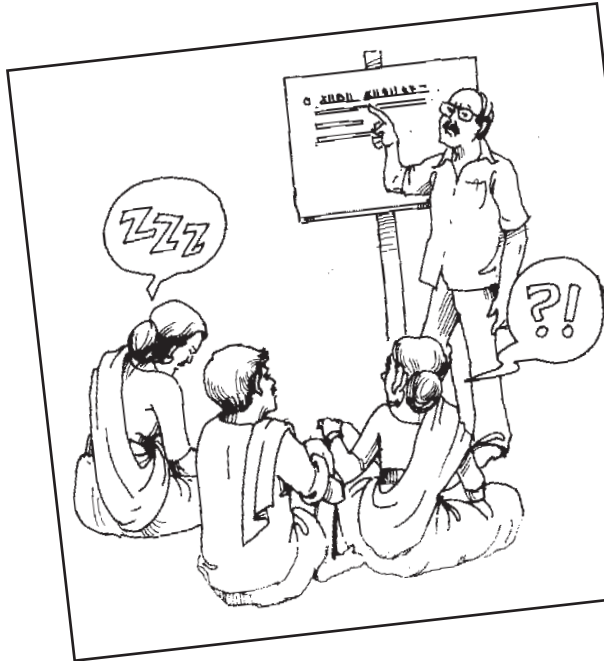# Participatory Learning Approaches

Whose Learning?

Participatory learning is based on the principle of open expression where all sections of the community and external stakeholders enjoy equal access to the information generated as a result of a joint sharing process. The information generated in the process would not only be of use to the secondary stakeholders but would also to members of the community.

What is Participation?

The word participation often has different connotations for different people in different contexts. Definitions of participation have also changed over time. It is therefore useful to differentiate between different levels of participation – each describing varying levels of involvement of the community, ranging from material contribution, to organisation, to empowerment.

Participation has been categorised by Pretty, Satterthwaite, Adna, et al and Hart [1] into seven stages. (See typology overleaf.)

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[1] International Institute for Environment and Development. 1995. Participatory Learning and Action, A Trainer's Guide. IIED, London, United Kingdom.

A typology of participation

8 **Catalysing change**
An eighth level of participation may be added to this typology, vis. the involvement and stakes of community members in influencing others in the environment to initiate change.

7 **Self-mobilisation**
People participate by taking initiatives to change systems independent of external institutions. They develop contacts with external institutions for resources and technical advice they need, but retain control over how resources are used. Such self-initiated mobilisation and collective action may or may not challenge existing inequitable distributions of wealth and power.

6 **Interactive participation**
People participate in joint analysis, which leads to action plans and the formation of new local institutions or the strengthening of existing ones. It tends to involve interdisciplinary methodologies that seek multiple perspectives and make use of systematic and structured learning processes. These groups take control over local decisions, and so people have a stake in maintaining structures or practices.

5 **Functional participation**
People participate by forming groups, which are externally initiated to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Involvement of the community is not solicited at early stages of the project cycle but rather after major decisions have been made. These groups tend to be dependent on external initiators and facilitators, but may eventually become self-dependent.

4 **Participation for material incentives**
People participate by providing resources such as labour, in return for food, cash or other material incentives. Most on-farm research today falls in this category – farmers provide the fields for demonstration but are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning. It is very common to see this called participation, yet people have no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.

3 **Participation by consultation**
People participate by being consulted, and external people listen to views. These external professionals define both problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of people's responses. Such a consultative process does not concede any share in decision-making, and professionals are under no obligation to take on board people's views.

2 **Participation in information giving**
People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using questionnaire surveys or similar approaches. People do not have the opportunity to influence proceedings, as the findings of the research are neither shared nor checked for accuracy.

1 **Passive participation**
People participate by being told what is going to happen or has already happened. A unilateral announcement is made by the administration or project management without listening to people's responses. The information being shared belongs only to external professionals.

A sustained commitment to the participatory learning approach will trigger a process, enabling a progression from lower to higher levels of participation in the community.
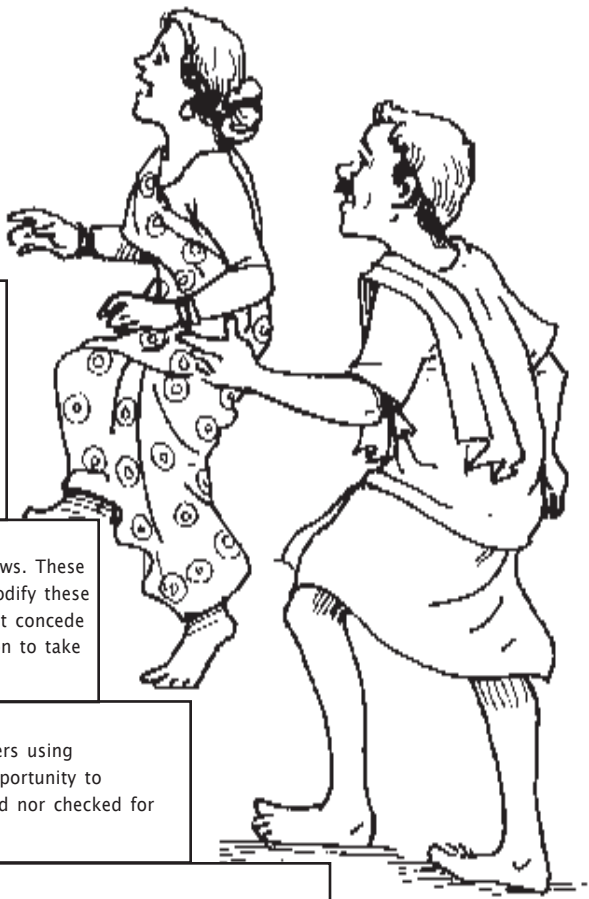
The Need for Participatory Learning

The evolution of participatory approaches indicates a shift from a "top-down" to a "bottom-up" approach that is popularly known as the "paradigm shift" (Chambers, 1995). There are several limitations inherent in the top-down approach which brought about this shift:

- Traditionally, the information-gathering process took the form of extraction where communities had no say in the content or type of information required in designing a project. The questionnaire type of survey is not only extractive but also results in restrictive "yes" or "no" responses.

- When the analysis of such data takes place, the causal factors depicted in a current situation are not revealed so that learning from the analysis is also restricted.

- Field experience shows that in many instances pre-determined conclusions from restricted information have failed to answer the reality of problems faced by different sections of the community. This is particularly true for the vulnerable sections of society whose voices are not heard and who are frequently left out in an extractive mode of information-gathering.

- In many instances, the process is limited to validating pre-conceived project ideas of policy-makers and funders. Such a process is not transparent and the cross-checking possibilities are extremely limited.

The participatory learning approach (PLA) has the potential for eliminating many of the problems described above by being transparent, allowing for cross-checking, providing space for the vulnerable to voice their opinions and for delving beyond results to discuss issues of causality with the community.

Prerequisites for Participatory Learning

- The attitudes and behaviour of different stakeholders should be supportive. Willingness to listen to others' views, patience, respect, free expression and above all, the willingness to learn through an in-depth analysis of causes and effects of problems and issues are attitudes which enhance a participatory approach.

- The tools and techniques used in this approach must provide the means through which participatory information generation, analysis, findings and conclusions are arrived at. The situation analysis is further enhanced by the visualisation that accompanies the tools and techniques. The potential of the visual in empowering the vulnerable communities to express themselves in front of authority, the powerful and the rich is of great significance.

- There must be **commitment to the process and learning through sharing of knowledge.**

Experience shows that best results are obtained through harmonising methodologies and making use of the strong elements in each for achieving the common objective of a participatory learning process. There is no way in which a prescription for the use of these tools may be given – the idea is to master the different alternatives and to pick, choose, adapt and innovate to suit the purpose. The mechanical use of tools runs the danger of turning "participation" to "manipulation". The spirit and attitude that accompanies the methodology is crucial for creating the space for the different stakeholders – more so that the primary stakeholder may participate.

Using Participatory Learning Effectively

■ The role of facilitation is a key element in the use of participatory approaches. Much emphasis is needed in the training of facilitators and training of trainers if "paying lip-service" to participation is to be avoided.

■ The strength of harmonising the positive elements of different methodologies with a strong emphasis on participation requires attention. Experience shows that PRA types of information generation lends itself to a log-frame kind of consolidation by adapting to the need. Tailor-made approaches are essential in the application of participatory methodology in different contexts. The tendency to use rigid methodology does not recognise the complexity of socio-cultural-economic contexts.

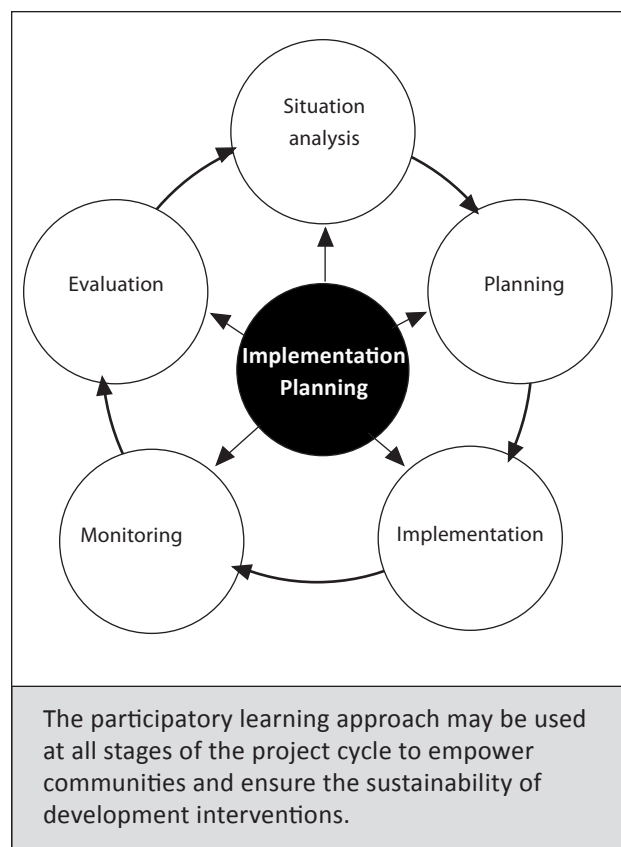| Tools for Enabling Participatory Learning at Different Stages in the Project Development Cycle					
Tools	Situation analysis	Planning	Implementation	Monitoring	Evaluation
Secondary data analysis	✓	✓			
Social and resource mapping	✓	✓		✓	✓
Seasonality charts	✓	✓		✓	✓
Historical timeline	✓				
Daily activity charts	✓			✓	✓
Wealth and well-being ranking	✓			✓	✓
Livelihood profiles	✓				✓
Matrix ranking/paired ranking	✓				
Venn diagramming	✓			✓	✓
Semi-structured interviews	✓			✓	
Problem analysis	✓	✓			✓
Objectives analysis		✓			
Alternatives analysis/ options assessment		✓			✓
Project planning matrix		✓	✓	✓	
Gantt/flowchart		✓	✓	✓	
Stakeholders workshops	✓	✓			✓
SWOT* analysis		✓		✓	✓
Group discussion	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Joint field visits	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brainstorming	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

* Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

- Field officers and facilitators end up in frustration if enabling environments do not exist within organisations. Frequently, middle-level management within organisations are the most resistant to change. This calls for adequate orientation of all levels in a system towards participatory learning and also for providing space for institutionalising a process-oriented approach to development. High expectations from one-off training programmes affect the quality and use of the participatory approach. Many organisations, both government and non-government, do not realise the need for a long-term training package targeted at structural reorientation.

- At the planning stage, care should be taken to allow adequate time for the participatory process so that realistic targets are set during the time-frame for implementation. Donors and funders must be adequately aware of time constraints in the use of participatory approaches.

- In designing research using participatory methodology, adequate attention is needed in selecting the appropriate tools for generating the information required. There are instances where stereotypical use of tools has ended up producing a mass of information resulting in chaos at the data analysis stage.

The participatory learning approach may be used at all stages of the project cycle to empower communities and ensure the sustainability of development interventions.

Participation: Building Micro-Macro Linkages

The common allegation that participatory approaches are useful only for micro-planning or small-scale operations is wrong. Macro-level policy formulation is best achieved by collating the perceptions and inputs from the micro level. The learning approaches discussed in this paper have the potential to influence policy, if those concerned have the patience and commitment to go through the process. In the past, valuable insights have been elicited from community perceptions which had an impact on policy formulation – e.g., social forestry, sustainable use of coastal fisheries, wildlife conservation and protected area management, etc., and in poverty reduction strategies.
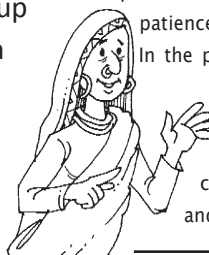
Prepared by:
Mallika Samaranayake

Overview of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Alternative views and critiques of conventional research started to appear in the literature and became subjects in development discussions in the early 1960s. These were triggered when agriculture-based action-research revealed that many findings in laboratory and conventional research are irrelevant. This is because the research was not tested in the real-life situation of the farmers and did not benefit from the lifelong experience of those who are familiar with the situation being researched.

Conventional research only recognised knowledge generated in supposedly "scientific" ways. Other forms of knowledge that were generated were trivialised. This resulted in devaluing and almost total obliteration of centuries-old indigenous knowledge that was beyond the ability of reductionist science to encompass.

## The Need for an Alternative to Traditional Research

There was a need to find a research method that would give power to the powerless and make people the subject, not the object of research. The methodologies employed by the anthropologists marked a radical departure from the research methodologies of the social sciences and the mathematical objective systems of the physical sciences. These methodologies provided "windows" that took people's own words and ideas at face value. As participant-observers, the anthropologists, the social activists and the development workers lived together with communities and chronicled their felt needs, priorities, art and worldviews. This marked the beginning of the practice of a participatory alternative to conventional research.

There was also an intellectual ferment that permeated the academe during the 1960s that questioned the "ivory tower" stance of research and how the results were being used.

The Change in Development Thinking

The work of Latin American scholars and practitioners such as Paulo Freire and Fals Borda pointed out that crucial to the people's taking responsibility of their own development is the conscientisation of the people themselves to the problems and structures that render them powerless and to their collective ability to change that situation. The other challenge was how to manage change together, as a community, to reap benefits for the good of the most disadvantaged groups if not for all members of a community. Another challenge was how to make those who are in a position (to allocate resources for the poor) to view this shift as necessary.

Earlier work on community animation as practised by humanitarian NGOs provided insights that for community development to occur, the people needed skills to organise themselves, to generate information and ideas, and to mobilise their resources. Many programmes designed to empower the poor followed the formula of organising, education and resource mobilisation, before they tackled the work of influencing social structures.
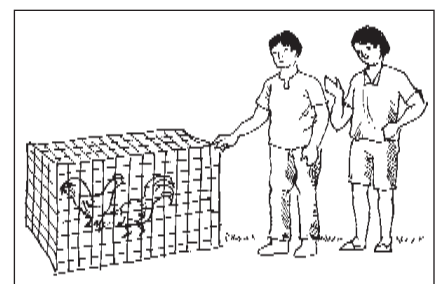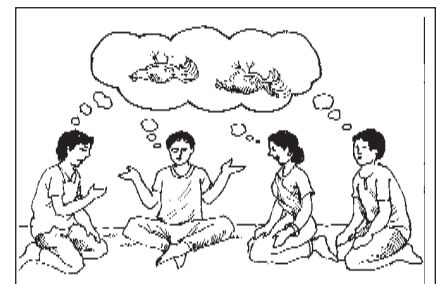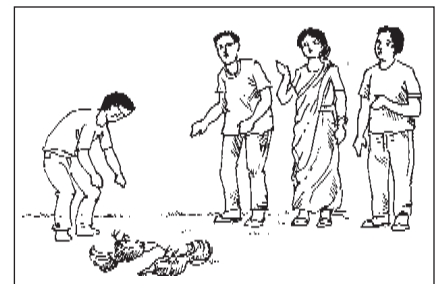
## PRA as a Participatory Alternative in Development and Research

The pioneering work of Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway in a technique called rapid rural appraisal (RRA) was one example of an attempt to include the interests of the poor in the design of programmes and projects. The importance of RRA was that it recognised the need to consult the poor on their needs and that it very quickly showed the inherent limitations of this superficial tour to reality. RRA is mainly seen as a means for outsiders to gather information; and hence, the need to replace or supplement it with participatory rural appraisal (PRA) which empowers the local people. PRA is a method that facilitates the community's own in-depth look at themselves and of their possibilities, and enables them to articulate these discoveries in their own colourful, meaningful, useable and realistic way.

Perhaps because of the work of Robert Chambers and other development practitioners advocating the shift in development thinking embodied in the PRA approach, many agencies, governments and financial institutions now prescribe the use of PRA in their development programmes. There is now a wealth of experiences and insights with which to view, define and practise PRA.

PRA as a Set of Principles

After years of advocating for PRA, and after seeing the contribution of this technique in enabling the poor to articulate their needs and to act on them, Robert Chambers would prefer PRA to be remembered as participation, reflection and action. This places PRA in the company of other pioneering explorations of how to mainstream the interests of the disadvantaged groups by putting the "farmers first". These explorations share the following principles:

- That development workers are prepared to learn from the people, adapt to the flexible learning process and pace of the community, and to seek out the poorer people and learn their concerns and priorities.
- That the main role of the development worker is to facilitate the investigation, analysis, presentation and learning, by the rural people themselves, so that they are able to articulate and own the outcomes of their activities.
- That development workers continuously examine their behaviours so as to recognise error and to constantly learn to be better facilitators of development with the people.
- That relaxed rapport between outsiders and rural people can and should be established early on in the process.
- That the people have a greater capacity to map, model, quantify and estimate, rank, score and diagram their own realities than any outsider. That the sharing of these products is popular and powerful because the information is visible, public, checked and owned by the participants.
- That the sequence of PRA exercises builds upon the commitment of the participants to further action and self-learning measures.
- That different PRA exercises have the cumulative effect of adding a few more dimensions to the community's understanding of itself. That all concerned learn through the process of sharing, observing and analysing.

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: A RESOURCE BOOK ON PARTICIPATION
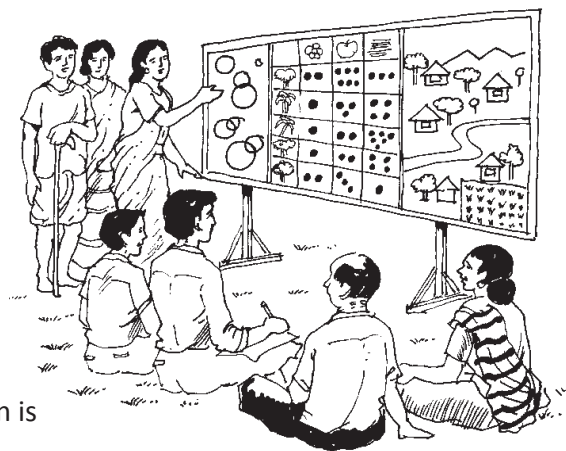
PRA as a Set of Data-Gathering and Awareness-Raising Tools

PRA is often also understood as a set of tools with which the community can visualise its own reality. It deals with space, time and relationships. PRA tools can be grouped together according to what kind of data or information they are sensitive in capturing. Some examples are the following.
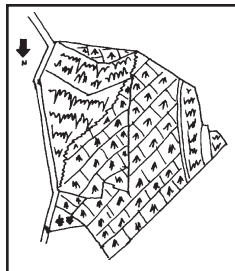

Spatial data

Deals with data relating to land and land uses and the different ways in which they may be viewed. The tools that are commonly used to draw spatial information are land-use maps, resource maps, farm sketches, spot maps, transects, thematic maps and three-dimensional models.


