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Activities for ABC

by ROBERT CHAMBERS

There are many games, exercises and activities for Attitude and Behavioural Change (ABC) that can be used in workshops.¹ These have many labels and styles. What the numerous sources show is that there are many ways of helping one another learn and change. If there is a gap, it concerns reflection: how one thinks critically about an experience and internalises whatever there may be to learn and change. In PRA experience, the most effective experiences are not in workshops, but in the field with members of communities. Four examples can illustrate:

- The first is where 'uppers' are taught by 'lowers', sometimes known as LAST (lowers as teachers). This reverses relationships and is often fun. Uppers tend to be clumsy. They learn respect for lowers' skills and lowers gain in confidence.
- The second is awareness and correction of behaviour in field situations. One approach is a contract drawn up together by a team, with dos and don'ts, and with a code of (usually non-verbal) signs to give positive or negative feedback between team members. Another, evolved by Anil Shah in India, is 'shoulder-tapping' (see Box 1).
- A third activity is taking a video of participants (and facil-

Box 1: Shoulder-tapping

Anil Shah gave this account of a village visit by a group of district officers in India. He explained that the purpose of a transect was to observe. His account continues:

*We do not **advise**, but **ask** – ask open-ended questions without implied advice. I told the officers that it was very difficult for educated people, more so for those in authority, **not** to give advice. Therefore, when I hear anyone giving advice or asking questions with implicit advice, I tap his shoulder and, if necessary, offer my services to rephrase the advice or query to turn it into an open-ended question.*

Shah described this exchange concerning earth bunds. One of the visiting officers said to Dudhabai (a villager):

'You should not collect earth.' 'Sir, you are advising', I said. 'What is it you want to say?' I intervened in English.

'Earth should be collected from the upward slope of a bund so that the levelling process is speeded up', he explained.

I then asked on his behalf: 'Why do you collect earth from both sides for constructing a bund?'

Dudhabai was ready with his explanation. 'Bunding work should result in minimum loss of cultivable land. By taking earth from both sides, the depression formed is shallow and we are able to raise a crop very close to the bund.'

Shah concludes that:

Even if it starts mechanically and artificially, a PRA exercise can, perhaps, contribute to the opening of mind, more so if someone is around to tap the shoulder when one starts to advise instead of listening and learning.

Source: Shah (1991).

¹ See Chambers (2002) for some ABC exercises.

itators!). This works well if participants are helping villagers or slum dwellers in their daily tasks. The videos are later played back to participants and also to the local people. The effects can be variously painful and hilarious, leading to levelling and learning, as well as laughter.²

² A video that showed me messing up with an overhead projector, trying and failing to find a transparency, was so embarrassing that I could not bring myself to see it again. But the memory is there, and the lesson indelibly etched.

- A fourth approach is to reverse roles. Sam Joseph (1995) has described what he calls Win–Win Trainings in which villagers are co-trainers and facilitators for outsiders. Agreement is negotiated that villagers will host and manage a field experience in which outsiders stay overnight in the village and the village is paid for the service provided.

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NOTES

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