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A little experience of PRA exercise conducted at Mecluskigang

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• Introduction

Originally, Mecluskigang was an Anglo-Indian village set up during the middle forties by Anglo-Indians. There were about 750 families but now only 15 to 20 Anglo-Indian families are residing in the village. After independence most of the outsiders, especially from Calcutta, were settled down. Mecluskigang is situated 58 km from Ranchi city (Bihar) and had many forests. Apart from Anglo-Indian families, there are also some other communities (e.g. Oraon, Mahli, Muslim, Sahu and Mundas) in and around Mecluskigang.

The population is not very thick as its topography is undulated. Most of the households are engaged in agriculture and a few households earn their livelihood through small business, collection of forest produce, as daily wage labourers etc. The social composition of the village is heterogeneous.

Xavier Institute of Social Service (XISS), Ranchi, India, conducted PRA exercises with post-graduate students of Rural Development during March 1991 and October 1991 in the village of Mecluskigang (Lapra) Chattinadi and in Hesalong village, respectively.

This PRA exercise is now being accepted by XISS as a very useful technique for the Rapid Rural Survey. XISS is also one of the leading organisations involved in the development of the oppressed people in and around Chotanagpur plateau which is a tribal dominated region. The main objective of the PRA exercise was to prepare a plan for the development of the *Panchayat*. To achieve this objective, a series of exercises was conducted to find out the real situation of the panchayat people.

• Causal diagram of drinking habits

As these villages are dominated by the tribals, one of the major problems is drinking habits which is considered a major obstacle in the process of development. We have tried to analyse the positive and negative effects of drinking. For this purpose four groups of different *tolas* were contacted for information gathering and was triangulated with different groups. The respondents were both male and female, drinkers and non-drinkers. We found that most of the villagers drink liquor prepared out of Mahuwa flower and rice. Due to poverty and lack of awareness of its negative effects, a few members drink because that is in their culture and customs.

To start the discussion, the group was first asked how liquor could be prepared. The villagers explained the different stages of liquor preparation and gradually they opened up and gave basic reasons for high alcoholism among the villagers. The casual diagram is shown in Figure 1.

• Women's status

The group joined the villagers under an old mango tree; they were eleven in number. The group interacted with them and asked about the status of women. Initially they hesitated to speak out but after one and a half hours they started speaking out and finally the causal diagram of women's status was prepared on the floor, using different types of materials (different colours of soil, seeds, stick) available locally. They explained direct cause through bold line and indirect causes through dotted lines. The diagram is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1. Causal diagram of drinking habits



