and long term consequences clearly in mind.

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NOTE

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily those of her organisation.

14

Scaling up or scaling down?

Kamal Kar and Sue Phillips

- ## Background

The Slum Improvement Projects (SIPs) in India aim to improve the standards of living of city slum dwellers. In an effort to integrate different facets of urban development, SIPs incorporate infrastructural improvements such as drinking water provision, sanitation, roads, drainage, garbage collection and electricity. They also include the development of primary health care and community development programmes such as pre-school, non formal education, adult literacy, and economic development. Since the early 1990s, the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) has funded SIPs.

In this paper we attempt to share some of our experiences of institutionalising participatory approaches (particularly participatory learning methods, PALM and PRA) in the slum improvement projects. The paper focuses on the Calcutta Slum Improvement Project (CSIP) which is implemented by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA). The CSIP focuses on the development of 0.28 million slum dwellers living in fifteen wards in and around the city of Calcutta.

The project began with the idea of promoting community participation. But in practice it followed a traditional mode of implementation. After two years, in 1993, it was decided to follow a more participatory approach to ensure people's participation at every stage of planning and implementation. At this point, PRA approaches were introduced to the staff working in CMDA. It was clear that the objective of increasing peoples' participation in the project planning and implementation was not driven from the

side of CMDA, but was rather introduced by the donor agency. The local actors CMDA and CMC had been implementing the programme in their own way. Area coverage, target achievement, fund utilisation, report preparation, were important indicators of success. Activities, such as discussions and meetings with the communities, were organised only occasionally.

The terminology of participation (community empowerment, participatory planning and implementation, participatory monitoring and evaluation, community decisions etc.). was used in seminars and workshops. Yet there was little sign of transforming the rhetoric into action.

- ## Structure of the organisation

The structure of the CSIP was compartmentalised and hierarchical. It is divided into three sectors: Engineering, Health and Community Development. Each sector had its own agenda, targets and way of working. The heads of sectors met only in occasional meetings/reviews and during the visits of external agencies e.g. ODA. There were no regular events where the staff from all three sectors could meet and exchange their views, experiences and ideas to plan for common action. It was so compartmentalised that to an outsider it seemed to be three different institutes.

- ## Training

The task of orienting CSIP in participatory approaches and methodology was time consuming. It required patience and persuasion. A number of training workshops were organised over a period of one year to bring it to the users level. The process of

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training the officials and staff was undertaken in several stages, including: orientating senior staff in PALM, training middle level officials and heads of departments in PALM/PRA, training of trainers in PALM/PRA and the training of field level staff in different SIPs.

All levels the personnel liked the idea of a participatory approach and learned the techniques with great interest. However, difficulties were experienced in training the staff and officials. Some of these are listed below:

- It was initially very difficult to bring the staff of all the three sectors of CSIP into one common training programme. All the three sectors wanted to have separate training workshops on PRA. The question that was asked frequently was that whether it was a PRA training for Engineering or Health or Community Development? The compartmentalisation was so deep in the institutional culture that it was difficult for the staff to imagine training, discussion or planning together in a common workshop setting.

- It was difficult to achieve spontaneous participation in training workshops. Introductory games (e.g. group drawings of personal images) were very useful in ice-breaking and rapport building during workshops.

- The project role for each of the three sectors was different. The Community Development and Health sectors worked for longer term improvements in health, education and income generation. The Engineering sector was engaged in creating infrastructure for immediate benefit. By the time PALM was introduced, most of the engineering plans for the slums were completed. Thus, the engineers found that this approach had little relevance to their work.

- **Problems of scaling-up**

A number of workshops, dialogues and discussions were organised with the staff from all three sectors. For the first time, the CSIP began to act as an integrated project. But, at this point the real struggle to facilitate slum improvement plans involving all three sectors began. Many CSIP staff felt that it was much easier to bring the slum community together, than to bring the three sectors of CMDA in a common platform for participation.

The compartmentalisation of SIPs into the three sectors reduced the effectiveness of PRA. All three sectors tried to use PRA in isolation. Problems and solutions raised through the use of PRA demanded a more comprehensive intervention and a consolidated approach. There was no participation in house, yet all the actors expected the participation of the slum community. Compartmentalisation tended to perpetuate a service-provision approach rather than to encourage a demand-driven response.

However, the staff felt they were doing the PRA well. Slum community members were encouraged to produce charts of different kinds. Hundreds of social maps, seasonal calendars and matrices started appearing. Rather over-enthusiastically, many so called PRA were facilitated in slums during the office hours. Most of the drawings were made by the women and children who were present in the slum community during that period. Since young and middle aged men are mainly in the slums in the evening, a large number of them were consistently missed.

In most cases the products of the 'PRA' were not used in planning activities nor led to any sustained action by the community. As a result, the newly learnt skills were mainly used in information gathering or extraction. The programme continued to be implemented as before. All the sectors had already set targets and this was the major concern. PRA became another activity to add to the list of targets!

It was difficult for the staff to understand how PRAs could be used in a situation where all the activities and plans were pre-decided in the project. Thus, PRA techniques were picked up in a target driven way.

In Vijawada in southern India, a senior officer of the SIP made it compulsory for the project staff to 'do' PRA from 10 - 11 am everyday. Scores of social maps, calendars and diagrams were produced in the slums. It was clear that the use of PALM/PRA techniques had become

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institutionalised rather than the participatory development initiative.

Some abuse of PRA and lack of both support and genuine institutional commitment to the approach created many new problems. PRA enabled local people to express their views but the institution was incapable of responding to them.

The lessons learnt from the Vijawada SIP were:

- Without initiating required change in the behaviour and attitude of project staff, it is risky for PRA techniques to be used on a large scale;
- Sufficient time and training is needed to sensitise senior people in a bureaucracy to the participatory process of development; and,
- A more integrated approach is required to implement a people centred development programme. It cannot be achieved by issuing government orders.

• Efforts to scale down

Because PRA techniques came to be used on an *ad hoc* basis, it was necessary to scale down the process to a few examples of real community participation (that *began* with participatory appraisals). These 'show cases' of community participation became the centres of process learning for other staff and slum communities. Insiders shared their experiences with others. This approach worked fairly well in Calcutta, although it may be questioned whether people's participation could be ensured in the community infrastructure created by the project.

Our experience in changing the attitude of government staff became quite exciting when a different kind of training module was adopted. The poor from the slums were brought as consultants. n workshop settings, the slum dwellers took the lead in discussions regarding their conditions of life and experiences. The government officials' roles were primarily to listen and learn. The project staff also listened to real life discussion regarding various problems in the slums. Slum dwellers were brought from the city of Bombay (in the West) to Cuttuck (in the East)

and *vice versa*, for sharing experiences and learning.

In the Calcutta SIP, different activities were tried out, over a period of about one and a half years, to institutionalise the participatory approach. The aim was to move beyond the adoption of PRA techniques to promote sustained community action in the slums.

For example, workshops were conducted with the senior and middle level officials from the three sectors of CMDA on the real need to integrate the activities of the Community Development, Health and Engineering sectors. This was seen as crucial for making community participation more meaningful and effective. In each workshop, the main focus was on appropriate attitudes and behaviour.

The sectoral officials quickly appreciated the need for a more integrated approach. They suggested the formation of an interdisciplinary core team.

At the field level, six action groups were formed, drawing staff from each sector responsible for a certain area. For the first time, a joint effort was made on a pilot basis in six slum areas. The aim was to integrate the interventions of all three sectors to support and strengthen the implementation of community plans.

A few of the activities that were effective in slowly institutionalising the participatory approach in CSIP and in establishing sustained community organisations, include:

- Inviting community members from one successful slum to another in large meetings attended by the slum dwellers and CMDA officials.

- Organising slum community meetings in the evenings when most members of the community were present. The attendance, spirit and enthusiasm were generally high. In these *Sahajog* (co-operation) meetings, senior officials, such as the Chief Engineer, Chief Health Advisor, Chief of Community Development, shared the same floor as the slum community and local field workers. The slum leaders facilitated group activities.

- Slum people evaluated the progress of project activities implemented by the CSIP, suggested improvements and contributed their time and labour to the projects.

- ## Lessons learned and conclusions

It is essential to begin the participatory process at the project formulation stage. In these examples, the slum community, for whom the project was designed, were not consulted during planning and implementation of project activities.

During the project, it was decided to take a more participatory approach and the staff were trained in PRA/PALM. The struggle to institutionalise the participatory approach in a top down hierarchical organisation at such a late stage, almost brought the project to an early end.

Adequate time and effort is needed to bring about the desired changes in the attitude and behaviours of the staff. This may not be achieved through one or two occasional training sessions. A much longer term input, using a range of training related activities, needs to be organised.