Temporal data

Includes time-related data such as those contained in time lines, trend lines, seasonal calendars and time-allocation diagrams.
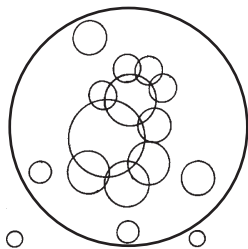

Social/Institutional information

Sketches the relationships of the people with one another or with outsiders or with different organisations. The tools rank and/or score the relative values of these relationships as derived in social maps, Venn or institutional diagrams, wealth ranking, flow charts, etc.
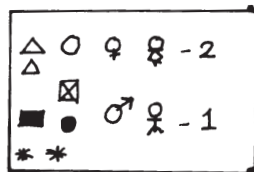
Discrete data

There is also some information that stands alone. This is gathered by such tools as census mapping, demographic profiles, simplified survey forms, sectoral consultations, matrices, etc.
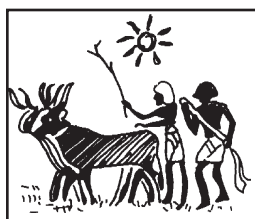
Indigenous or local data

These are artefacts or cultural forms within the community that have symbolism or histories behind them such as images, ceremonies, sculpture, songs, dances, weaving patterns, life stories, legends, myths and other indigenous ways of expressing realities.

The process of constructing these tools normally starts with an objective of why this information is gathered, and once the PRA tool is constructed, it is subjected to deeper analysis.

Analysing each of the PRA tools results in an awareness of the deeper causes of the problem that the PRA tool reveals and also engages the community in possible ways to address these problems by themselves. It has also been noted that for a community to be able to view and analyse their own situation reverses their role from being objects to being subjects of research. Hence, the community takes the initiative to make their recommendations come true simply because the idea of the change was theirs. This has been one of the satisfactions the villagers take home with them after a PRA exercise.

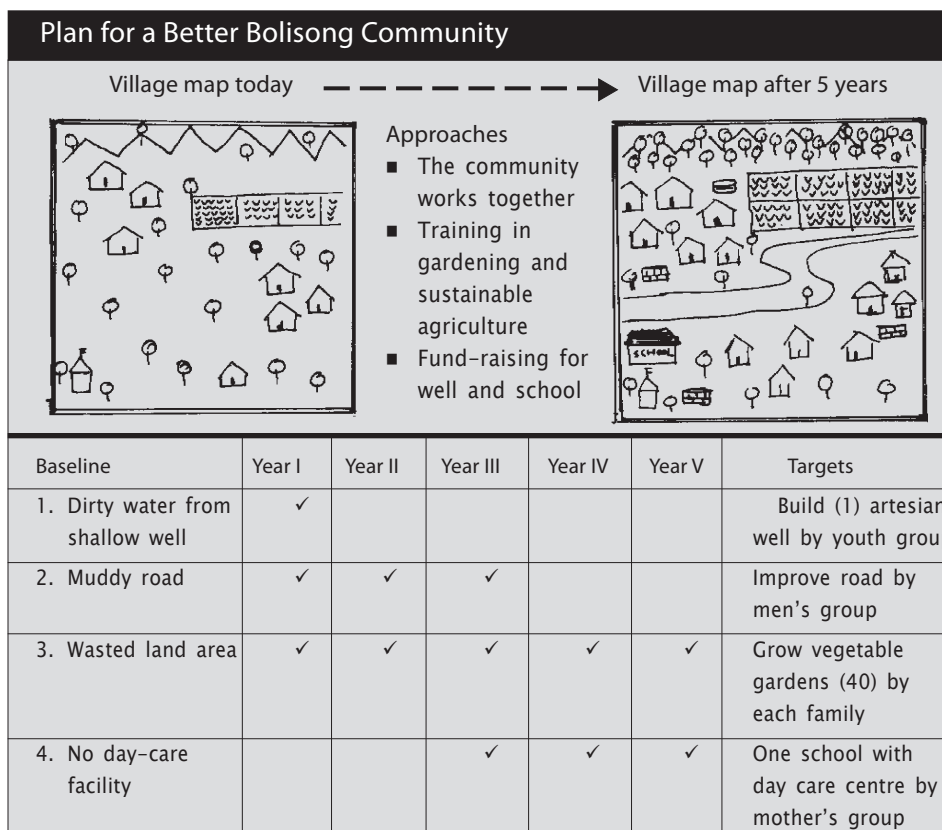One way of analysing the situation is to ask the following questions:

- What are the observations that can be extracted from the PRA tool?
- What problems do the data suggest?
- What is the cause of the problem suggested by the PRA tool?
- What are the gender or environmental implications?
- What should be the ideal situation?
- What can be done to attain the ideal situation or to eradicate the cause of the problem?

PRA as a Method of Participatory Project Management

PRA is more commonly defined as a family of approaches, methods and behaviours that enable people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and conditions, to plan themselves what actions to take, and to monitor and evaluate the results. PRA has the potential of being used for participatory project formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In this sense PRA can be used for participatory project management. This process can be done with just one PRA tool or with a series of PRA tools that can be used in the entire project cycle.
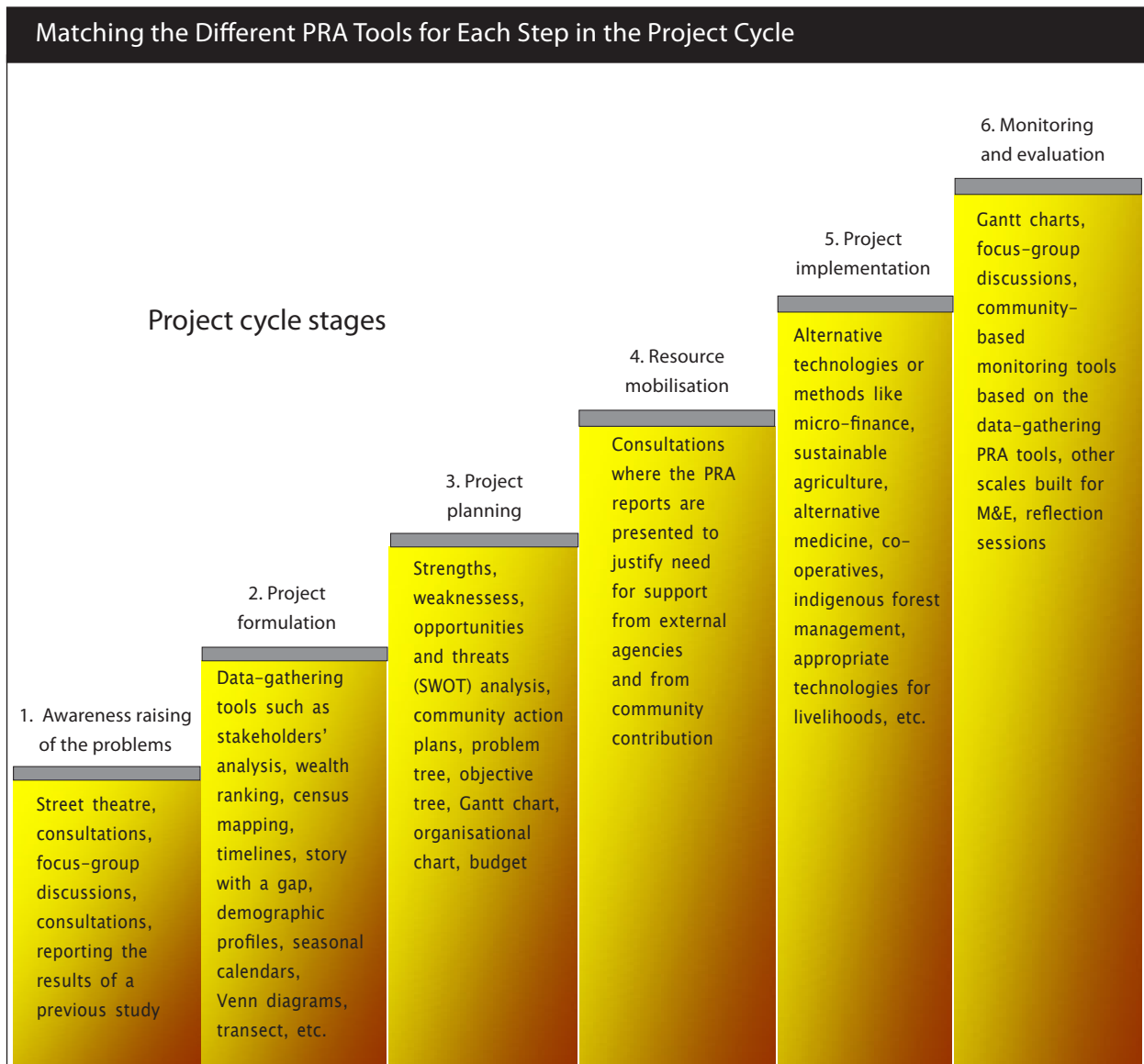
Example

A community draws a sketch map of their settlement featuring houses, infrastructure, roads, boundaries, etc. Once the map is drawn, the community looks at it and identifies the features they want eliminated or added in five years time. They then draw a map of the future settlement which contains their plans. They identify the new elements they want to see in the community and spell out steps they must take to achieve this. They make estimates

Plan for a Better Bolisong Community

Village map today - - - - → Village map after 5 years

Approaches
- The community works together
- Training in gardening and sustainable agriculture
- Fund–raising for well and school

Baseline	Year I	Year II	Year III	Year IV	Year V	Targets
1. Dirty water from shallow well	✓					Build (1) artesian well by youth group
2. Muddy road	✓	✓	✓			Improve road by men's group
3. Wasted land area	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Grow vegetable gardens (40) by each family
4. No day–care facility			✓	✓	✓	One school with day care centre by mother's group

of the time and resources needed and identify the people who will be responsible for each of the steps. They then use this as a record to monitor and track whether these activities have been carried out and whether their development objectives have been achieved.

Another way of using PRA in project management is to match the different PRA tools for each step in the project cycle.

Matching the Different PRA Tools for Each Step in the Project Cycle

Project cycle stages

1. Awareness raising of the problems
Street theatre, consultations, focus-group discussions, consultations, reporting the results of a previous study

2. Project formulation
Data-gathering tools such as stakeholders' analysis, wealth ranking, census mapping, timelines, story with a gap, demographic profiles, seasonal calendars, Venn diagrams, transect, etc.

3. Project planning
Strengths, weaknessess, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis, community action plans, problem tree, objective tree, Gantt chart, organisational chart, budget

4. Resource mobilisation
Consultations where the PRA reports are presented to justify need for support from external agencies and from community contribution

5. Project implementation
Alternative technologies or methods like micro-finance, sustainable agriculture, alternative medicine, co-operatives, indigenous forest management, appropriate technologies for livelihoods, etc.

6. Monitoring and evaluation
Gantt charts, focus-group discussions, community-based monitoring tools based on the data-gathering PRA tools, other scales built for M&E, reflection sessions

There are also creative ways of meeting the demands of donor organisations for solid quantitative data with the development imperative to involve people. There are projects that conduct surveys or RRAs first in order to prioritise target areas or target beneficiaries. Then PRAs are conducted in those communities that are already sure of being included in the project. This ensures that the people involved will have a greater say in what should be done in their own communities.

The RRAs provide data that can be compared across communities and could be tracked over time, whereas the PRA results provide qualitative information for community-based monitoring and evaluation systems.

PRA for Addressing Specific Issues

PRA is also useful for addressing specific concerns or sectoral issues. It is a matter of asking the appropriate questions so that the tool captures the specific data and the analysis needed. Some examples are listed in the table below:

Issues/Concerns		PRA Tools
Land improvement and development		Resource and social mapping, transect mapping, farm sketching, trend–line, three–dimensional participatory modelling
Marketing systems		Service mapping, Venn diagramming, flow charts
Credit programme		Census mapping, seasonal calendar, Venn diagram, sociogram for credit sources
Health improvement		Census mapping, seasonal diagram, service mapping, demographic profile
Targetting assistance to the poorest		Wealth ranking, census mapping, demographic profile
Agrarian reform		Mapping tools, Venn diagrams, sociograms, resource mapping, etc.

The PRA results that are gathered for these specific issues can be used very effectively in campaigns for reforms and advocacy. The articulations of PRA have the advantage of being very reflective of the realities of the proponents. They are also semi-abstract and are hence accessible to both the proponents and the policy makers.

RRA PAR TFT PRA P A L M PLA MAP C I D S LLL IIRR PSAP PIM NYZ PME REFLECT ?!
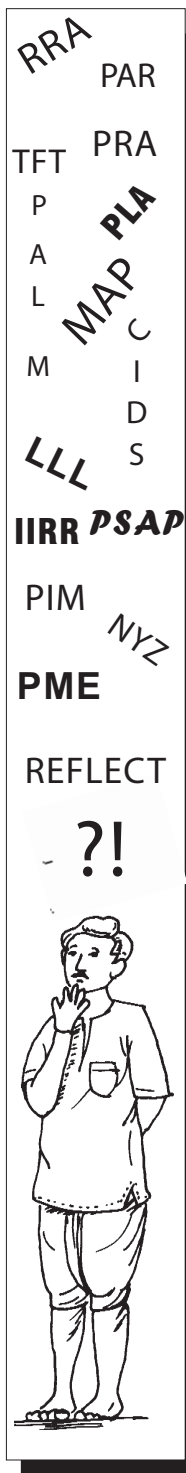
PRA as a Work in Progress

Because PRA has widespread acceptability and is being used extensively, there are bound to be many problems or "mistakes" with its implementation. Questions arise regarding the quality of data gathered through PRA and the varying levels of competence among PRA facilitators. In some instances, PRA has been conducted in the same extractive way as conventional research. There will be more criticism as praxis intensifies in the years to come.

The challenge is not to stop altogether the use of PRA but to find ways of improving the application of PRA. Stopping it completely carries the risk of closing the opportunities of people to participate in the development process. The results of PRA may not meet statistical standards and may not have the characteristics of solid quantitative data. However, as long as they are a product of the collective thinking of the community and the community is able to use the results for their own self improvement, then PRA is its own excuse for being.

Because PRA depends so much on the creativity of its practitioners, it has undergone modifications and these modifications are known by other names. Already there are several variants to PRA that are popular. There are now other methods such as training for transformation (TFT) which originated in Zimbabwe as a Freirean approach to enable people to understand the structural causes of their problems. There is the productivity systems assessment and planning (PSA) popularised by the Institute of Philippine Culture for the agrarian reform programme and the participation and learning methods (PALM) demonstrated by MYRADA, an NGO based in India, to enable villagers to handle and process voluminous amounts of data for their projects.

More recent methods include the participatory learning approach (PLA) and the linked local learning (LLL) that utilise the inherent power of participation and visualisation to expand the possibilities of the people. PRA is a "Perpetually Rejuvenating Approach" and has been an important underlying theme in the whole series of evolution of participatory approaches.

In many countries, PRA is the domain of development workers and social development organisations. Its power in inspiring the grassroots is so dramatic and lasting that it should be the domain of all interested in uplifting the poor. The use of PRA should be second nature to the next generation of development workers coming from the academe or for those who seek learning with the people.

Prepared by:
Rachel Polestico

Scaling Up Participatory Rural Appraisal: Lessons from Vietnam

This paper gives a brief overview of the use of participatory rural appraisal (PRA) in Vietnam from 1991 to 1996, focusing on considerations given and experiences gained in scaling up applications of PRA in the Vietnam-Sweden Forestry Cooperation Programme (FCP). It summarises the main lessons learned from this "experiment" – a term that aptly describes the development context in which the methodology was applied.

PRA as a planning tool and catalyst for participatory development has been used in Vietnam since late 1991. Prior to that time, there had been some use of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) for such activities as project identification. Widespread use of the methodology amongst foreign-based non-government organisations (NGOs) started a few years later. However, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA)-funded FCP is the only programme in which PRA has been used systematically on a large scale over an extended period of years. Even so, in the first four years of the programme, only 70 villages in five provinces were covered.

PRA was introduced to the FCP in December 1991, and the first two years were spent trying out and modifying the methodology to suit the specific needs of the programme and the variable settings in which it was being introduced. At the end of this period, a fairly standardised PRA package was in use throughout the FCP.

This was a transition period when most Vietnamese organisations were moving out from under the protective umbrella of a subsidised system, and consequently were facing greater risks and uncertainties than before. Because of the long years of war and the almost total dedication of productive resources to support the war effort, all infrastructure development was adversely affected and the state of development of human resources was poor.

It was within this context that the FCP introduced PRA. There was no existing organisation or system for extension, so nothing "old" had to be broken down or changed. Moreover, the Vietnamese were interested in trying out new things. The PRA approach seemed to fit in well with one of Uncle Ho's dictums, that in order to create a successful revolution the People's Army had to "live with the people, work with the people and learn from the people."

Several other factors were also supportive. The "doi moi" policy of economic reform shifted the basis of economic development from the cooperative to the individual households, creating new markets and freedom to produce for these markets. There was a rising demand for extension services. The allocation of forest land to individuals and groups also created additional demands for technical and material support for developing these lands.

Other enabling factors were the high levels of literacy and education among the population, and the presence of strong managerial and professional skills within many village communities. This made possible the establishment of strong community organisations capable of running project activities with minimal outside help.

The funding agency SIDA was very tolerant about the time required to develop and test out new methodologies. SIDA supplied large-scale funding to the forestry sector and supported some of the experimental activities.

