

## Video and PRA in Eastern Burkina Faso

**Eleanor Smithies**

### • Introduction

L'Association d'Appui et de Promotion Rurale du Gulmu (APRG) is a national NGO which has been working since 1988 with 70 farmer groups and associations across 3 eastern provinces of Burkina Faso. It has been promoting self-help development, through activities determined and managed by village groups. APRG employs field staff to work with these groups to identify needs, facilitate training and initiate projects in the areas of rural credit, soil and water conservation, literacy and small businesses.

I started working with APRG in 1993, initially to support and advise their Animation and Training Office. Since then, APRG has gone on to support video productions with village groups and use video and PRA to explore local concerns.

### Village video

There was great interest in using video to support the training of village groups, disseminate information, promote discussion and facilitate exchange between village groups. Six of the ten field staff were trained in basic video techniques, using simple lightweight equipment. APRG's video team quickly set to work, producing their own short training videos in the local language, with rural partners. These have included:

- women of Bilan-Yanga, Gnagna Province, explain how they have managed and maintained their grain mill and how they have coped with various challenges. The video has been shown to other women's groups who are thinking of buying a mill

or who are experiencing problems managing their own mills;

- farmers in Piela, Gnagna Province, show other farmers how to build rock bunds to encourage soil and water conservation and increase crop yields; and,
- participants from four villages involved in APRG's Gender Project, take part in Forum Theatre activities. This enabled other villagers, who were unable to participate in the event, to view the videos at a later stage.

Producing videos locally, in local languages and with rural partners encourages viewers in neighbouring villages and across the provinces. The videos are fun to make and, after the initial investment in equipment, are quite cheap.

### Integrating video and PRA

APRG went on to explore the use of video with PRA. A two week video and PRA training was held in Fada N'Gourma, facilitated by Su Braden of Southampton University and supported by UNAIS and CAFOD. The training was aimed at fieldworkers and included local NGOs and government field workers. The fieldwork was carried out in Koulpissi, a rural village some 60km from Fada N'Gourma, the regional capital.

After initial workshop sessions on PRA and video, the teams began work in Koulpissi. In three teams of four people, the group began by learning about the village. One team, for example, went to farmers' fields to help with the millet harvest. Following this, the team began to plan PRA work in the village. They discussed appropriate methods for exploring specific themes.

Each group started with maps and went on to work with other methods with different groups. All the activities were recorded on video. To begin with, two teams had a strong presence with the camera. One team maintained this, but the other learnt to be ‘invisible’ as their confidence grew and rapport was established.

The mapping exercise proved particularly interesting. APRG learned how their previous work with the village ‘groupement’ had been limited to one ‘quartier’ and that another ‘quartier’, previously thought to be a neighbouring village, considered itself to be the ancestral ‘heart’. The growing rapport and acceptance of the camera allowed for some rich historical profiles from both men and women to develop. Through this, APRG gained a clearer idea of the differing visions within the community.

‘Playbacks’ were organised for each ‘quartier’ in the evening. We soon realised the importance of lightweight, portable material, such as a small monitor, to ease transportation and facilitate playbacks in small groups, even in farm compounds. The turnout for each event was impressive, but discussions afterwards sometimes proved to be difficult. This was due to a number of factors, including the number of people who attended, the presence of the chief and the tiredness of the participants. After each showback session, villagers suggested further issues and themes which were incorporated into the plans for the next day.

After five days, the teams edited the material they had to date and showed it to a large audience. Unfortunately, the playback discussion was cut short due to the chief’s presence. Once he had spoken, people were unable to contradict him or continue the discussion. Instead, discussions were organised in smaller groups in the different ‘quartiers’ for the following day.

The two final days were spent synthesising the information with farmers in each of the ‘quartiers’. By this point, each team had facilitated different activities. For example, one group decided to explore the problem of finding water in the village through a small drama. This was rehearsed, recorded and

played back in one day. It proved a popular, animated and fun activity to pursue for both the women and men in the ‘quartier’.

### **Participants’ reactions**

Participants were very positive about using this approach in their work. One participant reflected:

‘Until now, these concepts [PRA] for me were fiction due to the fact that I’ve never known the foundations... In a technical way, [the seminar] enabled us not only to discover PRA but also, and especially, to associate it with the use of the camera; it improved our skills in camera work; it reinforced the partnership links with other organisations who took part; it opened up to the farmers a spirit of mental exercise and especially, of reflection and analysis of their daily life and aspects having reference to their environment; it enabled the farmers to familiarise themselves with audio-visual material; in a social way, the seminar revived relationships between the different quarters of Koulpissi (Lendi Daba, Animateur Diabo Zone, APRG)’

- . **Using forum theatre for gender awareness**

Theatre was also used by APRG in Koulpissi to raise awareness of the plight of women and introduce the concept of gender to APRG staff and village groups. L’Atelier Theatre Burkinabe was invited to facilitate performances in 4 villages involved in APRG’s Gender Programme. L’ATB had already produced and performed a piece that was considered suitable for the Gender Programme: ‘Mama est devenue folle’ (‘Mum’s gone mad’).

Prosper Kompaore, director of l’ATB, who also played the ‘joker’ for the forum performance, begins by introducing the group and the piece. He asks people if they would be willing to join in. The piece begins with the actors singing in proverbs about the plight of women. We see women arriving with water and wood, some of whom are pregnant. They are followed by their husbands. The action moves from a husband complaining about his wife, to scenes from family life, which show the inequalities of the gender division of

labour. The scenes gradually build up a picture of increasing conflict within the family, which concludes with the mother laughing to herself and her children crying ‘Mama est devenue folle!’.

The ‘joker’ then arrives to initiate participation. He begins by asking the villagers whom they thought to be the worst character and why. He asks if anyone will take on the role of the mother in the play. People are hesitant at first, but eventually the president of Koulpissi’s women’s group volunteers. A scene is chosen to be replayed. The scene continues much as before, but at a crucial point the joker intervenes: ‘can anyone help this woman?’. Another woman enters the action, followed by yet another. The three women then battle with the errant husband until he concedes.

Interventions continue, with three further scenes being re-enacted until everyone agrees with their outcomes. At the end, space is made for a discussion to explore the issues evoked and to clarify the aims of the Gender Programme.

Video was used to record the performance so that other villages who were unable to attend would have a chance to see and discuss the issues.

- **Reflections on using video, drama and PRA**

The enthusiasm with which participants took to the drama work has encouraged the use of drama in subsequent video work at APRG. A tale of a young couple’s literacy training experience, directed by APRG’s ‘animatrice’ and played by the people of Tangaye Village in Gourma Province, has been shown to over 30 other villages. It has been copied and distributed to 4 of APRG’s national partners involved in a gender programme. A sequel was demanded - and subsequently made!

When APRG was asked by women in another village in Gnagna Province for support, the ‘animatrice’ facilitated, filmed and played back map making to understand the layout and resources of the village. They then went on to use a matrix. This enabled women considering small loans for income generation to work out

the most viable activities. During playbacks, the women were able to discuss their income generating activities and the ‘animatrice’ was able to show the material to other women’s groups.

We plan to continue using video and PRA to identify needs for the next 4 year project plan. APRG has a small bank of footage which, it is hoped, will help villagers to: reflect on their vision and their changing needs, enable them to recall ideas and highlight priorities and challenges. Video should also make the information generated more accessible than that produced in fieldworker reports.

• **Eleanor Smithies**, Technical Assistant, UNAIS, BP 6143, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Contact c/o Hunter House, 57 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LS, UK.