Sufficient time must be built into the project document for this process of learning. In these examples, the staff did not have sufficient time to internalise participatory learning and reorganise themselves towards a more integrated approach. The in-house participatory learning that was building up over a period of 10-12 months was jeopardised by one workshop on the Logical Framework. The staff became concerned about their sectoral targets and the project time frame. Non-conventional indicators have be developed for monitoring and evaluating participatory projects.

A distinct phase for 'handing over' was described in the project document. The project expected community participation in project maintenance although they had not been partners in the planning stages. A successful hand over required much earlier community involvement in the project.

Our experiences suggest that staff and officials who show the right kind of attitude for participatory development are few. Sometimes they face obstructions from others in the system and may not get the necessary support and co-operation. Such people need to be identified, supported and encouraged. Innovative ways to sustain their spirit and motivation need to be developed. The commitment of only one or two people can bring about large changes because they generate interest amongst others.

Selection of the right people and the right approach to training is of utmost importance. Although some SIPs in India approach their end, many are in the process of implementation. New SIPs are being initiated. More new lessons will be learned in the future, but the impact of on-going programmes could be improved if appropriate actions were taken learning from these projects.

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NOTE

The views expressed in this article are the personal views of the authors and may not necessarily be those of the supporting and collaborating organisations.

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Going to scale: community resource appraisal and planning in the Philippines

Larry P. Nacionales and Maxwell P. Wilkie

- ## Introduction

Since 1986, the European Union has supported a series of integrated agricultural development programmes in the Philippines working in some of the poorest and most remote parts of the country. A major concern of these programmes has been the development of community based methodologies which foster local participation in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating micro-projects.

In this paper we describe the community resource appraisal and planning process which was developed and piloted in one geographical area (Zone 1) of one of these programmes, the Small Islands Agricultural Support Services Programme (SMISLE). We show how structured Community Resource Appraisal and Planning Workshops have been successfully used to: gather baseline information, establish an expanding programme of micro-projects which directly benefit the community planners, and reorient the local government bureaucracy toward a participatory, community-based development process.

- ## Programme background

SMISLE is a five-year Ecu 22.5 million grant-funded programme executed by the Department of Agriculture. The programme's core objectives are: to strengthen the capacity of rural communities, people's organisations, local NGOs and Local Government Units to organise their own development and resource conservation agendas and actions and to achieve sustainable increases in production and income through market-led economic opportunities in crops, livestock and fisheries.

SMISLE is mandated to support a micro-project based approach to development. Typically, micro-projects are directed at achieving a priority objective of a community, using local knowledge, resources and expertise where possible, and the capital and technical resources of SMISLE (and other development partners) where necessary. Emphasis is given to both quick-acting assistance to increase productivity, production and income, and actions necessary to sustain development initiatives.

Individual communities usually participate in several micro-projects and take a progressively greater responsibility for the development and implementation of each successive micro-project. This learning process is integral to the programme's participatory extension process.

- ## The local context

Zone 1 covers the island province of Guimaras, one of the twenty provinces in the country targeted by the Government's poverty alleviation programme (Social Reform Agenda). The province includes three municipalities and ninety-six *barangays* (the smallest administrative unit of local government) covering a land area of 605 km^2. Each barangay includes several *sitios* (villages). The total population is 137,000 of which sixty percent are farmers and twenty percent are fisherfolk. More than seventy-five percent of households are below the poverty threshold.

Guimaras province was created in 1992 after the enactment of the Local Government Code (Republic Act 7160 of 1991). This devolves much of the responsibility for development planning to the local government. From the

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outset, the appointed executive attempted to give voice to barangay-level informants in the provincial strategic planning process. We observed, however, that the existing process did not give voice to most of the potential beneficiaries of the SMISLE programme.

To redress this we decided to pilot a more community-based planning process which could be integrated into the existing barangay planning process. We felt that participatory techniques would be most effective with small groups of people. The average size of a sitio in Guimaras is 40 households. We therefore decided to work at sitio level and invite all households to participate.

- **Framework for consultation and community planning**

SMISLE began its activities in April 1994. Staff from the Department of Agriculture and the Office of the Provincial Agriculturist worked to develop and pilot a framework for community consultation and planning.

Consultations were launched at a two-day workshop gathering 21 key development agents active in Guimaras. During this workshop participants prioritised five barangays in each municipality for SMISLE pilot activities. This was based on their need, in terms of poverty and the relative shortage of assistance being provided by other development agencies.

Using this initial list and additional secondary data (on agro-ecosystems, land tenure, land use, key agricultural commodities, and access to markets and services) we identified one Strategic Agricultural Development Area (SADA) in each of the three municipalities in which to start field activities. These first three SADAs were validated with the relevant municipalities and Barangay Development Councils, which then prioritised sitios for SMISLE assistance.

- **Community resource appraisal and planning workshop**

We started sitio-level consultations with a walking transect with key informants. This was followed by a two-day workshop within the sitio. The objectives of this Community Resource Appraisal and Planning Workshop were to identify sitio goals, gather baseline information, and prepare a Community Development Plan (CDP).

Through the workshop we wanted to set the tone for future interactions between the community, municipal agricultural technicians and SMISLE staff. Reorienting municipal agricultural technicians away from traditional technical delivery services toward participatory extension techniques was a key hidden objective. The workshop was designed to elicit as much community participation as possible.

It was decided to collect the baseline information required to assess the impact of assistance to the communities during these workshops. Care was taken to limit the information gathered to the minimum required for development planning and later impact evaluation. Local agricultural technicians required new participatory extension skills. Thus a three day workshop on essential group extension techniques was provided.

The first Community Resource Appraisal and Planning workshop was conducted in October 1994. This gathered information on natural resources and agricultural problems and opportunities. The workshop was also used to introduce the SMISLE programme to the community and to discuss what the programme means by participation.

> In SMISLE, participation is used to mean the voluntary involvement of self-selected groups in formulating development plans for the communities to which they belong, implementing micro-projects to address identified problems and monitoring and evaluating the achievement (or not) of planned outputs and objectives. Thus SMISLE is viewed as participating in the development of communities, rather than the communities participating in SMISLE.

On the basis of these discussions the community was invited to discuss whether they would like to work with SMISLE. Subsequent sessions used various participatory techniques to prioritise goals, gather baseline socio-economic data and develop community plans (see Figure 1). The workshop concluded with the signing of a memorandum of

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agreement between the community and SMISLE agreeing the proposed terms of a future development partnership.

All data collected was copied by programme staff during the workshop. Original material was kept by the communities. In the zone office, a baseline information database was formed and reports prepared for the sitio, local government and ourselves.

The CDP, listing prioritised micro-project ideas, was submitted to the Barangay Development Council for endorsement, to the Municipal Planning Office and SMISLE. This plan guided development in the sitio. Five micro-projects have already been implemented by community groups, with assistance from SMISLE and other development partners.

Figure 1. Completing socio-economic matrices for each household (Photo: M.P. Wilkie)

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• **Impact and lessons learned**

Since October 1994, more than sixty workshops have been conducted in almost fifty Barangays. Much has been learned from this experience by all participants.

Communities

Communities have shown great enthusiasm for the workshops. Even though the design requires households to commit two days of their time, generally over 80% participate for the full duration. The selection of appropriate tools ensures that all participants actively contribute.

Communities respond enthusiastically to the process of planning. They are learning from the experience of implementing successive micro-projects. Communities now request SMISLE to provide more training on managing the development process. Beneficiary monitoring committees oversee the implementation of the micro-projects and the maintenance of outputs. The value of community contribution to micro-projects averages almost 30 percent. Where they have built small infrastructures, user groups collect maintenance fees.

Local government

Most local government agricultural technicians have embraced the workshops which require them to listen to local people. In some cases the consultations have encouraged the local agricultural offices to resume services, such as soil analysis, for which they mistakenly believed there was no longer any demand.

However, there have been some implementation difficulties. We soon found that many agricultural technicians were enthusiastically scheduling lots of workshops, because running them was easy. What they were meant to do next was less clear, as we had not provided a framework for follow-up consultations.

As Backhaus and Wagachchi (1995) observed, in the absence of an appropriate participatory framework, local government agri-technicians can act as participatory change facilitators one day and revert to technical delivery extension 'we are the experts' type the next. We found that inadequately trained facilitators focused on producing workshop outputs and neglected the consultative process fostered by the workshop. Some of the old hands started suggesting favoured micro-project ideas for participants to 'volunteer'. To address this SMISLE has conducted a series of follow-up workshops on participatory extension techniques.