How PRA Was Used

In the beginning, PRA was used mainly as a method for extension workers to find out about local village conditions before initiating extension support activities. In the process of working together, government staff and farmers learned how to use the methodology. They also gained a much better understanding of one another.
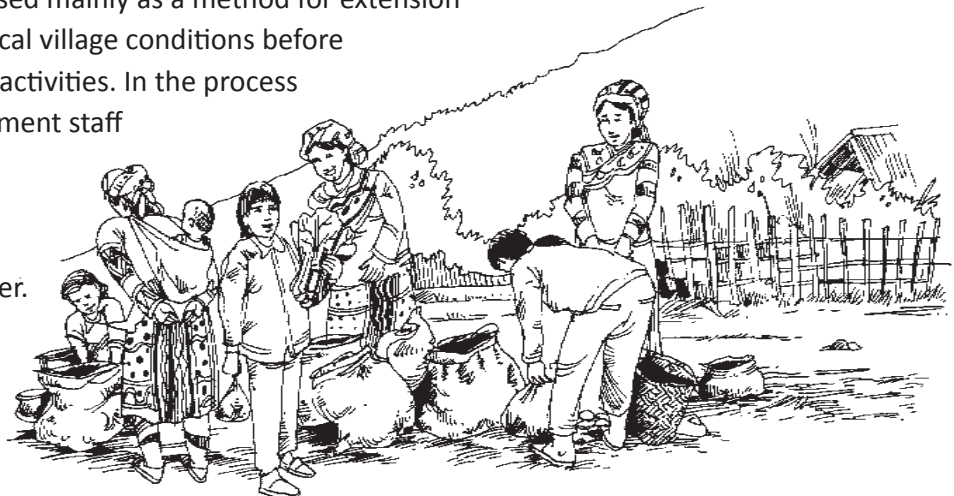
PRA became a catalyst for initiating a development process in each village. At the end of every PRA, a preliminary village development plan was formulated, this was finalised a little later by the villagers with the help of extension staff. The result of this process was a plan based on local realities and preferences that gave local people a genuine sense of ownership in its creation and implementation.

PRA was also used for thematic analyses of specific issues, such as livestock or the dynamics of village marketing. Indirectly, PRA was a factor in changing individual and institutional thinking, as well as how people and organisations functioned.

What Was Achieved

The PRA approach was found to be a useful method for gathering data and analysing conditions within a wide range of environmental and socio-economic conditions. Extension workers became sensitised to the knowledge and capabilities of farmers, and accepted the importance of involving farmers in the planning and development process. They also came to recognise the wide diversity of conditions within and between communities, and that there were no simple solutions to the farmer's problems.

Over time, there was a noticeable change in the way extension staff approached and worked with problems of local resource management and village development. They were eventually able to provide a more diversified and relevant set of responses to local needs. As they built up trust, they became more and more confident in delegating responsibilities to villagers to carry out on their own. Eventually, this delegation of responsibilities spread throughout the system.

As a catalytic influence for jump-starting the development process, PRA proved to be unrivaled. It was an effective method for involving local people in project planning and implementation. Eventually, villagers were successfully carrying out PRAs on their own in neighbouring villages, and they provided follow-up services and back-up support to other communities.

Constraints of Scaling Up PRA

One of the major objectives of FCP was to develop methodologies that could be scaled up. After four years, it was clear that PRA could be used effectively on a larger scale. However, there were some natural constraints and certain basic requirements would have to be met in order to achieve its successful application on a wider scale.

The main constraints relate to the context in which it is used – institutions, personnel and the overall system in which development takes place.

A Systems Approach

PRA is not a stand-alone methodology. It is never an end in itself because it is always serving some other purpose. It has to be part of a systemic approach that is applied to achieving a broader development objective. As such, it is one of the many steps taken in the project cycle and development process. Understanding its placement and timing in the process and how it should be designed to fit in with the other components in the system is critical for successful application.

The relationship among institutions has to be well understood. Most development programmes involve a variety of players and support mechanisms – politicians, policy-makers, managers, training support, financial support (subsidies and credit), material supply and technical support. Their roles, responsibilities and lines of authority have to be made clear. The application of PRA and the consequences of using PRA must be properly fitted within this institutional framework.

The Institutional Context

Under the influence of PRA, institutional dynamics change over time. Tasks maybe initiated at one level in the system and then shift to another level at a later date. This may be part of a gradual process of decentralisation and delegation that develops out of the use of PRA (e.g., a training task may start at the province level, move to the district, and then end up being carried out at the village level). It helps if this process of change is anticipated and planned for, or at the very least, if some allowance is made for the fact that changes will happen. This kind of planning requires special skills and attitudes.

There are generally two kinds of institutional realities that have to be managed in relationship to the PRA. The first is the formal establishment – government and officially sanctioned organisations. The second is at the village level – informal, local institutions. Each of these institutional realities has to be carefully considered when working with PRA-led projects.

Strong local organisations are needed to support the use of PRA and the process that follows PRA. The strength and cohesiveness of local leadership have an important impact on the success of PRA-initiated activities. Using local people and organisations to carry out PRAs in surrounding communities has proven to be a very effective strategy for spreading-out and scaling-up. Costs are lower and results are more rooted in local realities, resulting in more effective and more efficient use of all resources.

Institutionalising PRA requires a stable and legitimate institutional environment. Uncertainty about the future can be tremendously demoralising. Staff must be permanently allocated for a fixed number of years, and they must receive appropriate remuneration.

PRA usually works best with a multi-disciplinary group of people. However, there may be inter-institutional barriers that prevent the bringing together of people from different sectors and this must be considered in planning for PRA interventions.

Personnel and Training

PRA is totally people-dependent. It requires a minimal, critical mass of people with specific technical and communication skills. People must also feel motivated and not become sidelined due to a lack of appropriate salary or incentives.

It is especially important to have a few key people in the right place who really understand what PRA is all about (preferably from first-hand experience). One right-minded person can make a tremendous difference in the quality of the work that takes place. However, it is more often a matter of good fortune to have such people in the appropriate position, as it is seldom possible to influence this condition.

Training people to be effective PRA practitioners is not easy. Learning how to use the tools is relatively straightforward, but it often takes several years to gain sufficient understanding and self-confidence to move beyond this point and to become more creative and analytical. The most important learning takes place in the field. Classroom training on its own has limited value. Trainers themselves require special training. Very often there are not sufficient resources available for training, which means building these resources up before you can provide training to staff and farmers. This is a factor that can significantly delay the spread of the methodology.
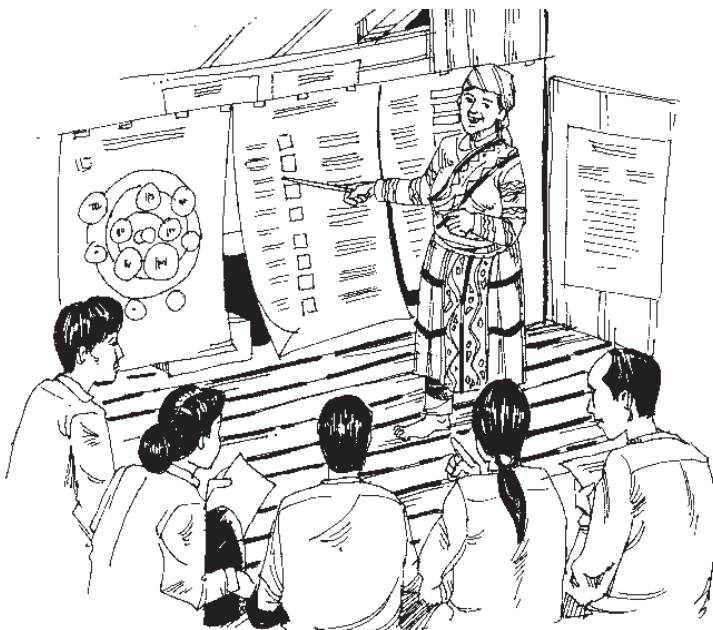
PRA training is almost totally dependent on village-level field training. This in itself can be a major limitation for scaling-up. Using a village for training without the prospect of post-PRA activities in that village can limit the quality of involvement from local people and thereby compromise the usefulness of the learning experience. If training always has to be linked to a commitment for project-supported village development, it can limit the number of villages that can be used for training.

Another limitation linked to using a village as a training base is that there are only a relatively small number of persons that can be accommodated during a PRA. This can be a major restriction on the potential numbers trained.

Requirements for Scaling Up PRA

It is essential to distinguish between the techniques of PRA and the philosophy or spirit behind it. PRA is driven by a philosophy that dictates how it should be done – it cannot be done properly in any other way. What is often missed is how to carry this same philosophy into other aspects of the work that precede and follow the PRA. If we do not use the same attitudes and philosophy in other aspects of the work, the good outputs from the PRA can easily be distorted or even lost.

This reality is by far the biggest challenge to widespread use and scaling-up of the methodology. Allowances have to be built into projects and programmes for the "conversion" of those who will never experience a PRA, yet who will have some involvement in some part of the process that is generated by PRA. We all know how nearly impossible it is to teach PRA without any direct involvement, so what methods can be used to change the attitudes of those who will never be directly involved? What kind of training can be used for this purpose?

This poses a very serious challenge: how do we introduce the same approach to the rest of the system? Is there some systematic way this can be done? Has anyone attempted to do it? Because ultimately it requires major institutional changes to take place. Or is it sufficient to be satisfied with the small, yet important gains made through farmers' involvement in processes and activities that affect them directly?

To summarise, the main requirements for scaling-up are:
- the use of PRA has to be carefully designed to fit within and be part of an overall development system;
- the development system has to be matched with existing institutional realities;
- methodologies used throughout the system have to be philosophically consistent; additional specialised training is likely to be required to achieve this;
- PRA requires sufficient numbers of trained persons if it is to be implemented on a large scale;
- training in PRA and related skills takes time, and requires specialised training resources which very often have to be built up;
- donors and recipients must allow sufficient time for the build-up of experience and skills before sustainable large-scale expansion can take place; and
- the use of PRA causes changes that cannot easily be foreseen – donors and recipients have to leave room for unforeseen operational and structural changes to take place.

Prepared by:
Bardolf Paul

Participatory Monitoring:
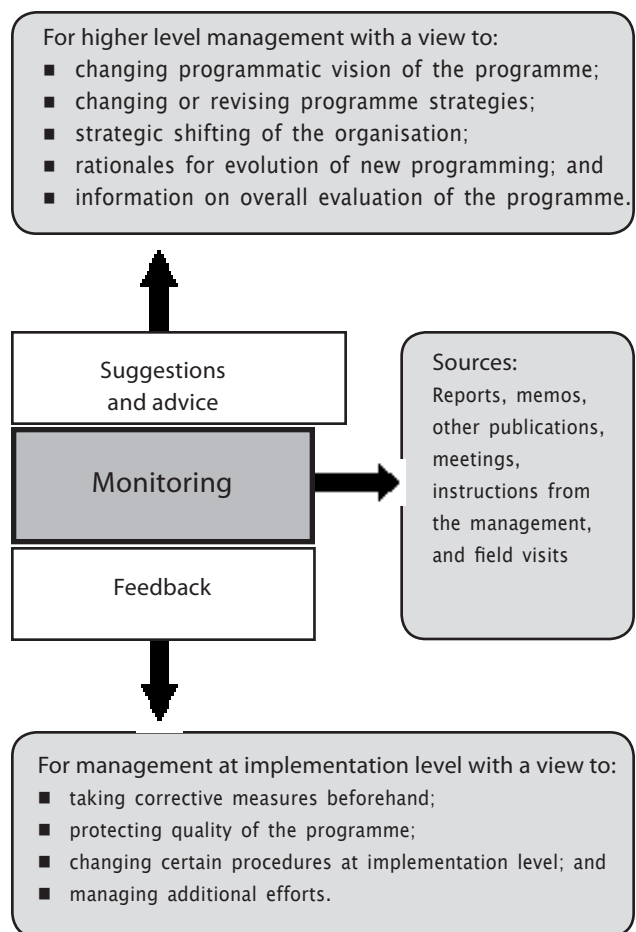# An Experience from Nepal
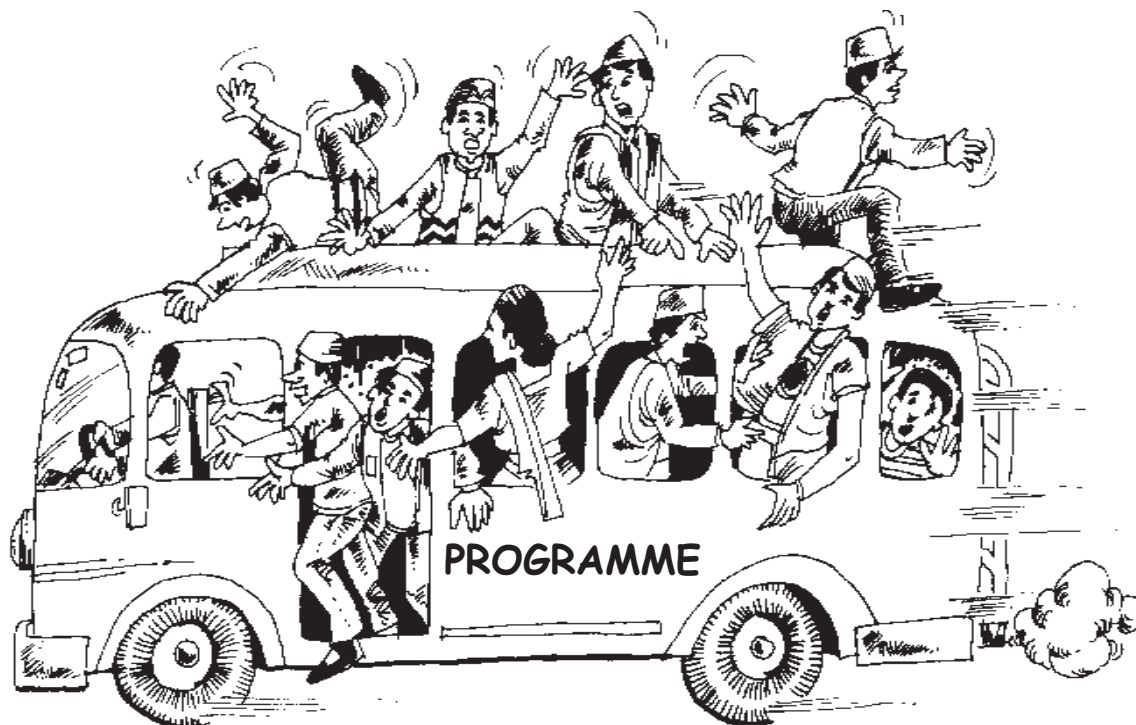
The participatory monitoring system in PDDP is contributing significantly to empowerment, resource management and confidence-building of community members. It helps them to improve understanding of the problems and find the solutions themselves, ultimately contributing to improve the livelihood of poor people.

Monitoring refers to the regular and systematic collection, analysis and distribution of information about programme activities. It is carried out continuously, as periodic reviews during programme implementation. An experience in participatory monitoring from the Participatory District Development Programme (PDDP) in Nepal is highlighted here.

In conventional development practice, monitoring used to be carried out by external personnel (e.g., programme reviewer). In participatory monitoring, all the stakeholders of the programme, especially the beneficiaries, are regarded as partners of the monitoring process. Beneficiaries are given access to whatever is needed to track the programme and to take corrective measures.

Participatory Monitoring Process

The overall objective of monitoring is to bring the programme on to the desirable path through feedback and suggestions.

For higher level management with a view to:
- changing programmatic vision of the programme;
- changing or revising programme strategies;
- strategic shifting of the organisation;
- rationales for evolution of new programming; and
- information on overall evaluation of the programme.

Suggestions and advice

Monitoring

Feedback

Sources:
Reports, memos, other publications, meetings, instructions from the management, and field visits

For management at implementation level with a view to:
- taking corrective measures beforehand;
- protecting quality of the programme;
- changing certain procedures at implementation level; and
- managing additional efforts.

Involvement of Stakeholders

Merely involving the beneficiaries in the monitoring team does not make the monitoring process participatory. Rather, the stakeholders should be involved in:

- deciding what to monitor and when;
- selecting indicators for monitoring;
- selecting tools and methods;
- processing and analysing information; and
- using information as outcomes of monitoring.

Responsible Levels for Participatory Monitoring

- **Grassroot level**
  Field staff, other partners and beneficiaries who are directly involved in implementation

- **Project level**
  Project manager along with support staff

- **State level**
  Donors and counterparts in the region

Difference between Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are different but complementary processes. A programme could be small or big in terms of funding or areas of coverage, but its basic elements remain – i.e., inputs, activities, outputs, effects and impacts. There is a considerable overlap between monitoring and evaluation, particularly in the outputs they generate. However, the focus areas of monitoring and evaluation are different. Information and analysis generated by regular monitoring can be used in evaluating a programme. Thus, monitoring is a part of the whole evaluation process of a programme.

Differences Between Monitoring and Evaluation		
Area	Monitoring	Evaluation
Purpose	Quality control Correction	Learning lessons Not repeating mistakes
Frequency	Regularly	Mid–term, final and after project
Involvement	Mostly/only internal	Internal and external
Use	Project, beneficiaries and donors	Project, beneficiaries, donors, counterparts and other agencies
Focus	Inputs and outputs	Effects and impacts
Reporting	Internal reporting	External reporting

Areas for Monitoring

Inputs
- Are inputs (human, financial and other resources) for programme implementation reasonable? If not, what changes are necessary in the ongoing programme? If change is not required, what could be the status of the expected result of the programme?

Activities
- Are appropriate procedures that are visualised by the programme followed?
- Are the activities designed by the programme appropriate and in line with the programme goal?
- Are all the activities being implemented following appropriate processes and timing?

Outputs
- Have expected outputs been achieved?
- What are the qualities and quantities of the outputs?
- Do these match with the programme objectives?

Effects and impacts
- What indications of effects and impacts of the programme interventions are visualised in the targeted communities?
- Are the existing indications leading the communities towards the ultimate goal of the programme?
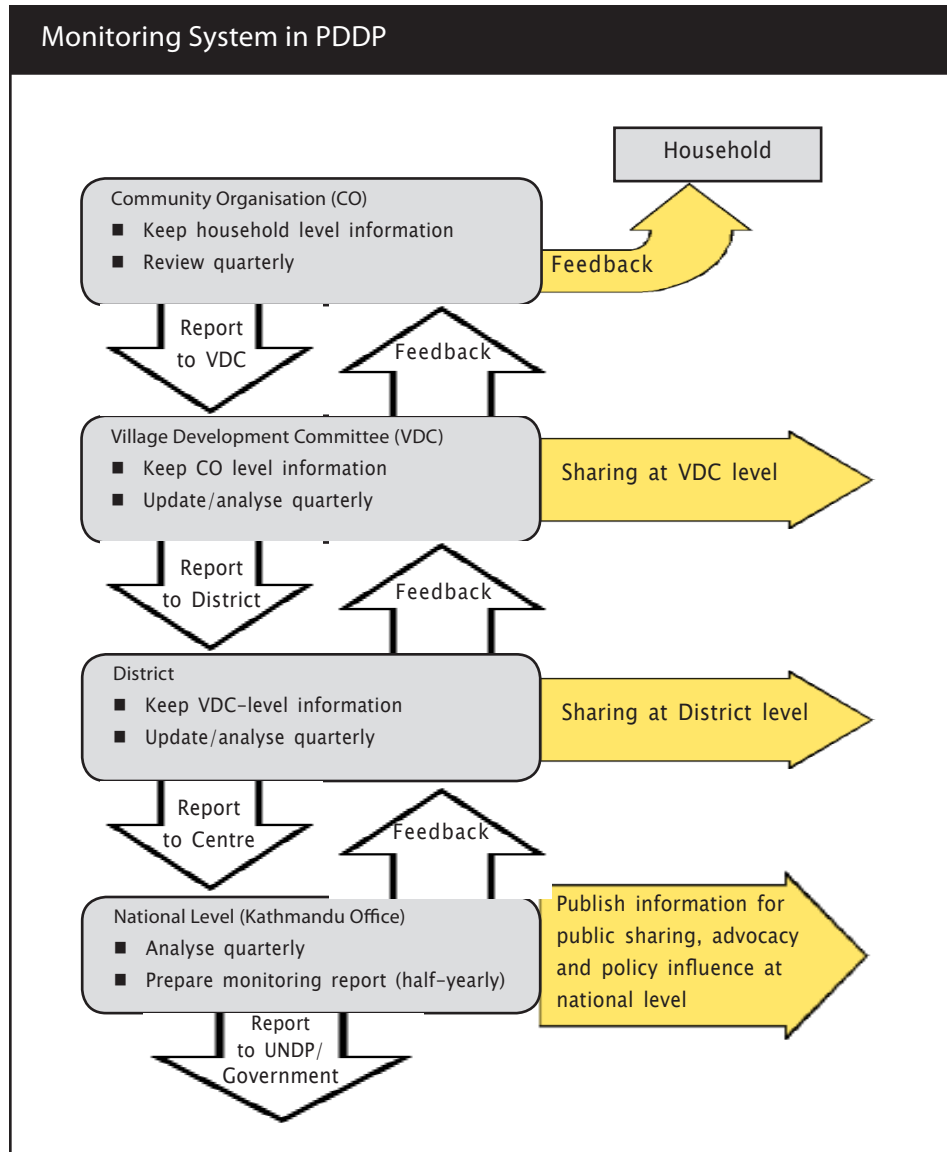
Programme Monitoring System in PDDP

At grassroots level, primary stakeholders sit together and analyse the information collected about the programme. This has been successfully practised and institutionalised in the Village Development Programme implemented by the PDDP.

All community organisation (CO) members sit together once every three months, analyse their progress and update the impact indicators. This is compiled at the village, district and national levels.

Nepal's Local Self-Governance Act (1998) made provision for monitoring sub-committees at the district and national levels. In this context, PDDP perceived that participatory monitoring is the main tool to improve programmes according to the needs of the villagers.

Monitoring System in PDDP

Household

Community Organisation (CO)
- Keep household level information
- Review quarterly

Feedback

Report to VDC

Feedback

Village Development Committee (VDC)
- Keep CO level information
- Update/analyse quarterly

Sharing at VDC level

Report to District

Feedback

District
- Keep VDC–level information
- Update/analyse quarterly

Sharing at District level

Report to Centre

Feedback

National Level (Kathmandu Office)
- Analyse quarterly
- Prepare monitoring report (half–yearly)

Publish information for public sharing, advocacy and policy influence at national level

Report to UNDP/ Government

Some Features of Participatory Monitoring by PDDP

■ **Empowering process**

Participatory monitoring equips the communities with confidence and motivation so that they, themselves, can initiate a process of verifying activity-related strengths and weaknesses regularly. A good monitoring process involves a range of tools that fosters community empowerment and confidence-building.

■ **Mutual sharing and learning**

The process builds on existing local knowledge rather than on formal research processes. Trust is built by listening to each other's opinions and ideas.

- **Enrichment of programmatic relationship**

  The process aims to produce a multi-dimensional relationship among the stakeholders involved in programme interventions. Participants are involved in the decisions about the issues and changes that may happen from the information generated and analysed.

- **Process of being informed**

  The outputs of monitoring, such as reports and publications, must be made available to all the stakeholders involved in the monitoring processes. These publications enrich transparency and help the stakeholders to be informed.

- **On-the-spot analysis**

  Visual tools and methods are more important than the formal and exhausting process of information collection. Successful monitoring deserves on-the-spot analysis by the stakeholders.

- **The public is on top of the process**

  People at grassroots know how to check the progress if they are allowed to do so. They also know how to assess the strengths and weaknesses and make suggestions about corrective actions. Participatory monitoring is carried out for the people, by the people, and with the people. It cannot be imposed, but it can be adapted and modified as required.

Prepared by:
Nani Ram Subedi

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Some Concerns from the Field

P articipatory rural appraisal (PRA) marks a paradigm shift in development thinking that promises far-reaching benefits. It has undoubtedly gone a long way towards making the development process more participatory. However, despite the rapid spread of PRA, there are concerns about the quality of the research, the degree of participation that is actually achieved and the interpretation of results. It must be emphasised, nevertheless, that these concerns have to do with PRA practice, and not with the approach or method.

This paper discusses a few recurrent themes with regard to the many articles that have criticised the way PRA is practised. Some key reading material is listed at the end. To this list we have added some concerns which have emerged from our own experience of using PRA.

The "Tyranny of Tools"

Although these concerns have to do with ALL participatory methods (including RRA, PRRA, PLA, etc.), the focus on PRA is basically because of its popularity and high profile.

Legitimisation of Agendas

Fears have been expressed about PRA being used to legitimise projects that communities might have challenged given more information, time and political clout.
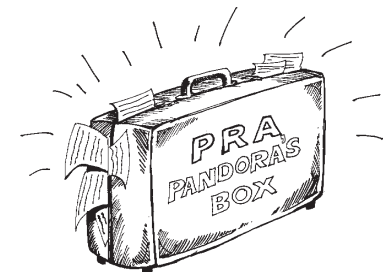
Depth of Coverage

Unless specified by the practitioners, or the project, it is assumed that PRA will cover all of the primary stakeholders. But this may not always be the case. There is no established norm for the depth that a PRA must achieve – for instance, what level of disaggregation of different stakeholder groups is appropriate? Some PRAs may stop at the level of caste or differentiating groups of men and women. But there can be many different subcastes or subcategories of people, and the women from these groups are also likely to have different allegiances. If the livelihood constraints and concerns are significantly different, then this could actually have an impact on the project or policy in question.

Difficult to Distinguish between Detailed and Shallow PRAs

The term PRA is used loosely to describe an exercise that could have taken a day, a month or even six months. This underplays the importance of really sound and detailed studies and gives credibility to hastily done or shallow studies.
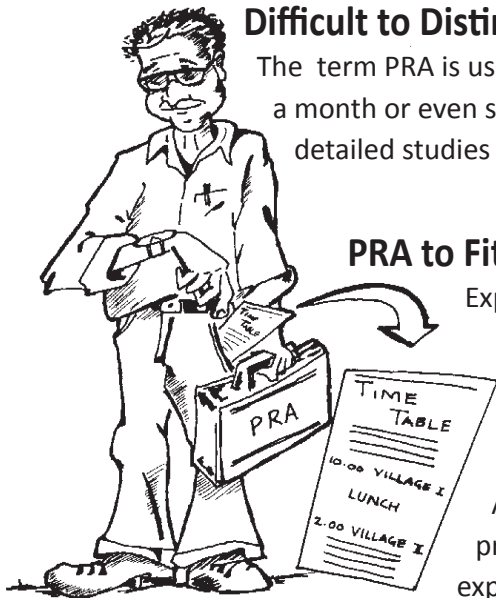
PRA to Fit Pre-Defined Project Requirements

Experience shows that where PRAs have been undertaken after the focus of the project has been decided, practitioners may "facipulate" the process so that the communities also identify the project sector as "their" primary concern.

Added to this is the possibility of the "Pygmalion Effect": If practitioners project their own preconceptions of the capabilities, expectations and development needs of the community on to community members, they may actually create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Pressure of Deadlines

For many donors, the pressure of deadlines creates the dilemma of wanting to conduct a PRA thoroughly but having to rush the whole process through the system of project approval and formulation. As PRAs are now mandatory in most programmes, they must be incorporated; but the resulting process – rush to find suitable PRA persons, rush to get it done and rush to write the report – leads to poor participation, inaccurate results and shoddy reporting.

Varying Competence and Attitudes of Practitioners

The quality of the research depends not only on familiarity with PRA tools, but also on the attributes and competencies of the researcher: communication skills, personality, attitude and
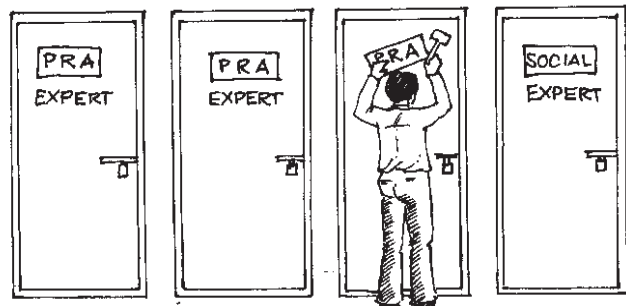
nature, analytical skills. It also needs to be recognised that when a professional is being trained in PRA a lot of unlearning has to take place. Many old thinking habits have to be forgotten and this is often not achieved, say, through a three-day workshop. Also, under pressure to get funded projects, many professionals and institutions rush to proclaim themselves as "PRA experts", even though they clearly lack the necessary skills (or attitude).

PRA practitioners have been accused of being unparticipatory themselves, while asking rural communities to participate. They may not be good listeners, may not treat people respectfully and equally, or may not share decision-making with others; they only display the "right" attitude when they are in front of
an "audience".

PRAs Yield Vast Amounts of Qualitative Information

More detailed PRAs may yield vast quantities of information that are difficult to assimilate for policy makers and other researchers. For instance, in the project design of a recent rural livelihoods project, 14 studies produced voluminous qualitative information on various aspects of project design, which were extremely difficult to compare and assimilate into one project document. In ongoing projects, project managers find it difficult to sift through the qualitative information produced – even by annual assessments of just 100 communities, on different aspects of the project.

PRA Results are Difficult to Compare

The results between PRAs undertaken in the same area by different field teams at different points of time may not be comparable, due to differences in methods and the depth of the investigation.

Institutional Limitations

Many of the constraints experienced in attempting to scale-up or mainstream PRA are institutional. Established institutions that were developed on the basis of a certain understanding of poverty and its solutions may have difficulty in adapting to the new agenda and methods of PRA.
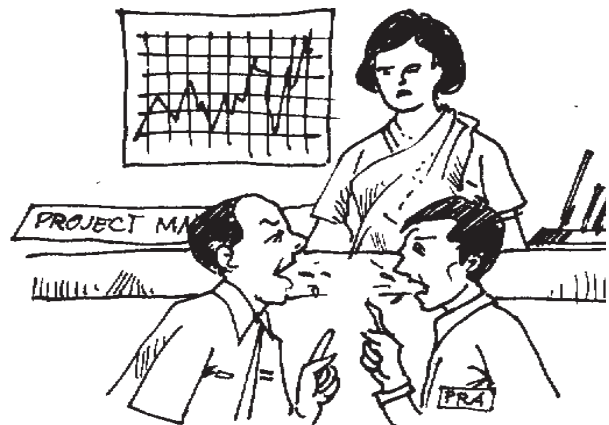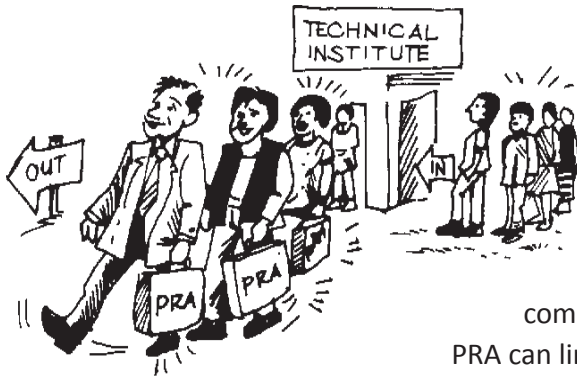
Contracting Out PRA

Several institutional arrangements are being piloted and a few early lessons have emerged. While contracting out of PRA by aid agencies and government has advantages - complementary capacity, more honesty in the process and better communication with communities - there are also problems. Contracting out of PRA can limit learning and policy feedback within organisations by compartmentalising the participatory element in projects.

A prime concern of practitioners is that they are asked to conduct a PRA for an externally defined purpose and their involvement in the process may not continue after the PRA exercise is over. They may not have any control over how the results are used. They also feel that such exercises leave them in a moral dilemma vis-a-vis their accountability to the communities they work with.

PRAs Focus on the Negative

PRAs may tend to focus too much on problems within a community and consequently people may be reluctant to go into details, particularly if they think that there is no direct or immediate benefit associated with it. A method like appreciative inquiry, in contrast, focuses on and builds on positive experiences and energies.
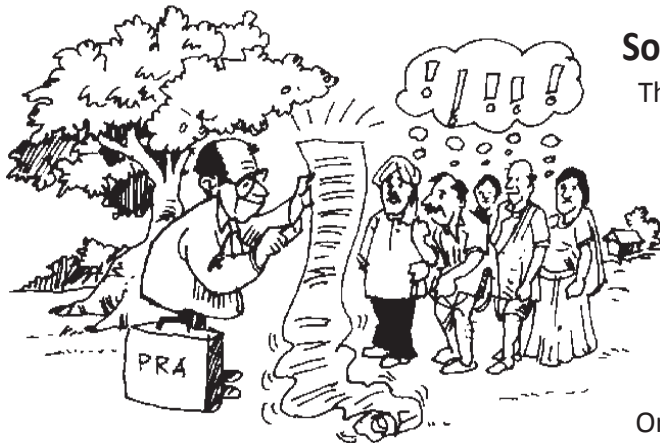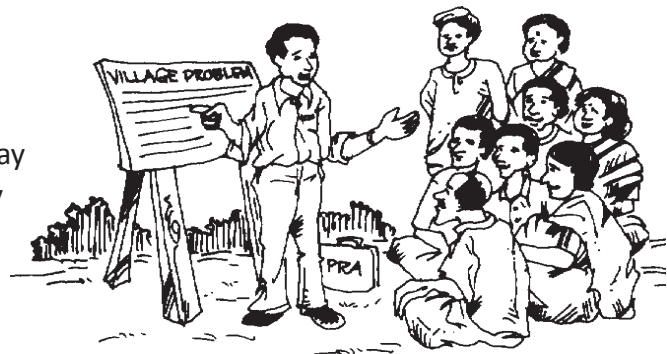
Some PRAs are Extractive

The purpose for undertaking PRA varies, and this determines whether the process is extractive or empowering. For example, if undertaken by a technical department to sharpen its own understanding of people's needs with respect to a particular output, there is a tendency to limit the exercise to that rather than seek opinions about wider issues or sharing of benefits. On the other hand if the PRA is conducted by those interested in social mobilisation, to encourage people to articulate their concerns and create awareness about their rights, then it is more likely to lead to genuine empowerment.

PRAs Raise Expectations

PRAs may have unintended consequences of raising people's expectations which may not be fulfilled. This is particularly stark where PRA is conducted for project design, and the community cannot be promised any benefits for a long time. Some practitioners have suggested undertaking "pre-project activities" in order to give something back immediately to the communities.

There are also instances where PRAs may be conducted and then a decision is taken to locate the project elsewhere.
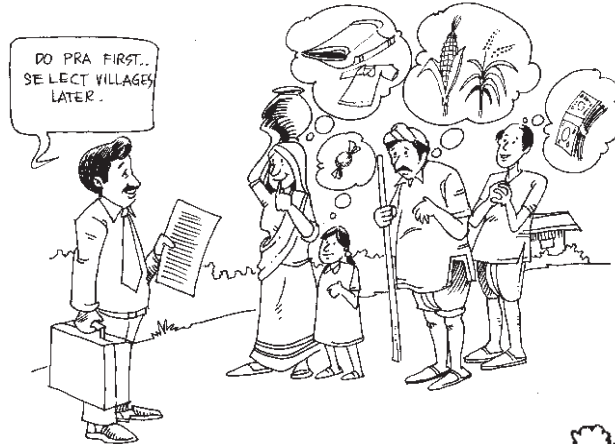
Those who are not used to being innovative in the field have a tendency to follow PRA manuals rigidly and to treat them as commandments. This has led to ridiculous situations where PRA practitioners have insisted on using "traditional" materials such as dung and sticks to the amusement of villagers who may have been more comfortable with a blackboard.

PRA Fatigue!

Frequent PRAs on different issues can create community fatigue for future participatory initiatives, and could affect the participation and the quality of information that villagers are prepared to share.

PRAs Can Have Serious Personal Consequences For Information Providers

In faction-ridden locations or highly feudal societies, PRAs could actually trigger conflicts which can put vulnerable people in danger after the outside team has left. Imagine a situation where a bonded labourer speaks up during a focus group discussion. Even if the meeting does not include the landlord, word does get around. What happens to the labourer after the PRA team has left?

Planning

- Draw up a plan of analysis, based on all available secondary information and discussions with resource persons, on the details of the planned PRA. This should include the reasons why the PRA is being conducted, the issues to be covered, the selection of appropriate tools, and the number of sites to be covered.

Appraisal

- Be innovative and adapt tools to fit the context, and not the other way around! Use complementary tools (like Appreciative Inquiry) when appropriate.
- Be honest and transparent about possible benefits to the community from the project (even whether or not the project will come to that village).
- Cover all socio-economic strata in the village, and not just the "visible" and articulate groups.
- Listen to what the villagers are saying and don't assume on their behalf; and don't listen only to the vocal.
- Encourage debate since this may bring up new and interesting issues and perspectives.
- Be sensitive to community conflicts and capture these in the analysis.
- Don't force respondents who are unwilling to speak out in a group - it may be out of fear – instead, meet them later to discuss the issue.
- Invite questions from the community; they may also want some information from you.
- Present findings back to the community, so that they can learn from the analysis.
- Facilitate community-level learning; the ultimate objective after all is to make the community an independent and effective decision-making unit.
- Leave information behind especially the tools and the maps.

Reporting

- Write a clear report, mentioning the final details of the process followed in the field, and changes from the initial analysis plan, with reasons.

Prepared by:
Priya Deshingkar and
A. J. James

What Now?

Such concerns have led to many discussions on the requirement for some kind of quality control and greater ethical standards in the practice of PRA. As far as ethics are concerned, greater introspection and self-evaluation is necessary. Peer review, especially in the case of PRAs conducted in sensitive areas and subjects should be considered. But it needs to be addressed in more detail.

The notion of introducing formal qualifications for PRA has been widely discredited because it would create centralised control mechanisms over a method that is essentially seen as free and for the people. At the same time, some kind of check on how PRA is done is necessary. Probably the most effective approach from the point of view of any user (of PRA results) would be to insist on certain minimum standards in PRA design and reporting.

Further Reading

Hall, A. 1999. New Methods and Old Institutions: The "Systems Context" of Farmer Participatory Research in National Agricultural Systems, The Case of Uganda. ODI AgRen Network Paper no 93.

Moss, D. 1994. Authority, Gender and Knowledge: Theoretical Reflections on the Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal. Development and Change, Vol 25 pages 497-526 summarised by MYRADA in Constraints in the Practice of PRA, PRA-PALM Series Paper 13, June 1999.

Pratt, G. 2000. Practitioners' Critical Reflections on PRA and Participation in Nepal. IDS, Sussex.