SMISLE

As a direct result of these workshops we have been able to introduce a participatory consultative process to local government agricultural extension workers and their supervisors. The Provincial Planning and Development Office has adopted the methodology for the implementation of the Social Reform Agenda in Guimaras. Municipal executives have also recognised that the process has improved the delivery of support services to the rural poor, and are among its strongest advocates. The process of transforming local development bureaucracies has begun.

The workshops have enabled us to establish a benchmark database, documenting the socio-economic status of communities when SMISLE first started working with them. The workshops result in excellent census-quality baseline data because is it validated by respondent's peers at the time it is collected.

The zone has already provided assistance to over 170 micro-projects initiated and managed by the communities themselves. These include water supply systems, rice seed production schemes, lobster culture and product marketing projects. However, sometimes we have found that micro-project ideas identified in the CDPs require further validation with the proponents. For instance, micro-projects which require land to be deeded by donation have to be reworked around the availability of resources.

To improve on the CDPs produced during the workshops, follow up consultations on problem and solution analysis are now structured using a series of extension

packages. Communities now undertake commodity analysis to ensure that the chosen solution to a problem is the most appropriate for the sitio and in the wider local development context.

When we designed the workshops, we felt it was inappropriate to collect information on incomes during the first dialogue with potential programme beneficiaries. However, we believe that it is important that ranking of the actual or perceived wealth of households in the community be undertaken as soon as possible. This will ensure that activities supported through micro-projects are not commandeered by the community elites. Wealth ranking is now undertaken after the first micro-project is completed, once SMISLE had demonstrated its commitment to the sitio.

• Conclusions

This structured approach to community consultation, data collection and planning is a compromise. It is necessitated by the programme's mandate to achieve physical results within a limited time frame (and to document the local impact of these results), and our desire to ensure that the micro-projects implemented are socially desirable, technologically appropriate and locally sustainable by the participating communities.

As Backhaus & Wagachchi (1995) have observed, participation encourages expectations. If poorly handled, workshops can result in wish lists of donor-funded interventions. The facilitating organisation must be able to explain to participants what type and scale of development activity it is prepared to support. The organisation must also have a transparent policy on the counterpart contribution which community stakeholders are expected to make on any such micro-project.

We believe that this type of structured consultation process can have a wider application. However, we urge development planning programmes which have no budget for follow-up action to avoid using community-based planning. One of our concerns about some other (often academic) initiatives in the Philippines and elsewhere which have used participatory appraisal and

planning tools is that there is no provision for follow-up.

These tools are intended to encourage communities to become stakeholders in a development process. We believe strongly that they should only be used if there are funds available to implement actions agreed on with communities. Otherwise we will hear the cries of "participation for what?" and "participation does not work", and with reason.

To address the credibility issue, SMISLE Zone 1 has worked hard to help communities rapidly implement a first micro-project within each of the sitios where we have facilitated workshops. Generally, we have been able to help communities implement a first micro-project within 3-4 months of the workshop. We counsel other development agencies seeking to embrace participatory appraisal and planning tools to adopt a similar policy.

In short, the workshops are only the tip of a participatory iceberg. They have little intrinsic merit if conducted in isolation from a participatory development process. Indeed they could dangerously erode participants' confidence in such a process.

We recognise that there are risks in "going for scale" (Chambers 1995) with participatory appraisal and planning tools. There is a danger the consultation process encouraged by these tools may be neglected as programme coverage increases. To ensure that the participatory development process initiated through the workshops is not diluted as programme coverage expands, SMISLE has developed a framework, the SMISLE Sustainable Development Process. This is designed to guide the evolution of development partnerships between communities and the programme.

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# ABC of PRA: attitude and behaviour change

Somesh Kumar

"Worldwide, PRA practitioners and trainers have been finding that personal behaviour and attitudes are fundamental for true participation. Behaviour and attitudes matter more than methods, powerful though PRA methods have proved. At the personal level, practitioners and trainers have found that the major problem in development is not "them" - local people, the poor and marginalised, but "us" - the outsider professionals. Again and again, we have rushed and dominated, imposing our reality, and denying that of the weak and vulnerable. For the poor to be empowered requires us to change, to interact in new ways, to become not controllers, teachers and transferors of technology, but convenors, facilitators and supporters, enabling those who are weak and marginalised to express and analyse their realities, to plan and to act. For this we have to behave differently; it is our attitudes that have to change.

Robert Chambers, 1996

• Introduction

Attitudes and behaviour, methods and sharing have been considered to be the three pillars of PRA (see Figure 1). However, there is growing realisation that attitudes and behaviour are the foundation of true participation. Acknowledging attitudes and behaviour in PRA is both a major challenge and opportunity.

Figure 1. The three pillars of PRA
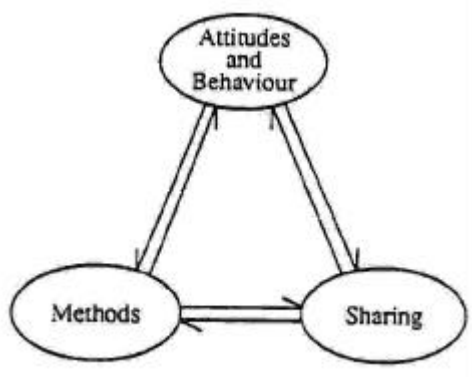
ACTIONAID India, Bangalore and SPEECH, Madurai resolved to convene a South-South Workshop on PRA: Attitudes and Behaviour in Bangalore and Madurai. For the first ten days of July 1996, 26 experienced PRA practitioners and trainers from 12 countries, mostly from the South, got together to explore and share attitudes and behaviour in PRA. This article summarises the outcome of the deliberations.

• The theme

The theme of the workshop was PRA: Attitudes and Behaviour with a focus on the following questions :

- How do the attitudes and behaviour of officials and professionals change when they become involved in PRA?
- How do they need to change?
- What are the training or other strategies that encourage such change?
- How are behavioural/attitudinal changes handled during basic training and 'training of trainers' in PRA?

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- **The structure**

In line with the tradition of a participatory approach, the structure and issues of the workshop were not predetermined or fixed by the organisers. Only time blocks were fixed. Instead, it was instead left to the participants to evolve the content and process of the workshop. A Steering Committee of participants met periodically to finalise the agenda of the workshop.

Seventeen articles were presented which were categorised into three thematic areas *viz.* personal attitudes and behaviour change, methods and training in attitude and behaviour change and institutionalisation of PRA. The presentations were followed by buzz groups discussions. After completion of all the articles on a theme, issues and learnings were listed, discussed in buzz groups and again in the plenary. The main findings of these sessions are outlined below.

- **Personal attitudes and behaviour change**

Some of the papers presented categorised the types of attitudes one encounters among officials and professionals in relation to PRA. Box 1 outlines an interesting example from Bangladesh. It demonstrates the arrogance of many outsiders and technocrats who believe in technical solutions alone and fail to recognise local peoples' perceptions.

BOX 1

Ranking by villagers of their most pressing problems produced a prioritised list of 44 problems, out of which the rat problem ranked at 42 in some villages. (It is pertinent to mention here that the Directorate of Agriculture Extension has the month of October earmarked as the 'rat killing month' when all the villagers are encouraged to kill rats and bring 'tails' to the office for which they are paid.) Instead of looking into why the rat problem was low in the villagers' priority, the officer immediately said, "Ah! well, you see, the farmers don't know that rats are a problem!"

- **Personal experiences**

The participants shared their personal experiences on how their own attitudes and behaviour have been changed. The factors which have led to attitude and behaviour change are summarised below:

- Realising that local people can do much better that we can, and have the capacity to analyse their situations and suggest more appropriate solutions.
- Realising that much development is imposed on people.
- Realising that our attitude and behaviour has been offensive to people.
- Recognising that training in concepts and methodologies are best validated by actual experience.
- Understanding that the virtue of listening is one of the basic foundations of changing attitude and behaviour.
- Understanding that internal change in attitude and behaviour requires constant self-critical analysis and introspection.
- Recognising the need to make good attitudes and behaviour an integral part of our lives.
- Understanding the need for space to allow others to reflect and improve/change their attitude and behaviour.
- Learning to regard one's work in participatory learning and action as a way of life, not a livelihood.
- Knowing that attitudinal and behavioural changes begin from within ourselves.
- Realising that knowing oneself, and being open for improvement is the basic prelude to change.
- Accepting the value of meaningful exchanges and interactions.

- **Training for attitude and behavioural change**

Training was seen as a major tool for facilitating attitude and behaviour change. However, all too often, PRA training focuses on methods, whilst neglecting attitudes and behaviour. There are good reasons why this bias towards methods tends to occur. It is usually easier, and often more fun, to teach people how to use PRA methods. On the other

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hand, attitudes and behaviour are difficult to teach, and for trainees to grasp quickly. There tend to be fewer tools available to make the teaching of attitudes and behaviour interesting (Makuku 1996).

The workshop participants focused on how training processes can be adapted to ensure that trainees are made aware of the importance of appropriate attitudes and behaviour. A wealth of principles and ideas emerged. Some basic requirements for PRA training were seen to be that:

- Training should be conducted in an informal and enjoyable learning environment;
- Training should be participatory;
- Lecturing, if at all, should be minimal;
- The participants should not be told anything which they can find out for themselves;
- The usage of games, activities, etc. followed by reflections and analysis can help the participants draw inferences for themselves. A selection of good games and exercises for addressing attitudes and behaviour during training is listed in the workshop report (see also Box 2); and,
- To keep the training sessions interesting - games, energisers, teasers etc. should be interspersed at regular intervals.

BOX 2
SOME TRAINING IDEAS FOR ADDRESSING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

Short stories with a clear morale can be used to initiate a discussion on attitude and behaviour;
Role plays of good and bad attitudes for PRA can be a fun, but revealing approach;
Pictures and videos portraying scenes from other PRA sessions can provoke discussions on body language, setting, seating arrangements etc. and can be useful in emphasising key points about people' behaviour and attitudes;
Games such as saboteur, dominator/ dominated (see *PLA Notes* 26), master/ servant, For or Against? (see Tips for Trainers, this issue) etc. are all good ways to allow participants to reflect on their own behaviour and attitudes.

Source: Makuku, 1996

- **Quality of PRA**

The spread of PRA has been tremendous. This has opened up new opportunities as well as challenges. The major challenge and concern has been the quality of PRA. Many factors have compounded the situation, including: donor driven spread without understanding the basic principles, dearth of quality and experienced facilitators, labelling of other methods as PRA etc.. These issues came up for discussion time and again during the workshop.

The scaling up at a faster pace was another related issue. The rapid spread of PRA and the initial enthusiasm for application was taken as a positive sign. However, quality continues to remain a major concern. Experience indicates that methods are relatively more popular among practitioners and their use for collecting data is labelled 'PRA'. This kind of application misses the fundamental premise of attitude and behaviour and relegates PRA to being an event, rather than a process. A number of experiences were cited where the eagerness to scale up has resulted in failure (see article by Nilanjana Mukherjee, this issue).

Key ways for addressing these concerns when supporting institutions in the scaling-up process include:

- Ensure that an emphasis on attitudes and behaviour is prominent in all trainings;
- Provide post-training follow-up for the institution, to support the internalisation of the approach in relation to the existing ways of working; and,
- Identify, encourage and support positive and reflective individuals within the institution by linking them with like-minded networks. Publicise their efforts to give them some standing and recognition among others.

• **Institutionalisation of PRA**

Experiences indicate that training, self reflection and field experiences may make a person participatory. However, newly acquired skills often prove ephemeral or do not get the opportunity to be used in an institution. Institutionalisation of PRA, as a way of operating and affecting the culture of organisations, is a major issue.

Normal bureaucratic tendencies to standardise, centralise and impose top-down targets impede or prevent the open-endedness, flexibility, creativity and diversity of effective PRA. Institutionalisation of PRA requires a reversal and a change of culture. This proves to be a Herculean task in organisations with strong top-down authority and hierarchy, evaluative and punitive styles, and repetitive routines and actions.

Some ways which have proved effective for sustaining desired 'attitude and behaviour' change include: working in teams of motivated individuals, institutional support to juniors through mentoring by seniors, observing role models and appreciating field realities. This is in addition to participating in training-workshops. Once again, interim and post-participation support is integral to both individual and institutional efforts for grassroots participation.

The key to understanding participation lies in discovering mechanisms to produce the right kind of attitude and behaviour. Therein lies the challenge for all those who are associated with PRA activities.

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NOTES

The workshop culminated in a common statement: *"Sharing our experiences: An appeal to Donors and Governments"*. The aim was to stress the need to be aware of how rapid scaling-up of PRA, without the necessary support and attention to appropriate attitudes and behaviour, can often do more harm than good. The appeal has been reproduced in this issue of *PLA Notes*.

For details of how to obtain the Attitudes and Behaviour Workshop Report, please contact the PRA Unit at ACTIONAID, D-6 Blessington Apartments, 34 Serpentine Street, Richmond Town, BANGALORE 560 025 INDIA.

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Sharing our experiences:
an appeal to donors and governments

- ## Introduction

We are an informal group of trainers and practitioners who are struggling to evolve, promote and disseminate participatory approaches in development. Most of us come from countries in the South. For ten days we have shared our experiences of participation and of PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) training and practice (see article by Somesh Kumar, this issue). We have reviewed what we have learnt through working with local people, especially the poor and marginalised, and with communities and Government organisations, donors and NGOs in our different countries and varied contexts.

- ## Participation and PRA

PRA is continuously evolving and spreading in many ways. It can now be described as a philosophy, approach and set of behaviour and attitudes, together with the methods with which it is associated. The philosophy stresses self-critical awareness and commitments to the poor, weak and vulnerable. The approach, behaviour and attitudes are facilitating, seeking to empower by enabling people to enhance their knowledge of their condition and lives, and to take more control by analysing, planning, acting, and monitoring and evaluating.

The methods are open-ended, participatory, and often visual as well as verbal. PRA processes have now been facilitated in many contexts, rural and urban, and in almost every domain of development.

As trainers and practitioners of PRA, we know we are continuously learning and that our common understanding will continue to evolve. We find, though, that our experiences have so much in common, and suggest urgent and important lessons. This compels us to appeal to donors and governments. We urge all those concerned at all levels to recognise the need for radical but practical change.

We hope that what follows will be widely read and reflected on. We believe that participation in development is at a crucial stage - calling for decisive action.

We welcome the efforts to mainstream participation in multilateral and bilateral agencies and in international NGOs, and the increasing stress on participation by Governments and Government departments. Participation has become a requirement in most donor-supported projects, and is more and more stressed in Government programmes. This has led to some good results.

Much more common, though, has been abuse and bad practice. This has occurred on a huge scale. Again and again, in different countries and contexts, with different donors and Governments, we have found dependency created and participation destroyed by:

- Pressures to scale up PRA rapidly, sometimes to a national level;
- Demand for instant PRA training one-off and on a large scale;
- Low quality PRA training, limited to routine methods;
- The rush to prepare projects and programmes;
- Top-down procedures;
- Drives to disburse funds;
- Time-bound targets for products, neglecting process;
- Inflexible programmes and projects;
- Neglect and underestimation of the knowledge and capabilities of local people;

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- Neglect of local capacity building and institutional development;
- Lack of staff continuity;
- Penalisation of participatory staff, and above all; and,
- Failure to recognise the 'ABC', the attitude and behaviour change of PRA - primacy of personal behaviour.

• Attitude and behaviour change

In these circumstances, the very priority and urgency given to participation and PRA have been self-defeating. The tragedy is that most donors and Governments either do not realise this, or do not act on the implications. We appeal to them to take a close, careful and self-critical look at the reality, to recognise what happens, and to reverse top-down practices and behaviour. We believe that only then can true and lasting participation and empowerment be achieved.

Participation as a way of life

We have found that participation and PRA are a philosophy, a way of life, and a set of behaviour and attitudes. These apply at all levels and in all organisations - donor, Government, NGO, CBO - and in all contexts - office, community and home. Contradictions between the values promoted in communities and those practised in organisations lead to conflicts and diminish or destroy participation.

It is not only villagers and slum-dwellers who have to be empowered, but also field workers and others at the lower levels of organisations. It is not only the behaviour and attitudes of junior staff which have to become participatory and non-dominating, but also those of their superiors.

Personal behaviour and attitudes

Personal behaviour and attitudes have been the missing link in development, and can now be seen as the key. Personal change is the first step in institutional change. This applies as powerfully to the head of an international agency as to a field worker in a remote village. Participation cannot be commanded in an authoritarian top-down manner. To facilitate participation at the community and group level requires that the culture, values and procedures

of the Government or NGO organisations, and of donors where they are involved, themselves be participatory.

In PRA, the tools have received much attention. By showing how local people can express, present and analyse their complex and detailed realities, they can help to change the attitudes and beliefs of outsiders. It is, the outsiders' personal behaviour and attitudes that are more fundamental than the methods. In particular, PRA stresses:

- Self-critical awareness of one's behaviour, biases and shortcomings;
- Commitment to the poor, weaker and vulnerable;
- Respecting others;
- Not interrupting, not lecturing, but being a good, active listener;
- Not hiding, but embracing error;
- 'Handing over the stick', meaning passing the initiative and responsibility to others;
- 'They can do it', meaning empowering others through confidence in their capabilities; and,
- Open-ended flexibility to make space for the priorities of the poor.