Critical Reflections on PRA and the Project Cycle: Practitioner Perspectives from Nepal
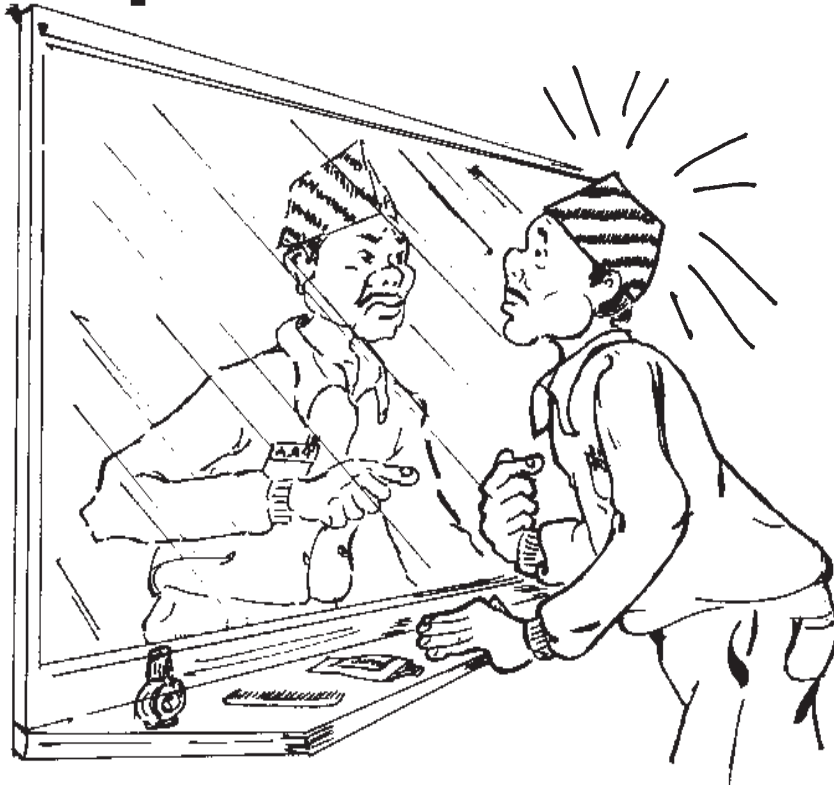
Most PRA in Nepal is understood and practised within the context of the project cycle. When used in this context, PRA is understood as a technique for gathering and starting to analyse information to inform project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Practitioners who use PRA for this purpose compare it favourably to other methods, especially surveys. They say it provides information that better reflects the local reality as seen by local people, it is faster, and the information is easier to analyse and record in reports. They also say that it can have empowering effects. However, the empowering nature of PRA is a major topic for debate and disagreement among practitioners.

The Pathways to Participation project, initiated by IDS in January 1999, aims to support critical reflection on PRA, in order to improve the quality and impact of participatory work. The activities embrace analysis of the successes and strengths of PRA practice, and also the challenges and weaknesses, looking back at the last decade of PRA experience. These reflections are based on a series of interviews with approximately 50 Nepali PRA practitioners about their own experiences with PRA, and about the general trends in PRA in Nepal.

This paper is a summary of the Practitioners' Critical Reflections on PRA and Participation in Nepal, 2001 by Garett Pratt. The paper is published in IDS Working Paper No. 122.

Using PRA within the Project Cycle

Over the last ten years, PRA has been used at more and more points in the project cycle at which development organisations need to gather and analyse information – and to discuss with other project stakeholders. At first, PRA was used at the appraisal stage. Later, some organisations began to use it for monitoring and evaluation exercises, including impact-monitoring and evaluation.

With experience, some organisations have gradually expanded their use of PRA to other stages of the project cycle but many organisations "discovered" PRA very recently and are still learning to use it at the exploratory appraisal stage of projects. Rarely is PRA used for detailed planning of projects, this is usually done by development professionals based on the information gained during appraisal.

PRA for action

One standard by which practitioners judge "good" versus "bad" PRA is whether or not it is directly tied to development action. Many practitioners operating in a project cycle framework say that if PRA does not lead to action, it is an abuse of PRA. They worry that when there is PRA without clear follow-up, local people will be disappointed, and will become hostile to development workers who come to their communities in the future. Some practitioners argue that PRA without action is an abuse even when PRA is used for another developmental purpose, such as policy or advocacy-related research. Practitioners who use PRA in this research-oriented way argue that it is important to be honest about what follow-up will happen afterwards, but that follow-up does not necessarily have to happen in the form of development projects. For example, it is important to share the final findings of the study with community members.
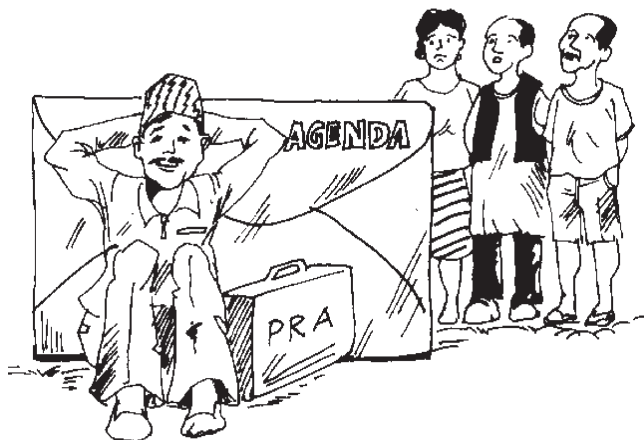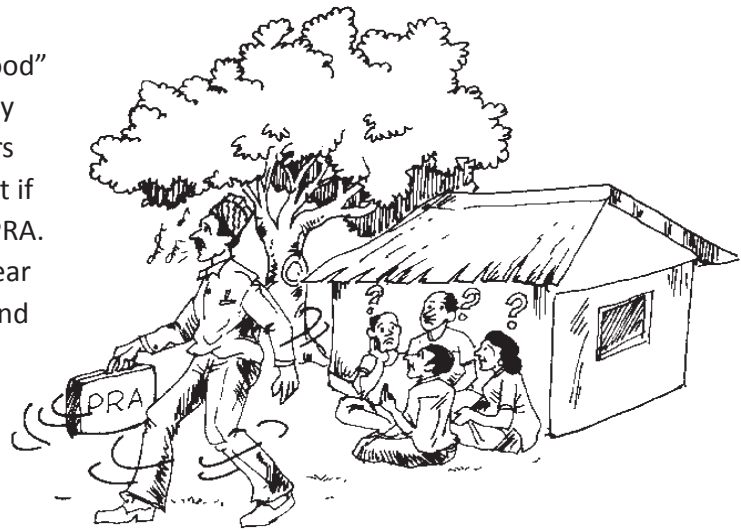
Hidden agendas

Practitioners criticise the use of PRA by organisations that hide their agenda upon entering the community. Often, organisations taking a project cycle approach to development already have a specific budget in mind, or know which sector they want to work in even before they begin communicating with the community through PRA exercises. Outsiders may "facipulate" the PRA to see that the sector they have decided to work in is chosen by the community as "their" priority.

Practitioners claim that this is an abuse of PRA, as it makes a sham of participation while trying to enlist local people in outsiders' projects. To avoid this, organisations should be open about the decisions that have already been made, and the constraints under which they are working. If priorities do not match those of the outside organisation, it has some responsibility for connecting the local people to other organisations who can offer expertise and support in their priority sector.

Does PRA lead to empowerment?

Practitioners disagree about the extent to which PRA is "empowering" when used within the project cycle. Many say that they see local people gain confidence in their own knowledge and articulate that knowledge during PRA processes. Groups of people may develop new shared understandings of the problems and opportunities in their community, which can spark new development actions. Outside organisations also come to share this new common understanding which can reduce conflict and misunderstanding between them and local people.

But does an increase in the confidence by local people already deserve the label "empowerment"? As one practitioner said, "These tools are as strong or as weak as we make them and we are choosing to make them weak." After all, PRA does not automatically change the balance in power between the outside organisation, which has the resources for the project, and the community members. Using PRA does not lead all development workers to question their self-image as the people primarily responsible for development. Also, by being practised in many cases as if very different community members share the same interests, the "consensus" that comes out of PRA can reflect the interests of the more powerful people in the community, in effect further disempowering more marginalised community members. Often, PRA for the project cycle is not linked to a community organising process, or if it is, the organisations reinforce existing power relations in the community. And often, using PRA within the project cycle does not allow local people to escape project time-frames set elsewhere, that may not reflect their own learning and organising processes. The practitioners who raise these criticisms question not just PRA within the project cycle, but the project approach to development itself.

> Does an increase in confidence by local people deserve the label "empowerment"? After all, PRA does not change the balance in power between the outside organisation and the community members.
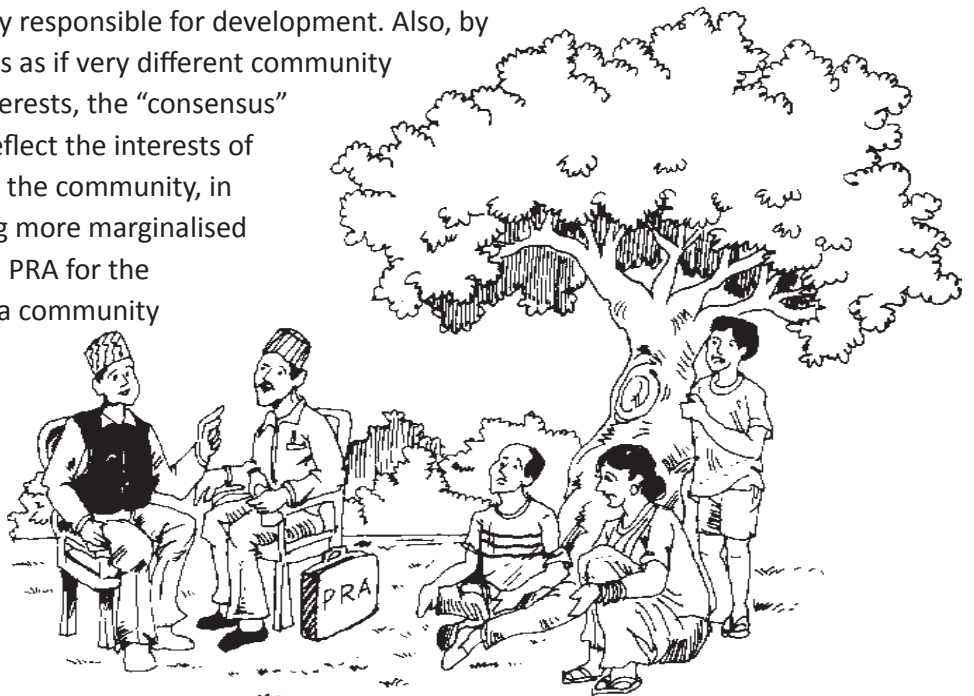
Attitudes and behaviour of PRA practitioners

PRA has raised other issues for practitioners that reach beyond the project cycle. In Nepal, much of the analysis and criticism of PRA centres on attitudes and behaviours. Practitioners often say that PRA is a "way of life". They argue that practitioners should internalise the characteristics and outlook of a "participatory" person, but that in reality, many people only do PRA as a job. Some practitioners do not even display good attitudes and behaviour during PRA exercises. But practitioners also criticise people who act in a positive way during PRA events, but otherwise fail to be good listeners, to treat people respectfully and equally, or to share decision-making with others, whether in the office or even at home. Practitioners observe that there are many reasons to display a "right" attitude and behaviour in front of some "audience" without internalising them more deeply. In the current professional climate, it is often considered necessary to make a display of being participatory in front of other development professionals to market oneself, even if one does not believe deeply in participatory ideals.

> Some practitioners do not even display good attitudes and behaviours during PRA exercises. In the current professional climate it is often considered necessary to make a display of being participatory.
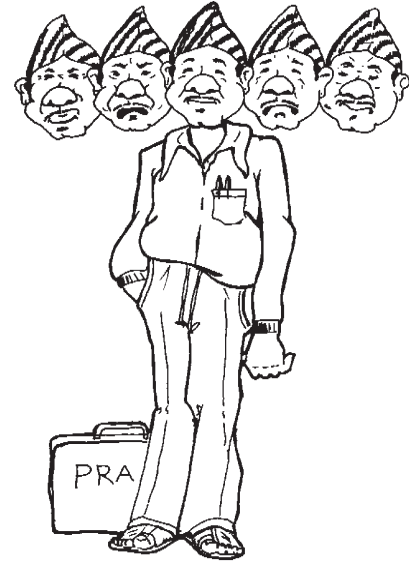
Exploring PRA Beyond the Project Cycle

Using PRA in new development frameworks

Some practitioners who deeply question the project cycle are exploring different development frameworks, and the way they can use PRA beyond the project cycle. For example:

■ Some are drawing on the Freirean tradition of adult education. The Freirean approach to development concentrates on conscientisation, a process through which people explore their social situation and the social causes of poverty and marginalisation. In an approach called REFLECT, community members explore these questions through PRA-style diagramming and discussions.

> Actionaid Nepal has been supporting a REFLECT circle of people from an untouchable caste, who have been analysing the social origins of their poverty and marginalisation through PRA diagramming and discussions. Their analysis led them to decide that as long as they continued performing their traditional but socially stigmatising role of removing dead animal carcasses from their village, they would continue to be marginalised by other members of the community. They organised a "strike", refusing to perform their traditional duty. Another group of untouchable women in a REFLECT circle began analysing how their lack of education, and their inability to educate their children, traps them in poverty. The women directly lobbied with local government officials to grant their children's right to waive school fees, a right for untouchable children that they had not been claiming before.

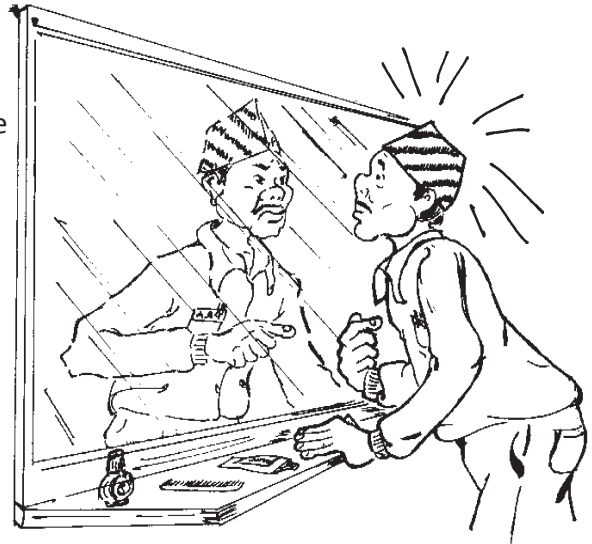■ Another development is the "rights-based" approach, which leads NGOs to focus on increasing the awareness, confidence and organisation of poor people to claim their rights as citizens to their entitlements from the State. The actions flowing from these applications can be more overtly conflictual and political, as poor people assert claims against more powerful people in their communities or against government.

Management styles in organisations

The logic of participatory interaction between development organisations and community members is being applied increasingly to interactions within organisations. For example, the manager of a new project waited until his newly hired staff joined the office weeks later, and only then sent them to choose their own furniture in order that they would be happy with it. When a funding NGO wanted to find partners to work with in a new district, the manager used matrix ranking in a participatory meeting among all the NGOs in the district so that the NGOs could decide among themselves which ones would be the best partners. When an NGO was deciding where to hold a staff meeting, the drivers were the ones who had the final say because of their knowledge about the security situation on the way to the possible venues. The participatory philosophy that has been transmitted along with PRA has reinforced a trend in Nepal towards participatory management.
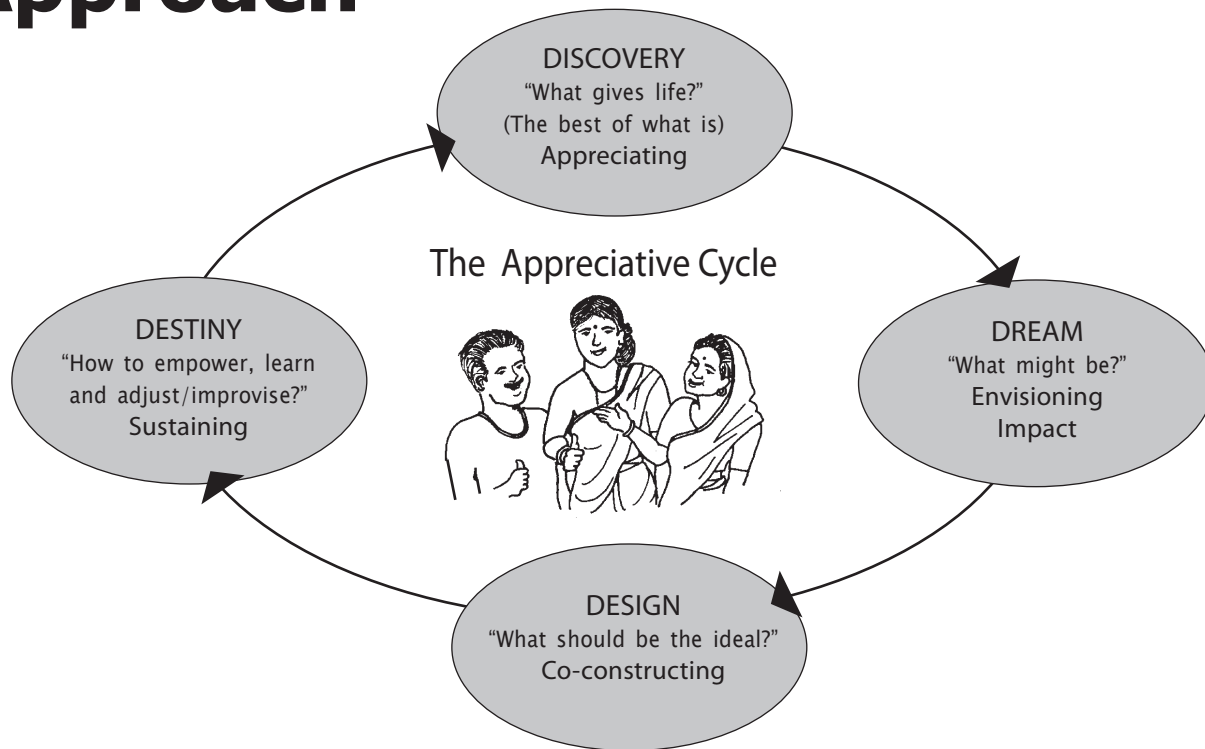
Need for Critical Self-Reflection

When PRA is used in any context including the project cycle, Nepalese practitioners argue that critical reflection is one of the most important factors in continued learning and improvement. Critical reflection has become institutionalised in the culture of PRA practitioners and networks in Nepal. Practitioners say that to honestly analyse oneself and the work one is doing, is often the greatest source of insight and learning. Observations, comments and questioning from other practitioners may help one to see one's own PRA practice with fresh eyes, whether from a senior colleague or a co-trainee on a PRA training course. But in the end, PRA practitioners must be willing to continue their self-analysis and learn to find their own pathways to participation.