Our experience has been that when this behaviour is encouraged, and when institutional cultures transform to permit and reward them, many obstacles to participation and empowerment are removed. Personally, the experience can also be deeply satisfying.

An appeal for action

In the light of the above, we urge all donors and Governments to adopt and implement these policies and practices:

- Endorse the primacy of personal behaviour and attitudes. This applies in all organisations involved - donor, Government, NGO, CBO and consultant, and at all levels. Encourage staff to interact in a participatory and non-dominating modes in their official and private lives. Change personnel evaluations to recognise and reward participatory behaviour and attitudes.
- Provide face-to-face learning experiences for staff at all levels through interaction with local people, especially the poor and marginalised. Organise PRA exposure for

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senior staff. Reward those who take this up. Make opportunities for poor people to present their realities freely to those in power.

- Don't rush. Take time. Allow much more time for the early stages of projects, to give space for local, community and group-level institutional development. Time and commitment are essential for the full participation, identification of priorities and planning by local people, especially women, the poor and the marginalised. This requires more funding for staff and training, less for hardware.

- Be flexible. Do not allow top-down logic to generate 'participatory' blueprints which only masquerade as participatory. Instead start and continue with open-ended PRA processes and flexible funding for empowerment, diversity and local control. Use PRA processes to enable people, especially the poor, to express and achieve their priorities. Do not be alarmed but welcome a project change through participation.

- Stress process and qualitative change, not targets and products. Local institution building for sustainability, empowerment of poor people, women and the marginalised, and new confidence among the weak usually matter much more than physical outputs. See process itself as a product.

- Engage PRA trainers who stress attitude and behaviour change, and reject those who stress only the methods.

- Assure continuity and sustain commitment to PRA and participation, at all levels in donor agencies, among political leaders, among senior staff, with field staff, and with PRA trainers. Avoid one-off training without follow-up. PRA requires long-term commitment of staff and resources to take root and be effective. Take a long-term view of changes in institutional culture which may require sustained effort for a decade or more. Ensure that donor staff, policy-makers and field staff alike have at least 3 to 5 years in the same post.

- Work to change the culture, procedures and interactions in donor and government organisations, and NGOs. Participation starts where the buck stops. Participatory management and interactions at all levels are needed to support and sustain participation in the field. Each one of us, wherever we are - in donor agencies, in governments, or in NGOs - can form alliances with and support those seeking change in theirs.

The spirit of this appeal

We present this statement not in a spirit of superiority or moralising, but as what we have learnt the hard way. We have ourselves made many mistakes in our development work, and will surely continue to do so. But we believe that what we have learnt recently about participation, and especially about the primacy of behaviour and attitudes, is so important that we have an obligation to share it.

For us it is an empirical finding that if participation is to be more than rhetoric, those who advocate it must live it. The implication is long, sustained processes of personal, institutional and professional change for us all, an agenda for the 21st century. We urge all Governments and donors to start now, and to reinforce and support each other in the processes of change.

We hope that this appeal will be widely read, reflected on and acted on; and we invite others to amend and add to what we have said here so that together we can all learn to do better.

Abu Hena Mallik, Farhana Faruqi, Fiona Hinchcliffe, G.B. Adhikari, Gemechu Gedeno, Haryo Habirono, James Mascarenhas, John Devavaram, Kamal Kar, Kamal Phuyal, Lars Johansson, Mallika R. Samaranayake ,N. Narayansamy, Neela Mukherjee, P.V. Satheesh, Rashida Dohad, Robert Chambers, S. Rangasamy, Saiti Makuku, Sansen Ramos, Shashigo Gerbu, Sheelu Francis, Shen Maglinte, Somesh Kumar.

Bangalore
10 July 1996

Feedback.... Feedback.... Feedback....

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Different perspectives: experiences with RRA in Zambezi District, Zambia

by Bart Pijnenburg and Daniëlla de Winter,

with a response by Bara Gueye

• Introduction

This article reflects on our experiences with RRA in Zambezi District, Zambia. We came across unexpected problems that we feel need to be addressed in the participation debate. The article starts with background information on the area which may explain peoples' attitude towards outside intervention. We then describe problems related to the interaction between researchers and farmers and our different perspectives on the RRA exercise.

• Zambezi district

Zambezi is located in a remote corner of Zambia. Colonial power was established relatively late (1907) and services, such as health care and education, were provided by missionaries up until the 1950s. After independence in 1964, the government followed an ambitious programme to develop the agricultural sector in the rural areas (co-operatives, credit schemes, marketing boards, tractor schemes etc.).

Few of these projects were successful, partly because of the remoteness of the district. However, the interventions were ultimately unsustainable because they were highly subsidised by a state whose national economy was deteriorating each year.

From 1979, a large German funded Integrated Rural Development Project was active in the area. The project had many components, including: an oxen programme, subsidised crop marketing and agricultural inputs, credit schemes, water wells, improved markets for honey and wax and the establishment of rural workshops etc.. In principle, the project was implemented through existing local institutions and government departments. However, the local population accredited the project successes to 'the Germans'. In the late 1980s, support for agricultural credit, input supply, oxen and crop marketing was taken over by a Dutch funded project. This project ceased abruptly in 1991.

While the projects had success in terms of increased agricultural output (especially maize and rice production), the improvements were not sustained after the projects ended. Credit schemes from both the government and external donors were highly subsidised and even had negative interest rates (inflation rate higher than interest rates). Thus, the demand for credit by farmers was overwhelming. Farmers quickly developed an attitude whereby they proposed more and new loans as a panacea for their problems. As a result, high expectations were raised from agricultural development projects.

• The RRA study

Given the historical legacy of projects in the area, a study was commissioned by the SNV Zambia/Netherlands Development Organisation The objective was to examine farmers' problems and priorities and identify possible project interventions for SNV and other donors. Three researchers with experience in RRA (the authors plus a Zambian counterpart) undertook six RRAs in the district, each lasting one week.

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The study was undertaken in collaboration with various government departments and two local NGOs. The study made use of a range of RRA tools, including: interviews, group discussions, calendars (food availability, data on cattle, fishing and labour calendars), daily routines and activity profiles, case studies (household histories and cattle herd histories), maps and transects. A report was written for each RRA.

After the six RRAs were completed, a one-day workshop was organised for all the RRA team members. We made problem trees and identified causes for farmers' problems.

• **Expectations**

During the fieldwork we came across several difficulties. These related to the different expectations that farmers and the RRA team had of the study. At times, an open and constructive dialogue was difficult to achieve.

From the outset, we tried not to raise local expectations. Each time we met villagers, we explained that we had come to learn about the area and farmers' priorities for further agricultural development. We stated clearly that we had no means nor power to decide on any future material assistance. We said we could only give recommendations to others.

• **Demand for more-of-the-same**

To the villagers, our team was seen as representing the government and donors. The arrival of white people with Zambian counterparts and big cars indicated the presence of a project. This may explain why the problems and solutions listed by the villagers seemed to be defined by what they had seen in earlier state or donor interventions. There was a strong tendency to ask for more of the same (credit, fertiliser, oxen, ploughs on credit, water wells, schools, shops and health centres etc.).

• **Shopping lists**

Generally, it was difficult to discuss and prioritise problems. Instead farmers said "we need a shop" or "we need oxen and ploughs", providing a 'shopping list' of ideas. These may have reflected some of the priority problems.

But, this was a rather unsatisfactory way of defining problems. It reflected only farmers' material wishes for government or donor material assistance instead of real problems.

Finding root causes of the problems became a tiresome and difficult task. Farmers tended to formulate problems in words of "We need ..." or "There is a lack of ...". For example cattle diseases were not the problem, rather the "lack of veterinary drugs" was identified as a key constraint. Problems of land preparations were in the first instance presented as "lack of oxen and ploughs".

The team decided to reformulate farmers' shopping lists into problems to enable a brainstorming of alternative solutions. But this sometimes lead to ridiculous discussions (see Box 1). It shows the danger of researchers trying to interpret farmers' statements.

BOX 1

In one village, farmers expressed a need for barbed wire. The team tried to redefine this desire into a problem. It was reformulated as "unavailability of labour for herding cattle". Now the team had phrased it as a problem, they were better able to come up with possible solutions. One of the possible solutions proposed by the team was "group herding so that farmers can share the cost of a herdsboy".

Later we found out that farmers wanted to use the barbed wire for their kraal (night paddock) and not for fencing grazing paddocks. The whole discussion had been rather senseless. We should have asked farmers why they needed the barbed wire in the first place.