Prepared by:
Garet Pratt

The Appreciative Inquiry Approach

The Appreciative Cycle

DISCOVERY
"What gives life?"
(The best of what is)
Appreciating

DREAM
"What might be?"
Envisioning
Impact

DESIGN
"What should be the ideal?"
Co-constructing

DESTINY
"How to empower, learn
and adjust/improvise?"
Sustaining

> "All the greatest and most important problems of life are fundamentally insoluble. They can never be solved, but only outgrown. This "outgrowing" proves on further investigation to require a new level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest appeared on the horizon and through this broadening of outlook the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically in its own terms but faded when confronted with a new and stronger life urge."
>
> **Carl Jung**

This paper provides an overview of Appreciative Inquiry, an approach to organisational and social development that identifies peak moments within a community and discovers and reinforces the conditions that made past achievements possible. While the approach recognises that problems may exist, it encourages change by focusing on the positive and life-giving forces that exist within all communities. The paper presents the four stages of Appreciative Inquiry, explains the principles behind its success and explores possible applications and limitations of the approach.

Rationale for an Appreciative Approach

Most development projects are designed and delivered using a combination of participatory techniques – including participatory rural appraisal, participatory learning and action, and various workshop methods – to uncover local problems, resource constraints, deficiencies and unmet basic needs. These approaches encourage participation, emphasise the importance of local knowledge and address real problems.

Yet they often fail to sustain community participation after the implementing organisation withdraws – possibly because they leave local people with the impression that their community is full of problems and needs, most of which require the help of outsiders to overcome. The focus on needs entrenches a sense of dependency that reduces the motivation of local people to initiate their own development activities. These unintended consequences illustrate the need for a shift away from problem-oriented methods toward processes that build on local strengths and achievements and generate a sense of hope in the community.

The Appreciative Approach

Appreciative Inquiry is a strategy for purposeful change that identifies the best of "what is" to pursue dreams and possibilities of "what could be". It is a cooperative search for the strengths, passions and life-giving forces that are found within every system – those factors that hold the potential for inspired, positive change.

Appreciative Inquiry turns the problem-solving approach on its head. It focuses on a community's achievements rather than its problems, and seeks to foster inspiration at the grassroots level.

> Appreciative Inquiry was developed in the early 1990s by David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University, primarily to help corporations sharpen their competitive advantage.

The appreciative approach involves:
- collaborative inquiry based on interviews and affirmative questioning, to collect and celebrate the good news stories of a community; and
- being attentive to and affirming of the best and highest qualities in a system, a situation or another human being.

Appreciative Inquiry is consistent with a livelihood approach to development that recognises people as resourceful and adaptive to changing circumstances. A person is not simply a wage earner but part of a larger family unit with multiple skills and assets that are employed in innovative ways to create a resilient livelihood system.

The Four Stages of Appreciative Inquiry

1. Discovery
In this stage, development practitioners work with members of self-help groups, watershed management associations, or other community groups to identify significant past achievements and periods of excellence within the community.

During interviews, local people are encouraged to reflect on periods when the community was functioning at its best. This might involve storytelling about the construction of a local temple or school, the rebuilding of local livelihoods after a natural disaster, or the management of shared common property resources such as forests and water.

Participants then seek to understand the unique conditions that made the high points possible, such as leadership, relationships, technologies, values and capacity-building or external relationships. They deliberately choose not to analyse deficits, but rather systematically seek to isolate and learn from even the smallest victories.

Typical Appreciative Questions

- Tell me about a time when you felt really excited to be part of this group.
- Tell me about the greatest achievement this group has had.
- Who was there? Who did what? How did you feel?

Remember when we built that temple?. . .

2. Dream

In the dream stage, local people discuss how they could build on the positive and unique characteristics of their group to create a better community. Through storytelling they have discovered what their group looks like when it is at its best. Now they begin to explore their purpose or destiny. What will the group be in five years? What will be its greatest achievement? What role will the group members play in the development of their village?

Aspects of the group's vision are likely to encompass social and economic relationships, cultural traditions, natural and man-made environments, governance structures, employment opportunities and social infrastructure. Because the images of the group's future that emerge are based on their past successes, they represent compelling possibilities. In this stage, the people become inspired and begin to understand the need for common action.
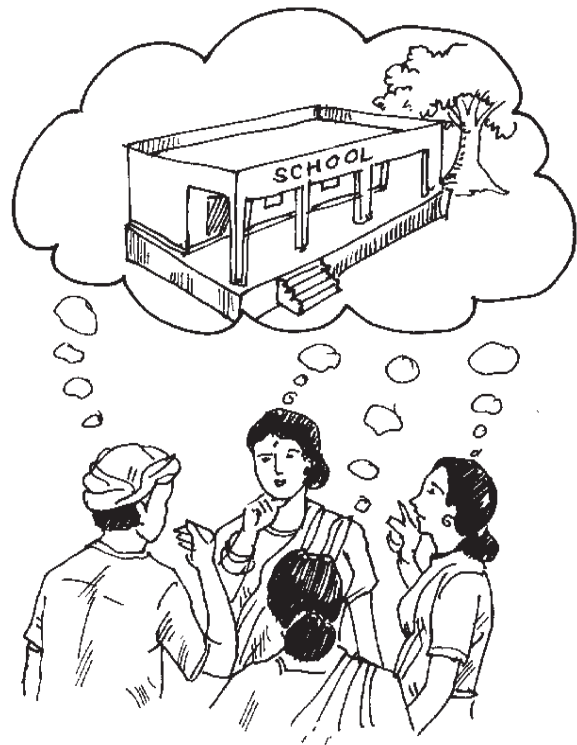
What about a school for our village?. . .

3. Design

This stage is intended to be provocative and aims to develop, through consensus, short- and long-run goals that will contribute to the community's overall vision. These goals are likely to take the form of statements such as:
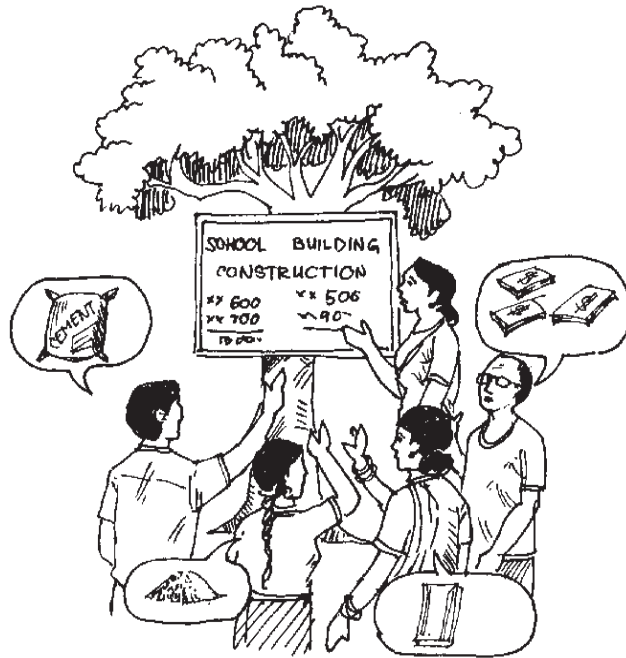
Let's plan for the school building. . .

- This group will mobilise the necessary resources and build a school within the next year.
- This community will plant one thousand trees over the next two years to ensure the forest's survival for future generations.
- This group will concentrate its efforts over the next six months on eliminating gambling and drinking in the village.

With these goals in mind, people begin to consider how to build a social architecture for their community that might, for example, re-define approaches to leadership, governance, participation or capacity-building. As they compose strategies to achieve their provocative propositions, local people incorporate the qualities of community life that they want to protect and the relationships that they want to achieve.

4. Delivery

In this stage, group members turn their imagination and inspiration into meaningful direction by establishing roles and responsibilities, developing strategies, forging institutional relationships and mobilising resources to achieve their goals. As a result of the appreciative process, local people gain a better understanding of the relevance of new initiatives to their long-term vision of the community.
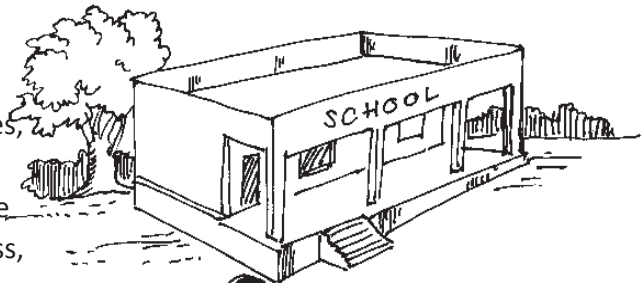
5. Begin the cycle again

Because Appreciative Inquiry is a continuous cycle, a new round of discovery, dreaming, designing and delivery can take place at any time. After a community has begun to implement an action plan for example, Appreciative

We did it again. . . now let's. . .

Inquiry can be used to reflect back on peak experiences and to identify and reinforce those conditions that enabled these achievements. New goals and action plans emerge which address current priorities and build on recent successes. In this sense, Appreciative Inquiry is more responsive to the changing circumstances and preferences than a static action plan where targets are set and not revisited.

Why Appreciative Inquiry Works

Practitioners of Appreciative Inquiry believe this approach is true to human nature because it allows room for emotional response as well as intellectual analysis, room for imagination as well as rational thought.

Appreciative Inquiry is based on an understanding that:
- reality is a collectively defined interpretation of a situation based on a group's history, assumptions and expectations;
- reality is an evolving story that is constantly being co-authored as it is passed from person to person and generation to generation; and
- people derive their identities and devise their strategies on the basis of the reality that they see constructed around them. As such, their identity and destinies are interwoven.

Inquiry and change are therefore not separate moments, but occur simultaneously. Inquiry is intervention. The seeds of change are implicit in the first questions we ask. We can choose to inquire into the nature of alienation or of joy. We can choose to study moments of creativity and innovation, or choose to focus on moments of stress and failure.

Locating and sustaining the energy for change requires positive thinking and social bonding. By using positive questions to discover the strengths and successes that exist in every individual and community, a sense of hope is generated through which people can anticipate a better future. Buoyed by the confidence of their past successes and inspired by a vision of a better future, people are better able to take up the many challenges that they face in achieving their dreams.

Possible Applications

Appreciative Inquiry can be used to:
- stimulate change and redefine the purpose of a group, community or individual;
- establish goals and develop action plans to achieve them;
- generate constructive relationships and a sense of common purpose; and
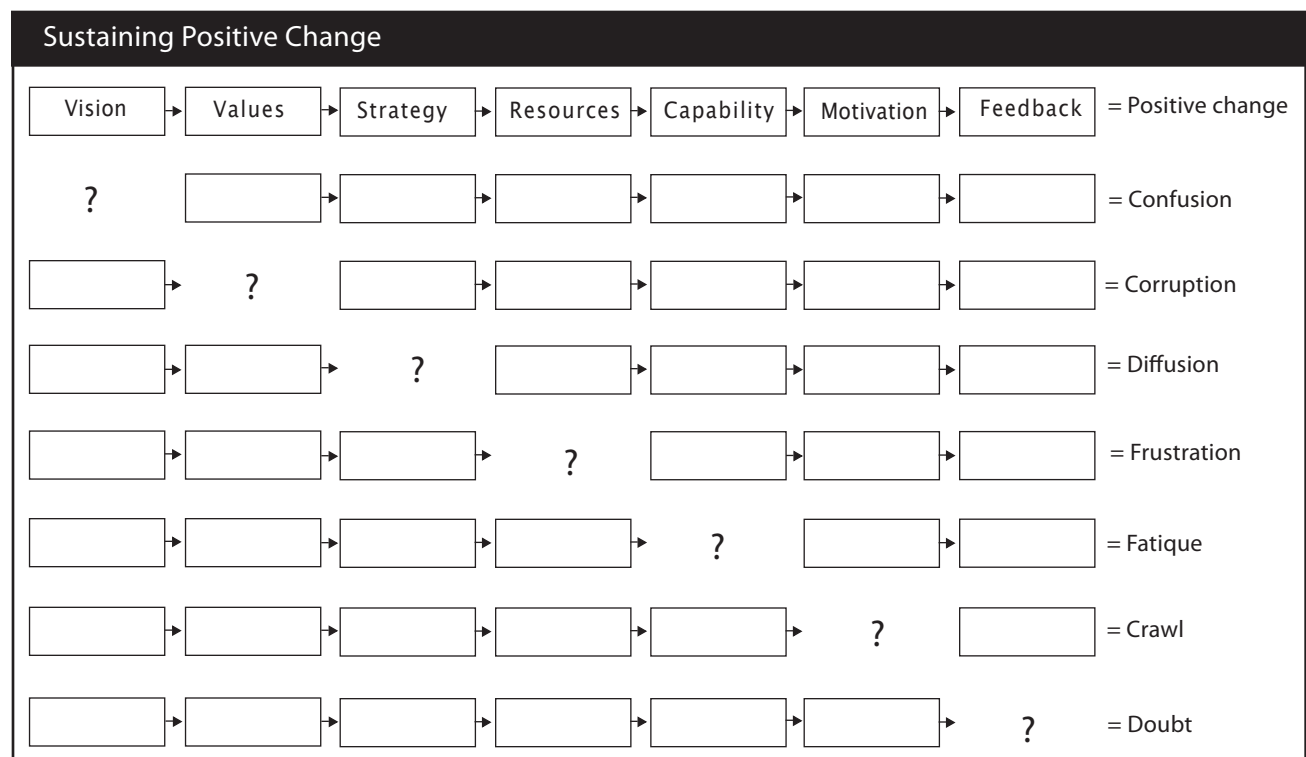- build on past achievements.

Potential Limitations

- Successfully applying Appreciative Inquiry requires creative and energetic facilitation, and an expectation that the group is capable of success. If the facilitator lacks these skills and attitude, the group members will not challenge themselves in their goals and may not come to recognise all of their strengths. Enthusiasm for the process will be low and initiatives may not be sustained.
- Appreciative Inquiry takes time. If it is attempted as a short exercise, energy and enthusiasm might initially rise, but a deeper analysis of strengths and a thoughtful vision-building and action-planning process will not occur.
- The process may also create conflict if there is an imbalance in power relationships which results in group members disagreeing on the vision and action plan, or not participating. Effective facilitation skills are necessary to return the emphasis to positive and shared values, and to ensure that all participants have a chance to tell their stories and contribute to the group goals and action plan.

Appreciative Inquiry Within a Broader Strategy

While Appreciative Inquiry is very useful in generating community visions and action plans that motivate people to collective action, it should be seen as part of a larger development strategy. To understand this better, the table below explains some of the more important factors that enable positive change. When one of the factors is not present, change may be difficult to sustain. The table suggests possible outcomes when a particular factor is absent. In the second row for example, a group vision is lacking which can result in people becoming confused as to their purpose. Similarly, in the third row, when values are not shared the process can be corrupted. Where no strategy exists to coordinate actions, efforts may be weakened, etc.

Sustaining Positive Change

| Vision	Values	Strategy	Resources	Capability	Motivation	Feedback	
Vision	Values	Strategy	Resources	Capability	Motivation	Feedback	= Positive change
?							= Confusion
	?						= Corruption
		?					= Diffusion
			?				= Frustration
				?			= Fatique
					?		= Crawl
						?	= Doubt

While the diagram greatly simplifies a very complex problem, it helps to clarify how Appreciative Inquiry contributes to a larger development strategy. Appreciative Inquiry can be very effective in establishing an inspiring group vision, articulating shared values, developing strategies and engendering interest in implementing them. Appreciative Inquiry creates a sense of ownership in new initiatives. It can also be a useful feedback tool. However, while it may helpful to reveal hidden resources and skills, it does not in and of itself create resources, build new skills or establish new institutional relationships. These are areas where alternative measures need to be considered. And, as always, all of the key stakeholders need to be involved in the process to ensure that the strengths, goals and action plans are inclusive and representative. Nonetheless, by providing people with an effective tool to understand how they successfully addressed past problems, Appreciative Inquiry generates new ideas for more secure and sustainable livelihoods.

The Relationship between Appreciative Inquiry and Participatory Rural Appraisal

The relationship between Appreciative Inquiry and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) should be seen as complementary; one enriches the other. They can be used together.

- Appreciative Inquiry is a process to discover people's strengths and to use the momentum and energy generated to build a group vision and action plan. PRA refers to a set of systematic, semi-structured tools and methods for participatory learning and project planning.
- Both Appreciative Inquiry and PRA are based on values of mutual respect between various participants and an ethic of inclusion and participation.
- Appreciative Inquiry makes use of storytelling and personal reflection, while PRA focuses on cause-effect relationships, organisational linkages, time-lines, seasonal calendars, transects and other data collection exercises.
- While Appreciative Inquiry is most effective as a complete and continuous cycle, PRA exercises do not have to follow any particular order and are capable of standing alone.
- Both Appreciative Inquiry and PRA can be used in a variety of circumstances and for different purposes. Practitioners often use PRA to gather data on problems and needs, but the exercises themselves tend to be neutral. As such, they can easily be used to facilitate the discovery of strengths, the documentation of a vision or the development of an action plan.

- Due to its emphasis on stories of personal or group experiences, Appreciative Inquiry tends to have a strong emotional element. Participants and practitioners alike can find it quite transformative. When used in combination with PRA drawing exercises, images with metaphorical qualities are often produced. For example, an electrical pole might be used to represent "empowerment". Resource maps drawn in PRA tend to represent existing situations, whereas those drawn in Appreciative Inquiry exercises depict an ideal environment as envisioned by the participants.
- Community development practitioners require both accurate data of current conditions and inspiring images of what a community can be at its best. As such, they will find value in the use of both PRA and Appreciative Inquiry.
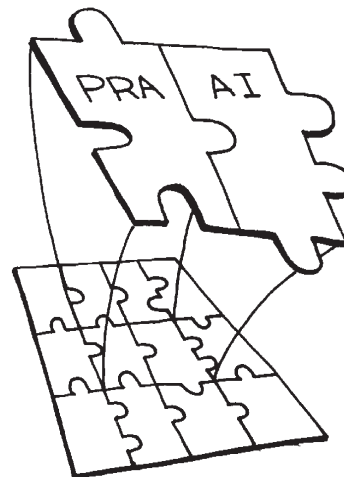
Case Study: Using Appreciative Inquiry in Resource Management Conflicts

In 1999, the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) began a partnership project with Skownan First Nation to develop alternative resource management strategies within the community's traditional land use area through the use of Appreciative Inquiry. The project is intended to lead to a more effective partnership between Aboriginal people and decision-makers in the provincial government and resource industries.

Background

Skownan First Nation is an indigenous community located in a remote part of central Canada. With the signing of a treaty in 1871, the community members moved from a 7,100-sq km area in which they had lived in for countless generations to a 1,856-hectare reserve. Although the area around the reserve has great spiritual significance for the community and is integral to their identity as a people, they have had very limited control over the resources it contains. Consequently, there have been protracted conflicts between the community, and the provincial government and forestry companies over resource management decisions in the area.

Project Objectives

To move from a situation of conflict to one of cooperation, IISD, Skownan First Nation and the provincial and federal governments began a pilot project in order to:

1. Use Appreciative Inquiry to determine how an Aboriginal community values the forest around it through the course of a year. This valuation will be as holistic as possible.

2. Build a community vision and action plan based on the shared values that have been identified using Appreciative Inquiry.

3. Record the results of the Appreciative Inquiry on videotape and produce a set of programmes that portray community values accurately and powerfully.

4. Enable community representatives to communicate local values to decision-makers in the provincial government and to other stakeholders through focus-group sessions in which the video programmes are played and discussed.

Results

Although the project is still being implemented (July 2000) the results are encouraging. Local values were easily identified and the emerging community vision/action plan is very internally oriented, requiring little external investment. Further, the emerging vision is very holistic, going beyond cooperative economic development strategies to address family, health, educational, religious and recreational goals. For instance, instead of looking to the government to provide a new road, the community is looking to itself to reestablish community gardens, plant trees, organise community celebrations, teach their children traditional skills and values, develop eco-tourism, and revive their local language. And, although the project has only recently begun, the community is already seeing benefits – people are visiting each other more, self and community respect is increasing, and people are finding new ways of becoming independent.
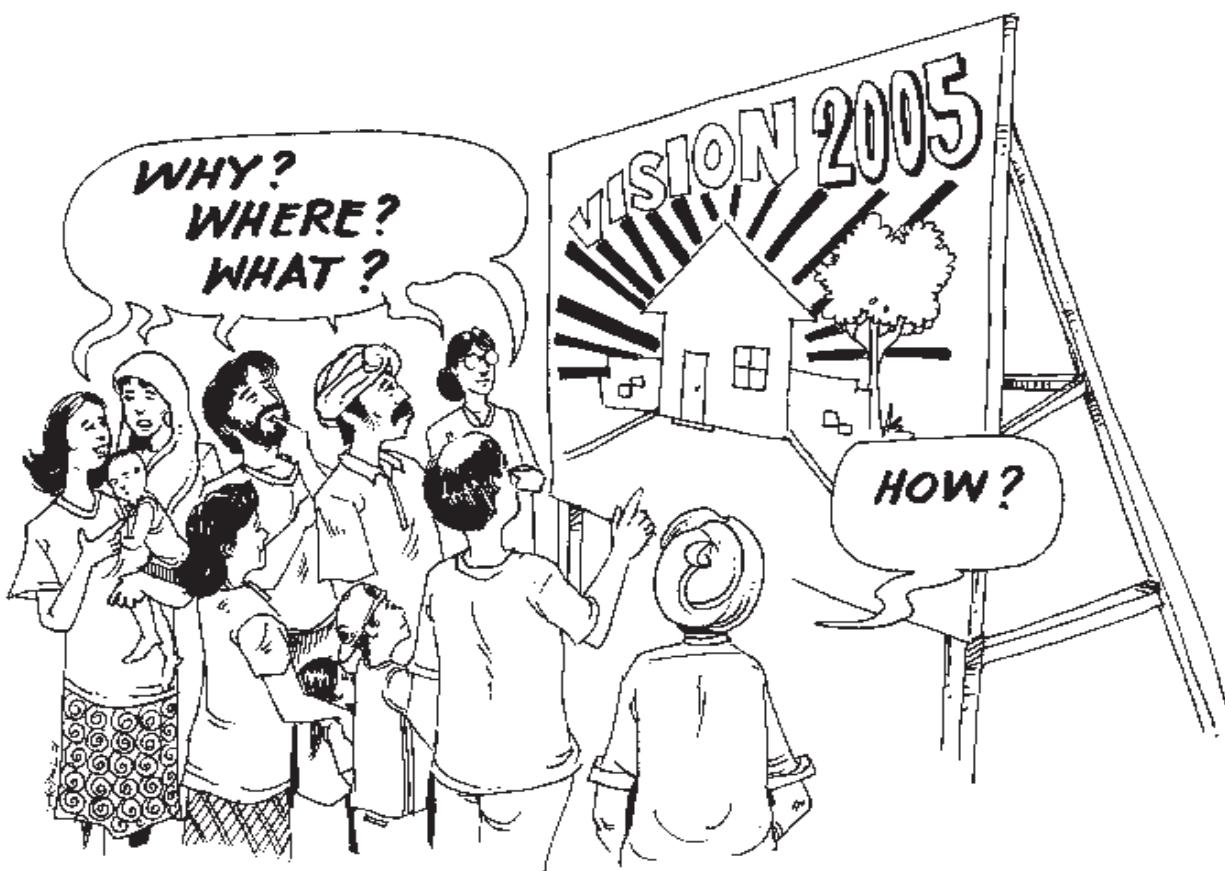
For more information on Appreciative Inquiry, please see website: http://iisd.ca/ai

Prepared by:
Graham Ashford and
Saleela Patkar

Building Institutional Capacity: The Use of Appreciative Inquiry in Rural Communities

Sustainable Development and Building Institutional Capacities

Looking toward sustainable development requires not only technical and managerial skills, but a vision. It requires collective thinking and effort. While much has been debated about sustainable development at macro levels, today's challenge is to go beyond rhetoric to actually work at the micro level. To keep a focus on the global issues while implementing the various activities at the field level, without losing sight of the values underlined, requires a delicate balancing act.

This paper outlines MYRADA's experience with the use of the appreciative inquiry approach to facilitate vision building and planning by local-level institutions with success. It looks at the need to strengthen institutional capacities so that rural communities can manage change with confidence.

In this context, participation has no meaning unless it results in building appropriate institutions. Building institutions takes time and commitment on the part the facilitator. A theoretical framework has been developed by MYRADA for the assessment of organisations using the characteristics shown in the diagram.

Experiences from the Field

During participatory assessments, it was found that many community-based organisations (CBOs) did not have a clear and written mission or vision. Some had Dream Books with a few needs listed as visions or goals but very few could articulate why their CBOs existed beyond solving problems related to credit or soil erosion.

Characteristics of a Healthy Organisation

- Clear vision/mission
- Strong organisational management
- Sound financial management
- Organisational accountability
- Appropriate linkages
- Reflective learning and evaluation

Some doubts arose among the MYRADA staff. How far could such people participate in development initiatives let alone manage self-initiated programmes? Project staff realised that leverage could come only when institutions set a purpose for their existence, have long-term goals or visions and are guided by values.
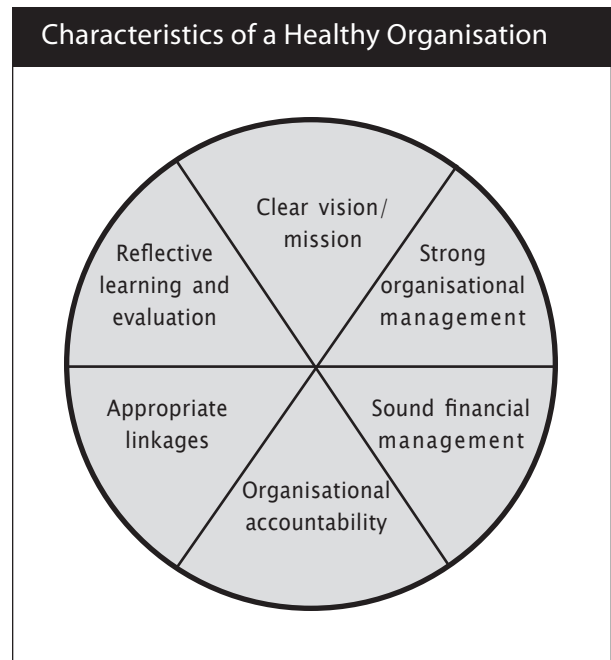
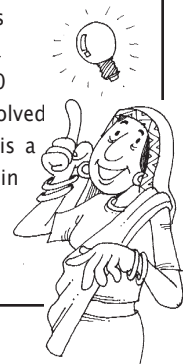## Applying Appreciative Inquiry

### At the organisational level

- It draws on the strengths of individual staff, teams and projects and brings forth the reciprocity of strengths between individuals and the organisation.
- It can be used as an approach for self-renewal from individual to organisational level.
- It can help envision qualities that can retain and build excellence in the organisation.
- It can also help staff right down to the grassroots level to see the larger perspective that one gets from the top level.

Self-monitoring. Staff appraisals are much maligned becausethey tend to see "what there is not" in the staff. As a part of appreciative inquiry, staff on certain projects are trying to design appraisal systems that focus on achievements and factors that contribute to successes and build an action-learning programme to do better the next time.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry was introduced to MYRADA through the Canada–based International Institute for Sustainable Development, with financial support from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. Though new, the strength of the approach was striking and CBOs who participated were able to develop clear visions within the span of a single day. Over 200 CBOs have been involved and vision–building is a compulsory module in MYRADA's capacity–building programme for CBOs.
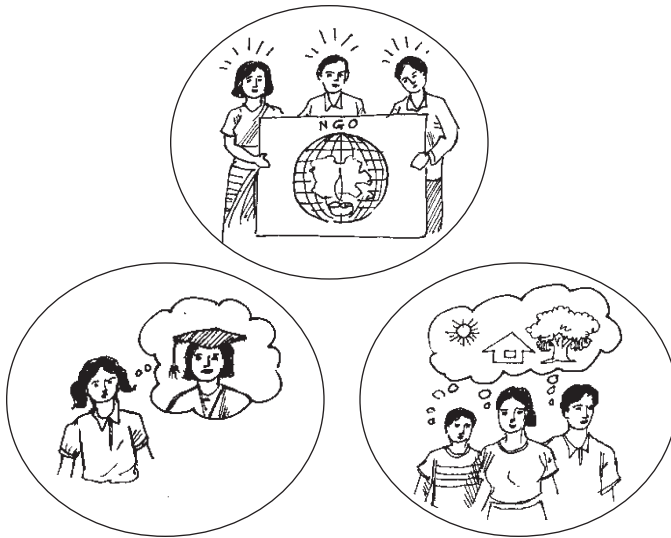
In the communities

Appreciative inquiry is used as a capacity- and partnership-building process with the community with CBOs, children and families. The field staff facilitates the discovery, dream and design stages. The results so far have compelled the communities and institutions to work towards their visions on their own. The process has also helped MYRADA to plan and budget for future projects in congruence with these visions.

The Sarvashakti Story

In December 1999, a group of MYRADA staff facilitated appreciative inquiry in the Sarvashakti Federation in Talavadi. Federation members consisted of confident and enthusiastic men and women from several SHGs. Appreciative inquiry was then a new concept and the field team was apprehensive about the whole exercise. The discovery phase went along well. However, in the dream phase the facilitators were groping for words to describe visions and vision–building and what to do next.

One of the participants then stood up and said, "We are a small seed now, and you want to know what we will look like when we grow up to be a big tree. Is that all? All right leave us alone we will sort it out."

An hour later they called us in. On a chart paper was a beautifully drawn picture of a big well with an electric pump. Water from the well flowed into several paddy fields and a banana and fruit orchards. A farmer stood beside the channels regulating the water flow.

"Oh, no! They want us to electrify those old Government sponsored wells", exclaimed the Project Officer. And then the Federation began its presentation.

"We are like the water from this well, we will always be useful and life–giving. These paddy fields are the SHGs that form the Federation. Their prosperity will be the Federation's priority. The fruit orchards and banana plants are like other institutions and individuals in our community. We shall help them, too. Finally, the farmer depicted the Federation representative", who shall always be responsible to see that the efforts and utility of the federation goes to the right place."

Saying this, they presented a list of activities and programmes they had planned for the next ten years.

Sarvashakti SHG Federation (Mantpuram Talavadi, December 1999)

Vision for 2005
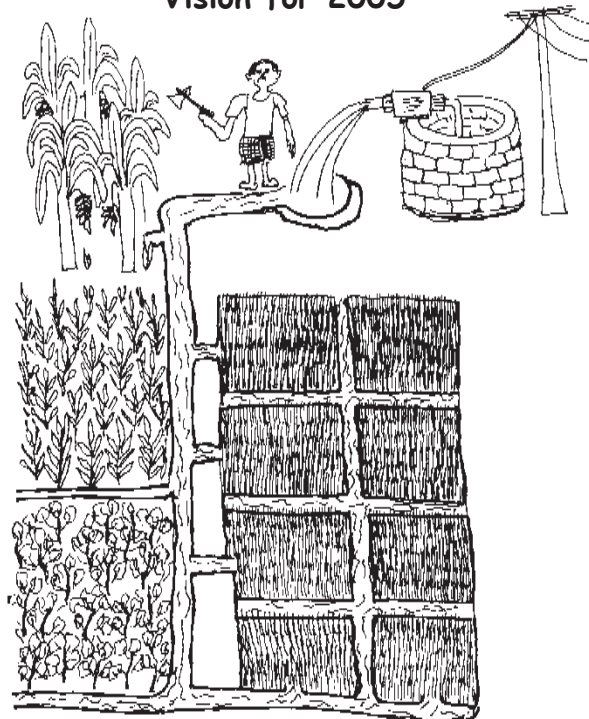
Issues in Facilitating Appreciative Inquiry

Facilitating skills

The quality of a good appreciative inquiry depends heavily on the skills and attitudes of the facilitator. This includes both process and contents skills as well as the ability to inspire. It is therefore important for the facilitator to have personally experienced the approach. Facilitation also includes the ability to be transparent, maintain confidentiality and not raise undue expectations from the participants. Experience shows that appreciative inquiry can foster self-directed initiatives and expectations can be levelled.

## Can a young group go through Appreciative Inquiry?

Facilitators need to work harder on younger groups who do not have the experience of working together. But as appreciative inquiry also helps individuals, the process has its own merits with younger groups, facilitators usually ask how individual strengths can support the strengthening of a group.

Appreciative Inquiry in heterogenous groups and stratified societies

Appreciative inquiry has to be applied carefully in heterogenous groups. In exploitative social structures, there will be conflict between visions of various constituent groups. The "ideal" community for the landlord would not be the same as for the tenant. Accepting appreciative inquiry as a useful approach for development does not mean that problems do not exist. It is the value of past successes that support us to even try to work in such difficult circumstances.

Limitations

- Appreciative Inquiry like any other approach is as good as the practitioner that uses it.
- Appreciative Inquiry is an inspirational process that cannot be done by the uninitiated and that cannot be replicated in very short times.
- Experiences suggest a strong case for creative, honest and inspired facilitation.
- In a couple of very heterogeneous groups (a village progressive farmers' association and a local resources management committee) the process did not succeed, but better facilitation might have turned things around.
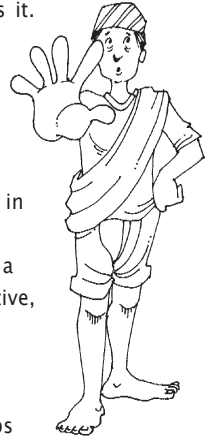
Appreciative Inquiry With Community-Based Organisations: A Sample Module
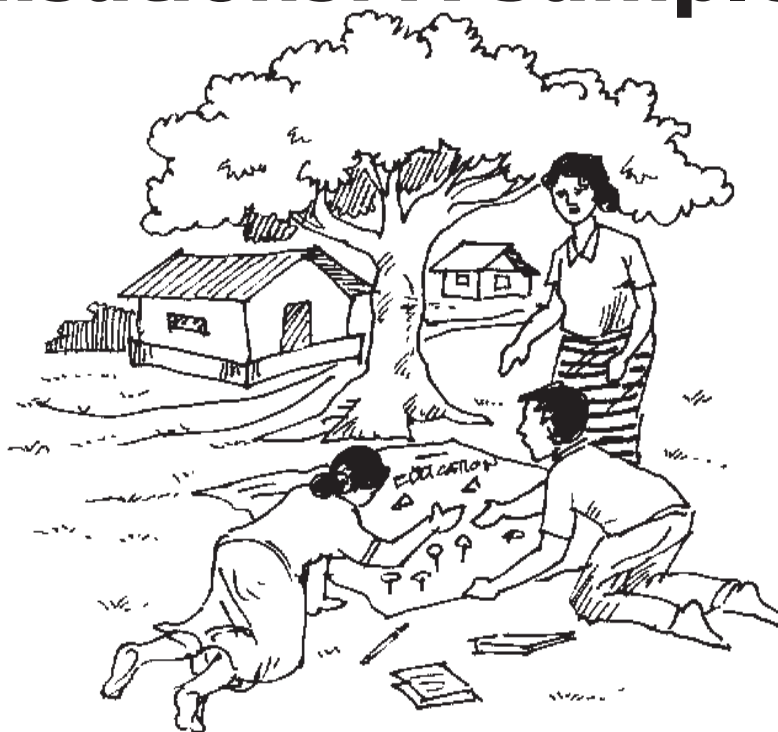
Appreciative inquiry has been successfully applied around the world and it is increasingly applied in development activities. Personal experience in conducting appreciative inquiry is an essential factor for anyone intending to be an appreciative inquiry facilitator. The following is a suggested module for appreciative inquiry with community-based organisations (CBOs).

Purpose of the Module
- Enhance self-confidence and self-awareness of the human potential in each member of the CBO.
- Release the constructive potential of the CBO in working towards the development and empowerment of its members.
- Enhance their role in the community.

Objectives of the Module
At the end of the module, the participants will be able to:
- clearly state their individual strengths as well as their CBO's strengths;
- have a written vision, mission or credo; and
- develop a detailed plan to achieve their vision (incorporating values, qualities and physical targets to be met, responsibilities and time frames).

Duration

2-3 days in one or several phases

Materials

- Chart paper, pencils, erasers, markers, wax crayons, still cameras.
- Lunch for all participants plus tea with biscuits will help make the programme a success.

Facilitator Team Preparation

- Prepare a tentative methodology with contingency measures. The exact methodology will depend on the nature of the group and its age.
- Discuss the code of conduct that enhances the effectiveness of the inquiry.
- Set yourself a "Best Possible Outcome" for the exercise.
- Always have someone who knows the local language and dialect.

The Field Work

1. **Welcome and introduction:** Brief the community about the visit and introduce the visit as a relationship-building one or a "special" training programme. Clarify that the purpose of the exercise, in case they are apprehensive of your motives. Insist that, for this module, the focus will be on positive experiences only. Do not raise expectations.

2. **Introduction of participants:** Use this step to build good relationship with the group. Use social games or stories. During introductions, ask participants to include details of family, strengths or why people joined the group. If done well, it may lead to straight to the Discovery Phase.

3. **Learning more about the CBO:** Ask open-ended questions about the CBO, such as, "So this is the Jyoti Mahila Sangha, can you tell us some more about your group". With such a background, move on to the "Discovery Phase" in a formal manner. Do not forget to take down notes. Keep track of how people react to questions.

4. **Discovering individual strengths:** This is perhaps the most important and also the most challenging part of the appreciative inquiry process. The key question is usually "Tell us the story of a time when you faced a challenge and achieved something that you feel happy about". The quality of this stage determines all the others to come. Challenges include:
   - getting reticent members to speak;
   - getting the "right" kinds of stories, the one that are not tragic, or happy without an element of challenge and success in them;

- getting out of the "problem" mode;
- managing emotions; and
- documenting the process in detail.

At the end of the exercise, you will surely have a huge list of strengths presented by the participants. Read this out to them and confirm.