• **A beyond farmer-first explanation**

The way farmers defined their wishes may reflect their expectations. Farmers longed `to go back to the good old days' when projects delivered fertilisers and seed on cheap credit. They wanted to discuss why fertiliser was no longer subsidised and credit no longer available. They defined lack of fertiliser as a priority problem rather than brainstorming on causes of declining soil fertility.

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The farmers did not see us as partners to discuss problems and their causes. Instead they saw us as representatives of projects which were supposed to provide the services.

• **Conclusions**

The RRAs generated valuable data and resulted in development proposals. These proposals were based on priorities given by farmers but formulated by the team of researchers. The farmers and research team appreciated the RRA approach, the sharing and discussing of results and proposals was valued highly.

In this respect, our experience with RRA methodologies are positive. But we have also learnt that it is not easy to put it into practice. It's success is highly dependent on the attitude and skills of team members. This is nothing new for practitioners. However, we also feel that that the attitudes and expectations of farmers affect the RRA experience and can inhibit an open and fruitful dialogue. We perceived the following problems:

• Expectations were so easily raised and so hard to temper.
• It was difficult to get farmers to list priority problems and their causes. Instead we received shopping lists which required outside material support.
• The shopping lists tended to define priorities in terms of items or support which earlier interventions had brought to them.

An RRA cannot be seen as an exercise on its own. At least the farmers do not see it in this way. They have experience with outside intervention. Since many projects brought short term benefits, farmers have learned to capitalise on opportunity when it arrives. In short, the farmers' extensive prior project experience made them expectant of imminent project activities.

This is where we see the conflict. In our view, we tried hard to establish an open dialogue to identify problems and brainstorm on solutions. But the farmers wanted us to provide them with wells, health centres, schools and loans for cattle, fertilisers ploughs etc. It was very hard to bridge the gap between the two different views on the exercise.

• **Recommendations**

Since writing this article, we have tried to think about different ways of enhancing the role of farmers in project activities. Some of these may seem rather obvious, but they reflect our way of discovering the need for a more participatory approach.

• *Bring the WE and THEY closer together.* We need to involve local people more, particularly the community representatives in the research process.
• *RRA should be part of a process.* The RRA should not be an activity in itself. One RRA may not be sufficient to define priorities for possible development interventions. Instead, it should be part of a process approach, whereby the exercise is the beginning of a dialogue between the outside agency and the community.
• *Prevent shopping lists.* We needed to take more time to analyse and discuss the root causes of ranked problems.
• *Prevent high expectations.* A proper introduction, explaining objectives and defining clearly what the RRA team can and cannot do is vital. This is especially important where the RRA is linked to an outside agency. The agency must make it clear what they have to offer and what are their expectations of what local people must contribute in return, e.g. in terms of time, labour etc..

• **B. Pijnenburg** and **Daniella de Winter,** Eduardo Mondlane University, Koeriersdienst (Maputo), Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, Postbus 20061, 2500 EB Den Haag, The Netherlands.

• **Different perspectives: a response by Bara Gueye.**

As in most African countries, the rural development programme initiated in the Zambezi region in the 1960s was characterised by a centralised, top-down approach. This inhibited local communities' knowledge and

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initiatives. Even the 1970s integrated rural development projects did not bring much change to the situation. Under the umbrella of integration, they actually strengthened the vertical approach to development. In the Zambezi case, ownership of project achievements fell into the hands of the external funding agency, rather than the local community.

The historical development background can influence the interaction between an RRA team and the local communities. Local people are accustomed to playing the role of 'expecters' rather than active planners and implementers. Moreover, some of the problems encountered may have stemmed from the way the RRA study was designed. It is important to remember that RRA can be as extractive as any other methodology or approach, if its underlying principles are not fully taken into account.

In this case, it is very likely that the team set the research agenda and participation by the communities was more of a means (to gather information) than an end. When local communities are not involved in the research objective setting and implementation, ownership becomes difficult. Local expressions of expectations become a way of getting trade-offs. In this case, people's expectations are normal because they can hardly understand why the team is interested in knowing their priorities, if they do not have any solutions to them.

Transparency and objective setting are also very important. In a participatory process, the communities should be aware of the objectives of the work long before the team's arrival in the field. More importantly, they should be in a position to decide whether they feel comfortable in participating in the study. Usually, they are put in a position whereby they have no option but to accept the team. This often leads to lack of interest and involvement.

Expectations and `demand for more of the same' probably depend less on the team composition than people's roles and interaction between the team and the community. The local people did not feel like active partners but rather passive information providers. Since local populations cannot anticipate 'what the

outsiders real intentions are', they tend to draw a long and diversified shopping list. They hope that at least a few of these 'needs' fall into the outsider's agenda for action.

In conclusion, participation cannot be achieved only through methods. Methods are just a means, not an end. In designing participatory research, it is essential that the objectives and agenda are set jointly by the communities and the team of facilitators. Furthermore, as the authors note, the process should be linked to on-going development action. Otherwise *ad hoc* `participatory' research may yield little, if any, impact.

- **Bara Gueye,** International Institute for Environment and Development, BP 5579, Dakar Fann, Senegal.

NOTE

Feedback is a forum for discussion in *PLA Notes.* It features articles which raise common concerns in fieldwork or training, together with a response from another PRA practitioner. Comments, letters and articles are welcomed for this section.

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Extracts

- ## The price of rice: exploring the meaning behind the data

This extract originates from a 3 month field study carried out under the auspices of ICRA[1] and Ministry of Agriculture, Research and Training, Uyole in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. The study site was in Kyela district, where farming systems are dominated by a single rice based cropping pattern. Revenue from rice sales accounts for 20-45% of household income according to proportional pie diagrams constructed by farmers. One of the issues that dominated our discussions was farmers' concerns over the low selling price of rice. We decided to explore the underlying reasons for this through the construction of calendars.

One group of farmers was requested to make a calendar of relative variations in the selling price of rice, together with an estimate of the quantity of rice sold over the year using beans. Another group of farmers was requested to recall the actual prices they received for rice. The information was then compiled into a single diagram which formed the basis for discussion (Figure 1).

The reasons behind farmers' perceptions that they receive a 'perennial low farm gate price for paddy rice' became evident as we discussed the diagram. Lowest prices are evident, as expected, during peak harvest season (May to July) with higher prices occurring during the lean months of March and April. At this time, the farm gate price for rice is about 250% more than in the harvest season. Farmers dispose of their rice when price is lowest. Post harvest constraints and cash obligations (e.g. school fees) force them to sell rather than wait for higher prices.

Actual price during the peak harvest season though low was relatively stable during the period May to July. However, a more sudden drop was indicated for the same period by farmers who constructed the calendars using beans. Heated debate revealed the reason behind this difference.

The group who gave the actual price of rice were basing their estimates on the prices in local markets, whereas those constructing the calendar of relative prices were basing it on prices received at the farm gate. During the peak harvest season traders come from outside the area and buy up rice in huge quantities - at low prices. Farmers say they are often forced to sell, rather than risk the chances of being unable to sell in the market.

The final aspect of farmers' perceptions of low farm-gate prices can be attributed to the comparison by farmers of differences between the farm gate prices they receive for rice and the retail price for milled rice in the nearby town of Kyela. A case study of a rice farmer was carried out to relate farm gate transactions to the retail market. The farm gate price was found to be only 33 % of retail price and farmers perceive that a large percentage of the difference accrued mainly on middlemen profit.

This simple example illustrates the value of using PRA tools to rapidly assemble qualitative and quantitative information on market prices. It demonstrates the importance of farmers' knowledge in exploring the meaning behind the data generated using PRA methodologies.

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[1] The International Centre for development orientated Research in Agriculture.

Figure 1. Fluctuations in the price of paddy rice
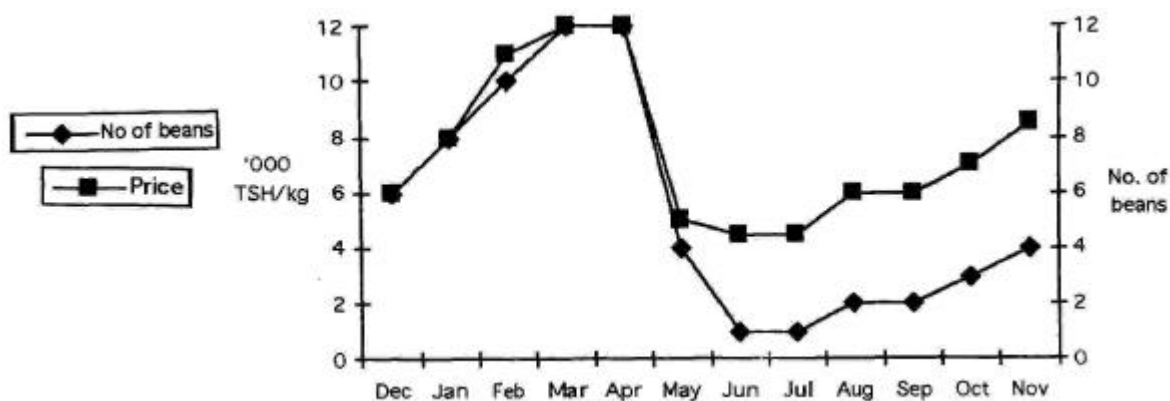
The structural adjustment programmes of the early 1990s led to a rapid increase in the trading of agricultural produce within Tanzania. However, low rice prices and the increasing cost of inputs (notably fertiliser) threaten the future of rice production. One solution may develop through participatory research on new rice varieties (e.g. high yielding or varieties suited to low fertility conditions). Another option is the establishment of storage and milling facilities at the local level to increase the value of the marketed product.

- **Cate Turton,** Overseas Development Instute, Regent's College, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS, UK, and **Albert Aquino,** Socio-Economics Division, Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry & Natural Resources Research & Development, Paseo De Valmayor, Los Banos, Laguna, Philippines.

- **Participatory project evaluation among dryland dwellers**

We have recently tested a method among pastoralists in Northern Kenya to develop indigenous indicators and criteria for project evaluation. This was part of a process of revisiting our own rationale for participation.

Firstly, we simply listened to people's project descriptions to get an idea of what is, and what is not, important to them. This exercise revealed a number of discrepancies between the project's intentions and people's expectations. The pastoralists expressed clearly their disappointment about their non-involvement in project decision making. In fact, none of the so-called `participatory projects' strived for true partnership.

We then added a series of short questions, such as 'Do you know why the project is here?'. To the question, 'Do you know why the project wants to help you?', one Ariaal pastoralist responded `Maybe they *think* we have a problem'. Subsequently, we asked the pastoralists to compare, rank and contrast the various activities of all six programmes operating in their area. From the narratives and comparative analysis of the projects, we were able to extract meaningful indicators and criteria to be used for participatory project appraisal.

Our research results have been compiled in a manual which is available from UNEP or ELCI (Environmental Liaison Centre International). The guide provides a methodological basis for development agencies to examine:

- whether the project objectives are understood by the target group;
- to what extent the activities contribute to the achievement of project objectives as perceived by local communities; and,

- to what extent the activities meet priorities as defined by people living in the communities.

The first results have proved very interesting regarding community perceptions of their environment. Not only do local people see things very differently from project staff, but there is also a difference of perception among the various stakeholders within the community.

- **Ute Reckers,** UNEP GEF-Unit, PO Box 47074, Nairobi, Kenya.

- ## Using names as a guide to past ecology and land use practices

Environmental conditions and change are often recorded in folk tales. These are passed down to future generations and help younger generations build up a picture of the past and consider on how things have changed. Folk tales reflect peoples' knowledge of their environment. In the same way, the name of a place is often determined by sociocultural and ecological factors. These factors can be used to learn more about the history of a site and, ultimately, assist in environmental education and conservation. I would like to illustrate this with examples from a range of communities in Kenya.

Naming in African Communities. This is a special social occasion in many African communities which gives a child an identity and relates it to the clan or family. The name often depicts local circumstances or conditions. For example, among the Kamba community, an individual's name can identify the season when the child was born. A female child born in the famine may be called *Wayua*, while a male child born during the rainy season is called *Wambua*.

Places named after plants. Places are often named after a dominant tree or a tree of special significance to a community. Often, the tree is no longer present but the name continues. A group discussion might help to remind people about the history of their village. For example, Napetet is a village in Turkana. Apetet is the local name for *Acacia nubica,* which used to be abundant in the area but have since been cleared for settlement. This information would be useful for tree planting programmes.

Places named after animals. Places may be named after animals found near the site. For example, Mbusyani in Kikamba means 'the place of rhinos'. Mbusyani is now a densely populated village with a shopping centre! There are few signs of its recent past, except to those who know the meaning of the name.

Plants named after their role. If an exotic species is introduced to a village, the local community will experiment with it for firewood, timber, medicine etc. An introduced plant that is found to be similar to an existing indigenous species is often given the same name. For example, the Kamba favour the indigenous *Cassia singueana* (*Mukeengeka*) for firewood as it coppices easily. The introduced *C. siamea* and *C. spectabilis* have the same name as they are used for the same purpose.

Indigenous knowledge of the local environment and its history may be explored using PRA approaches, such as group discussions, key informant interviews with older people and transect walks. Naming illustrates the strong relationship between culture and the environment. Names can be used as an entry point to formulate dialogue within the community and help reconstruct the changing ecology and land use practices. The local information gathered can help raise local interest in environmental issues. In particular, a clear explanation of a name and its link with the past, could be used in environmental education activities with children.

- **MTE Mbuvi,** Kenya Forestry Research Institute, PO Box 20412, Nairobi, Kenya.

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• **Insider and outsider voting: reflections from Scotland**

For shorter PRA fieldwork sessions organised as part of training courses, it is common to end with a general meeting. This provides the facilitators and participants with an opportunity to provide feedback on the previous days. In many cases, some form of voting is carried out to prioritise issues identified. This may be achieved through group scoring or by individual voting.

In one case, the villagers identified the topic 'quality of village life'. They then noted eight significant issues which affect this in a negative way. These were written on large pieces of coloured card and placed on the floor in the middle of the circle of participants and facilitators. Local people were then given 6 beans each and asked to identify which were the most significant issues. They could place the beans on any combination of cards, from all beans on one card, to one bean on each of six cards. In this way everybody voted, and an idea of the group feeling was also obtained.

There was only a handful of local people present at this final meeting. It was the culmination of an afternoon's display and the team had had discussions with many others during the day. With only eleven participants, people could have become self conscious while voting, particularly as there were an equal number of trainee facilitators sitting around the circle, watching. With a greater number of people, this type of voting is more anonymous, as well as more fun, and the facilitators would have time to move away.

At this point, there was an instant decision that the facilitators should also be involved in the voting process. Beans were handed to both groups, with red beans to the trainees and white beans to the local people. The trainee voting was spontaneous, as they had not prior warning of this change in events! While the local people expressed their own priorities, the facilitators voted according to how they thought the community would prioritise issues, in the light of the understanding gained through the previous few days of fieldwork.

There were no divisions between insiders and outsiders except for bean colour. There were fewer barriers, and more laughter. Everybody had an opportunity to express an opinion, and the trainees could reflect on what they had learned.

The benefits of this process were clear. Firstly, voting by the locals was not compromised, as the different colours of beans indicated clearly the local opinions. This led to a discussion on priorities, which could be used as an entry point to discussing the development of action plans.

Secondly, the voting provided a strong visual tool for comparing insiders' and outsiders' perceptions. This can indicate the accuracy of the impressions gained by the facilitators. The local people were interested in how we had voted and commented on the few cases where the numbers of beans differed. This led a detailed discussion about the issues and the process. It illustrated the importance of transparency and encouraging local feedback. As part of a training exercise, this opened up an analysis of PRA, focusing initially on the similarities and differences in facilitators' and insiders' opinions.

This approach was spontaneous but requires further thought. For example, are either group influenced by the other (might participants follow or contradict facilitator voting, or facilitators allow themselves to be influenced by local opinions expressed at the time)? How well can facilitators separate their own preconceptions of the issues and vote according to what they have learned (this has great potential as a training tool)? Despite these and other issues, this is an interesting way to compare insider/outsider perceptions, discuss the potential of PRA, ensure facilitators understand the issues and provoke focused discussions.

- **Carolyn Jones**, 4 Capelaw Road, Edinburgh EH13 0HG, Scotland, UK.

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A brief guide to preparing for training and facilitating

- **Introduction**

This section of the *Notes* provides training materials for participatory learning. Each issue focuses on a different topic. This article examines the preparations that you, the trainer or facilitator, should consider before initiating a training session. It outlines how to plan and schedule a training session.

- **Basic preparations**

The first thing to prepare is yourself. Being a facilitator is not easy. Being clear about your position and responsibilities early on in your preparations will help to prevent any inappropriate interpretation of your role as a trainer (see Box 1).

Objectives of training

Before you begin, you must be clear about your objectives. Why are you going to do a training? Who are you being asked to train? What are the main themes you hope to communicate in your training? You will need to formulate a specific objective for the workshop, based on the subject matter. Writing it down in a single sentence will help you to focus and select materials.

The purpose of all training is to build skills and encourage behavioural and attitudinal changes in participants. So it is essential that your specific objective is something that can be measured or evaluated. There are usually two kinds of objectives that can be identified. The first kind describes general objectives: to understand, to know, to recognise. These kind of objectives reflect the process of learning but are difficult to evaluate.

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│              BOX 1                   │
│   RESPONSIBILITIES OF A TRAINER      │
│                                      │
│ • Reflect back to the group their    │
│   need to take responsibility for    │
│   their own learning process.        │
│ • Remember not to meet your own      │
│   emotional needs while training     │
│   (such as seeking attention or      │
│   respect or making friends).        │
│ • Being a facilitator does not       │
│   qualify you as a psychotherapist.  │
│   Take great care when participants  │
│   reach out to you, either directly  │
│   or indirectly, with their          │
│   emotional needs.                   │
│ • It is essential that the group     │
│   understands what you are doing     │
│   with them. It is their right to    │
│   hold you accountable for what you  │
│   do.                                │
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The second kind of objectives are more specific and deal with the skills that participants can learn e.g. to write, to plan, to measure etc. An objective that says "the trainees will understand the principles of PLA" is important but vague. Compare this with "the trainees will be able to plan their own use of participatory methods in their fieldwork". This can be assessed and evaluated much more easily by both participants and outsiders.

Knowing the participants

No training programme should proceed until you are clear about who you are training. Try to find out:

- How many people will be present?
- Why are they attending, is it their own choice or have they been instructed to attend?
- What are their hopes and expectations?
- What are their fears and concerns?
- What range of experience, discipline, age, gender, status is likely to be represented?
- Do they have any biases towards or against your organisation? Who may feel threatened by the training and why?

- What prior knowledge might they have about the subject matter of the training?

Remember to be sensitive to participants' religious or cultural needs. These may have implications for the timing of sessions and meals, especially if the workshop coincides with a religious festival.

Choice of venue and rooms

You may not be able to plan your training venue or times, but be aware how these affect people's ability to learn. If possible, visit the training site before the participants arrive and set up your materials. Check whether the room will suit the type of session you have planned.

Try to identify potential sources of distraction, both to yourself and your trainees. Walk around the room to check participants will be able to see, hear and be heard. Allow time to set up the training materials and teaching aids that you will use. Check that you have all the materials you need and that any audio-visual equipment is working. Organisation will make the session proceed more smoothly and will give you extra confidence.

Seating arrangements

Seating arrangements have a big influence on the session. Many people are used to sitting in rows, knowing they can daydream or 'hide' in the audience. To increase interactions between trainees, try arranging the chairs in a circle, a semi-circle or a 'U' shape. If you have a small number of trainees, you could all sit around a table. If you have a lot of group work planned, the banquet or fish bone style of seating works best. It limits disruption as you shift from presentation to small group work.
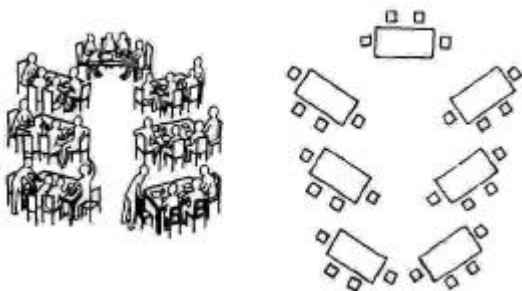
Be creative with seating arrangements and explain to the participants why they are important!

Timing of sessions

People cannot concentrate for long periods if there is little variation in the style of the presentation. Twenty minutes is about the maximum so you should enrich presentations with visual materials, exercises, stories, jokes or breaks. If there is to be no active participation, you will need to carefully plan lecture-based presentations.

The time of day has a big effect on how well people respond to different kinds of learning approaches. People can generally concentrate better in the mornings. After lunch, participants will be tired, slower to respond and less able to concentrate. You will, therefore, need to make sessions more lively: the more participation the better. Avoid lecturing or slide presentations. It is better to begin with some kind of energiser game, then introduce longer, interactive exercises which allow participants to move around and discuss issues or practise skills amongst themselves.

Pace and content of sessions

It is important to structure each session carefully. Begin by thinking about the trainees:
- How much do they already know?
- What do they need to learn?
- How much time do you have to cover the material?

To help in the selection of material, think about what the participants *must* know, *should* know and *could* know.

Most of us want to fit in lots of information, especially if it is a subject we know well. But too much detail covered too quickly will hinder the success of the presentation. You can only expect participants to remember a few key points. For a 30-minute talk you should select no more than five main points. The rest is detail to keep everyone interested.

The session should then be structured around the key points you think they MUST know by the end of the training session. Although it may seem unnecessary to you, always repeat the central ideas. *Repetition reinforces memory*.

If you wish to communicate five main points to the group, save the most important point until last. Begin by capturing the interest of the group, and then give a taste of what is to come. Deliver the detailed message in the main body of the presentation and build up to the most important point. Then summarise everything by restating the purpose and major points.

• You as a performer

To train well is to give a good performance. You will need to pay attention to the way you present yourself, your style of performance and the learning environment. The message you deliver is comprised of three components: the words, the tone of your voice and your body language (see Box 2). People will grasp your main message if you *keep it simple* and *avoid jargon*.

So what ARE my main points?

Articulation and expression

More than 50 % of the message is conveyed by how you say the words. Guidelines for helping you to articulate your thoughts include:

- Do not be afraid of pauses. Pause after your key points to allow the group to absorb them. Look at your trainees and you will be able to tell whether they have understood;
- Act a little. Use a wide range of vocal tone and pitch to strengthen expression and emphasis in your message;
- Speak clearly, articulate words carefully and do not let them run together; and,
- Speak up by breathing deeply but do not shout. Both a loud and a quiet voice can add emphasis or drama to a statement.

BOX 2
BODY LANGUAGE

- Look at the group and try not to stare at your notes. Make eye contact with the whole group. While looking you can also assess the level of interest by people's reactions;
- Smile - even if you are nervous or apprehensive. It will put your audience more at ease;
- Avoid placing barriers between yourself and the trainees. Don't hide behind lecterns or desks. Crossed arms or legs are symbolic barriers, too. Be open in your posture, particularly when participants are giving feedback.

BOX 3
TRAINER'S CHECKLIST

- Are you clear about the overall training objectives?
- What are the main characteristics of the likely participants?
- Have you adapted your schedule to the time of year when the training workshop is held?
- Are you clear about the main points that you wish to communicate to participants?
- Are you aware of your style of intonation, articulation and expression?
- Have you prepared the sessions to include an introduction, main section and summary?
- Have you checked all the electrical equipment you will use?
- Are the room and seating arrangements suitable for your session?
- Have you prepared all the audiovisual aids that you will require, without overdoing it?

Taken from *A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action*. Published by IIED. Price £14.95 + postage and packing (25% UK & Europe, 35 % airmail)

Next issue: Methods of training.

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Tips for Trainers: for or against?

- **Objectives**

- To discuss contentious issues and opinions in more depth;
- To energise participants through active discussion; and,
- To deal with potential conflicts and sharpen analysis in the group.

- **Time**

About 20 - 30 minutes per statement.

- **Preparation**

Two chairs in an empty space.

- **Procedure**

1. Identify the contentious issue and formulate it as a clear but explicitly controversial statement e.g. "Women are better at natural resource management than men", "PRA is a way to get projects funded", "PRA is used by decisionmakers to avoid responsibility".
2. For each statement, ask for two volunteers, one of whom will represent a viewpoint supporting the statement, and the other to represent a stance disagreeing with the statement. Make clear that they are simply starting off the discussion and will be replaced during the exercise by others (see point 5).
3. After some reflection time (perhaps over a coffee break or lunch or simply for 5 minutes), ask the volunteers to sit in the chairs that are placed opposite each other.
4. Ask the others to stand anywhere around the chairs. Explain that when the two volunteers start debating, the spectators should move to stand behind the chair of the person who makes a statement with

which they most agree. As the spectators shift between the two chairs, it will become clear that there are always at least two sides to each issue.
5. If one of the seated volunteers seems to get stuck with their viewpoint, ask a spectator to take over. Alternatively, a spectator might want to contribute to the debate and replace one of the seated participants. He/she should signal to the person they want to replace and exchange places.

- **Applications and alternatives**

If you find yourself in a tricky training situation, with many heated discussions because of rigid attitudes, use this exercise to refine the debate. It also worked well in one workshop when participants asked for more discussion about fundamental gender issues. The facilitators invited participants to formulate statements and selected two of these for the exercise. This removed some frustrations and helped to move the debate forward, beyond simplistic opinions.

NOTE

Source: This exercise is adapted from a number of different sources. This version is from Questions of Difference by Irene Guijt, forthcoming from IIED.