5. **Discovering the CBO's strengths:** Examples of key questions are: "What are the greatest/various achievements of your CBO?" or "Why do you consider them your achievements?" "How would you rate them in terms of challenge and outcomes and why?" "What are the strengths in your group that have contributed to your successes?" "Did you know that you had these strengths in you?" "How has being in the CBO helped you personally?" Seek stories and not lists of facts.

6. **Once the strengths are gathered** take a break to allow time for the input to sink in.

7. **The Dream Phase** – Visioning: Based on the strengths discovered, ask them questions:
- to envision what their CBO would like to be five years from now;
- the emphasis is on what they will be; and
- not really what they will do.

Drawing exercises work well here and in most instances, the quality and depth of the pictures are revealing. In case the group is literate, it may be possible to develop visions as "provocative propositions". In fact, the CBO can remember these as a poem, credo or a song. Use a mix of verbal and non-verbal methods.
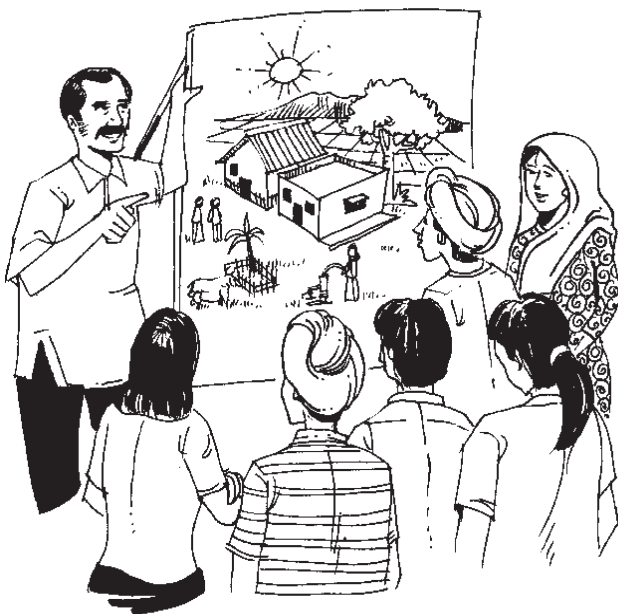
8. **The Design Phase – Co-constructing:** Guide the planning process where the CBO members can use their skills in project management to develop an action plan to achieve their vision. This requires them to state goals and objectives, prioritise them and then make a concrete action plan with indicators for achievement. Many groups can do this on their own. The exercise may take a day or more. This could be the last stage facilitated by the external agency. Thank the participants for their cooperation and invite them to reflect on the process. Obtain their commitment to take the process through.

9. **Do/Delivery – Making it happen:** This is a stage that has been very internally driven for CBOs. Facilitators are really not in the scene except to monitor progress for the project itself. It is interesting to note that groups with long-term visions have managed to achieve their goals in a matter of months. A new self-help group (SHG) in Gulbarga, India thought its most important achievement was to file a candidate to the Gram Panchayat elections. Their vision for the next five years was to field someone from the SHG for the Gram Panchayat president's post. They simply went ahead, lobbied for their candidate and won. Two months after another group indicated that they wanted to get all the poor women in their village into a SHG; the process was completed in two months.
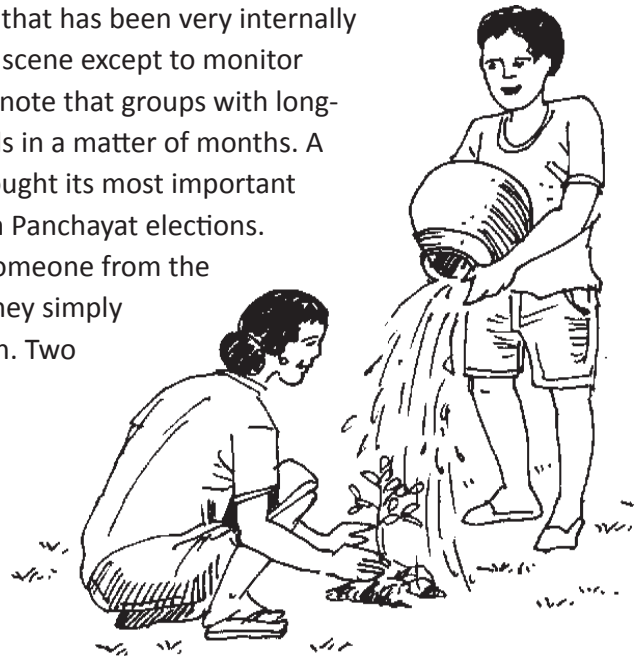
Notes from the Field

The protocol for PRA holds true for Appreciative Inquiry though there are other considerations such as:

- Appreciative Inquiry works best in a team.
- Prepare well, phrase your questions clearly and keep examples handy.
- A facilitator is like a midwife. What finally emerges in an Appreciative Inquiry process should be the community's vision for themselves and not yours for them.
- The Appreciative Inquiry interview should be "rapport talk".
- Appreciative Inquiry deals with the personal and very deep emotions; give people time to think, reflect and then respond. Do not push them to give you answers right away.
- Assign a person in the team to warn you if you are going into a "problem" or "criticising" mode.
- Relax and be creative.

Stakeholder Analysis:
A Process Approach

People

Donor

Government

STAKEHOLDERS

Private sector

NGOs
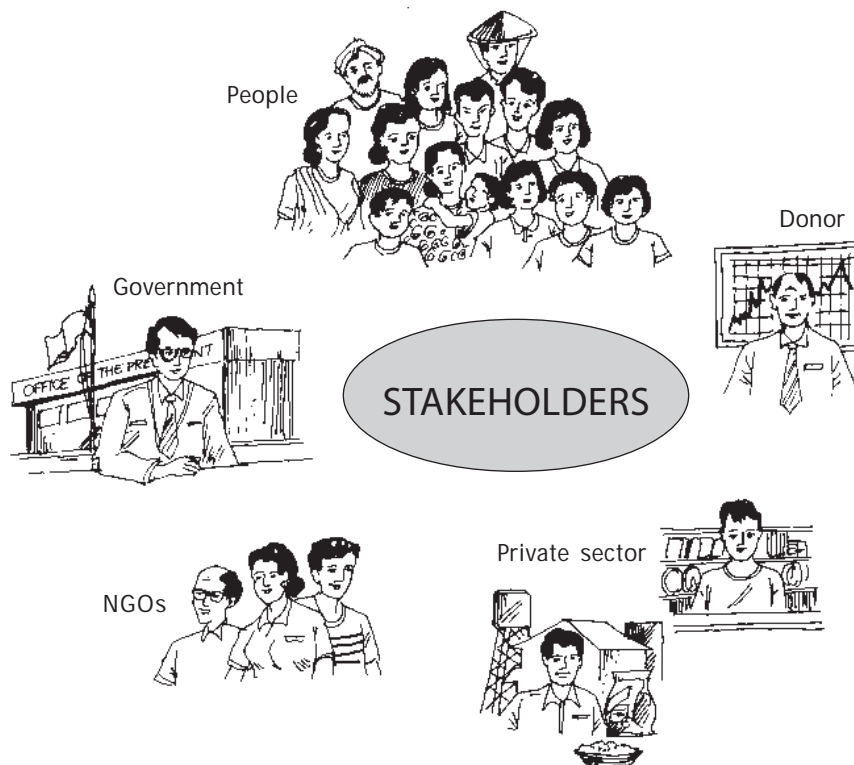
The Risks of Overlooking a Stakeholder

The establishment and implementation of community forestry in Nepal has considerably improved the status of forest resources. However, the closing of areas under community forestry to "outsiders" meant that pastoralists from the northern areas who used to take sheep and goats to the south for trade (carrying salt and other goods) as well as to bring their herds to greener pastures, lost their traditional rights of transit through some of these forests. As a consequence, pastoralists h a d to slaughter or sell their animals, thus losing their most important livelihood assets.
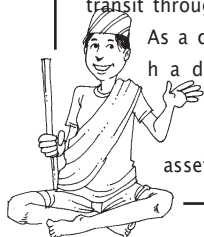
Failure to identify all stakeholders can have severe implications in development initiatives/projects:

- It can have devastating consequences on the livelihoods of some people;
- It can slow down project implementation. For example, the disregard of some government agencies and/or private sector (middle-level traders) may lead these stakeholders to "boycott" project initiatives;
- It may even stop implementation altogether. For example, watershed projects often fail to recognise the stakes and the ensuing competition between communities (upstream and downstream interests with regard to water, soil conservation, etc.), between individuals (commercial vs. subsistence agriculture) and/or between national interests vs. local livelihoods. This often leads to conflicts that may, at times, bring projects to a grinding halt.

Stakeholder analysis is crucial in project design and implementation as it seeks to identify all stakeholders, in particular the disadvantaged and less powerful groups – who are generally voiceless – and seeks to integrate their interests and concerns. Stakeholder analysis is critical for the identification of appropriate project initiatives as well as for targeting them. Stakeholder analysis is an integral part of participative diagnostic studies (*see related topic on Participatory Diagnostic Study in Project Formulation and Beyond: A Process Approach*) which focus on primary beneficiaries, particularly the poor and the marginalised.

Who is a Stakeholder?
In the context of a development project, a stakeholder can be defined as any group or individual who can affect, or is affected by, any initiative undertaken by that project.

What is a Stakeholder Analysis?
"Stakeholder analysis can be defined as an approach for understanding a system by identifying the key actors –or stakeholders – in the system and assessing their respective interest in that system" (Grimble et. al. 1995).
It refers to a range of tools for the identification and description of stakeholders on the basis of their attributes, interrelationships and interests related to a given initiative or resource.

Why do we Need a Stakeholder Analysis?
There are several reasons to carry out a stakeholder analysis:
- empirically discover existing patterns of interactions;
- improve and target interventions;
- as a management tool in policy-making; and
- as a tool to predict and/or manage conflicts.

What is the Purpose of a Stakeholder Analysis?
The basic objectives of stakeholder analysis are to:
- identify all those – people, groups or institutions – who might be affected by an intervention or can affect its outcome;
- identify local institutions and processes upon which to build; and
- provide a foundation and strategy for participation.

Categories of Stakeholders
- Primary stakeholders: These are project beneficiaries. IFAD regards the poor and marginalised groups as the primary beneficiaries and tries to focus its efforts on fostering their participation.
- Secondary stakeholders: They comprise government agencies, NGOs, research institutions, etc. They participate in the project because they either have a stake/interest in or can contribute to it.
- External-or other-stakeholders: These are people groups and/or institutions that are not formally involved in specific project activities but can have an impact on or be affected by a project.

Stakeholder Analysis: Steps and Tools
- Identify the main purpose of the analysis;
- Develop an understanding of the system and decision-makers in the system;
- Identify principal stakeholders;
- Investigate stakeholders' interests, characteristics and circumstances;
- Identify patterns and contexts of interaction between stakeholders; and
- Define options for management.

Although differentiation between stakeholders is a necessary step in stakeholder analysis, the distinction is often based on qualitative criteria that are difficult to generalise. The use of matrices is a common tool in stakeholder analysis, in which stakeholder groups appear on one axis and a list of criteria or attributes appears on the other. For each cell, a qualitative description or a quantitative ranking is given in the table.

The identification of stakeholders is best achieved through a series of brainstorming sessions at various levels, whereby a list of all likely stakeholders is drawn up. Then, depending on the type of stakeholders, interviews, workshops and participatory analysis are undertaken during the project formulation process, to ensure that their voices/concerns are heard and their interests are identified. The table below illustrates how the methods that best fit different types of stakeholders can be identified.

Questions to Ask for Identifying Important Categories of Stakeholders

- What issues are at stake for this category of stakeholders?
- How important is this stakeholder for the success of the project?
- How much influence does this stakeholder have over the project?
- How can this stakeholder contribute to the project?

Plan for a Stakeholder Consultation					
Stakeholder	How to be Consulted	Methods to be used			When to be Consulted
		Interview	Workshop	Participatory Diagnostic	
IFAD evaluation committee					Choice of evaluation
Cooperating institution					Prior to and after mission
Co–financier	Review TORs				Prior to and after mission
Country Programme Manager (CPM)	Review TORs, participate in workshop and wrap–up meeting		X		Prior to, during mission wrap–up and during writing and review
Office of Evaluation (OE)					
Borrower (MOF)		X			Etc.
MOA HQ		X	X		
MOA district			X		
Front line implementing staff			X		
Implementing NGOs		X	X		
Environmental lobbies/ NGOs			X		
District local government			X		
Private contractors		X			
Local leaders			X	X	
Ordinary households				X	
Poor farmers				X	
Women and youth				X	
Ethnic groups/caste				X	

An essential step in stakeholder analysis is to identify all primary stakeholders, especially those who are less "visible" and voiceless, e.g., the marginalised groups.

Process in Stakeholder Analysis

1. Brainstorming: list all possible stakeholders in project
2. Group stakeholders: public sector, private sector, NGOs, intended beneficiaries, other affected people
3. Assessment of stakeholders' interest and potential impact of the project on these interests (Table 1)
4. Assessment of stakeholders influence and importance (Table 2)
5. Outline of a stakeholder participation strategy (Table 3)

Identification of Stakeholders

Likely Primary Stakeholders

- Farmers: smallholders, commercial, landless households
- Male/female, young/old, wealthy/poor, ethnicity
- Crop growers, mixed farmers, pastoralists, fishermen, forest dwellers, casual labourers, handicraft producers, etc.
- Producers for local market, export crop growers
- Food secure; food insecure
- Local groups (formal/informal): cooperatives, women's groups, self-help groups, exchange labour groups, etc.

Likely Secondary Stakeholders

- Local government (village, ward, district)
- Implementing agencies (ministries, departments, NGOs, etc.)
- Private input suppliers, traders, transporters, processors, etc.

Tables 1 to 3 show analytical grids that can be used to identify: (a) which stakeholders are most important for the programme; (b) which stakeholders are most able to make their voice heard; and (c) which important stakeholders are likely to be bypassed unless special efforts are made to consult them.
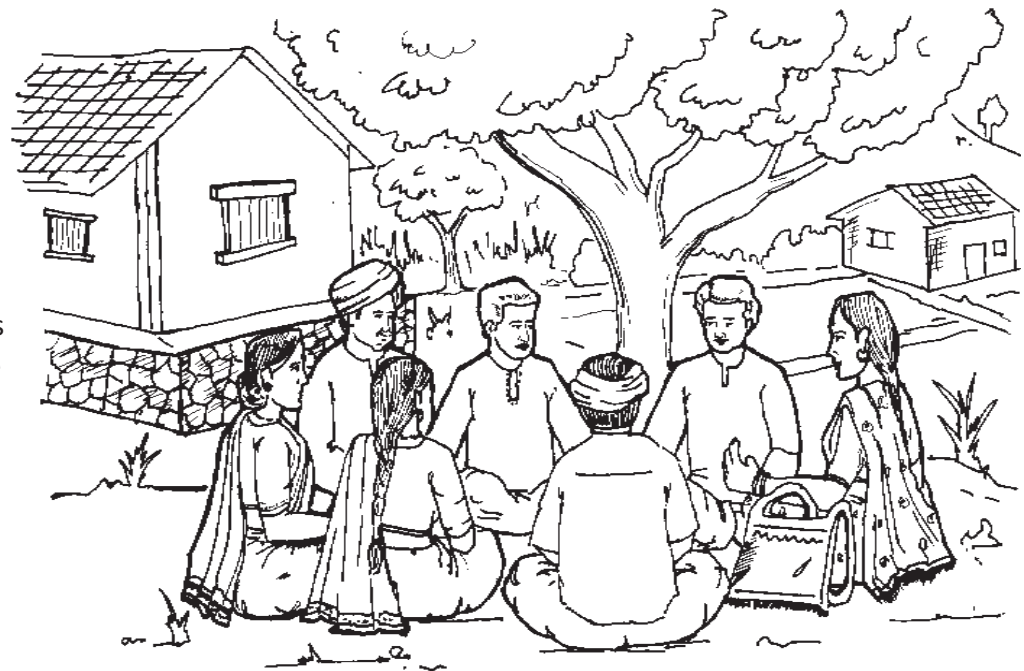
Table 1. Identification of Stakeholder Groups, Interest, Importance and Influence

Stakeholder Groups (Illustrative list)	Interests at Stake Relative to Project (list)	Effect of Project on those Interests positive/negative (insert +, 0, or -)	Importance of Stakeholder for Project Success (1 - highest, 5 - lowest)	Degree of Influence over Project (rank 1 to 5)
Farmers – Smallholders – Commercial – Landless – Women				
Other private sector – Input suppliers – Agro-processors – Farmers' association – Farm lobbies – Local NGOs – Universities – Consulting firms – Elected councils				
Borrower (MoF) – Central – Districts – Other				
Other ministries – Planning – Agriculture – Natural resources – Others (land, women, etc.)				
Donors/ Major NGOs				

Note: Influence refers to the power which a stakeholder has over a project. Importance relates to which achievement of project objectives depends on the active involvement of a given stakeholder group.

Table 2. Mapping Key Stakeholders' Relative Influence and Importance

Influence of Stakeholder on activity (+)	Importance of Activity to Stakeholder (0)					
	Not known	Little/No importance	Some importance	Moderate importance	High importance	Critical player
Unknown					+ 000	
Little/No influence						
Some influence						
Moderate influence						
Significant influence						
Very influential						

Note: Each stakeholder has a set of grids by type of activity or component.

Table 3. Formulation of Stakeholder Participation Strategy				
Stage in Project Process	Type of Participation			
	Information sharing (one way flow)	Consultation (two way flow)	Collaboration (increasing control over decision-making)	Empowerment (transfer control over decisions and resources)
Project formulation				
Appraisal				
Implementation, supervision and monitoring				
Evaluation				

Note: Insert specific participation strategies for key stakeholders, e.g., information campaign for general public, workshop with ministries and NGOs; PRA with communities and groups, etc.

After the stakeholder analysis is carried out, a series of consultation meetings at different levels (local, regional and/or national workshops) are organised in order to identify areas of convergence/divergence among key stakeholders. Given the unequal distribution of power among stakeholders, care must be taken that those with less power (women and other marginalised groups) are provided with the necessary "space" to voice their concerns and priorities. In some circumstances, external partners/agencies need to play, at least in the beginning, an advocacy role in favour of the powerless group.

In case of divergence of interest/concerns, negotiations/conflict management tools need to be employed.

Since changes are likely to take place during project implementation, stakeholder analysis is not a discrete activity but rather a process – though an intermittent one. Therefore, groups/individuals/agencies who are not stakeholders at project formulation may become such during implementation either owing to project activities or to totally external factors. Thus, the need for flexible projects and a "learning" approach based on re-diagnosis and planning. This will allow, among others, for inclusion of new stakeholders.

Prepared by:
Vanda Altarelli

Participatory Diagnostic Study in Project Formulation and Beyond: A Process Approach

The methodology described in this paper is the result of progressive learning and adaptation by the staff of TCII over 15 years. It draws upon the work of many colleagues, especially Ms. Alice Carloni.
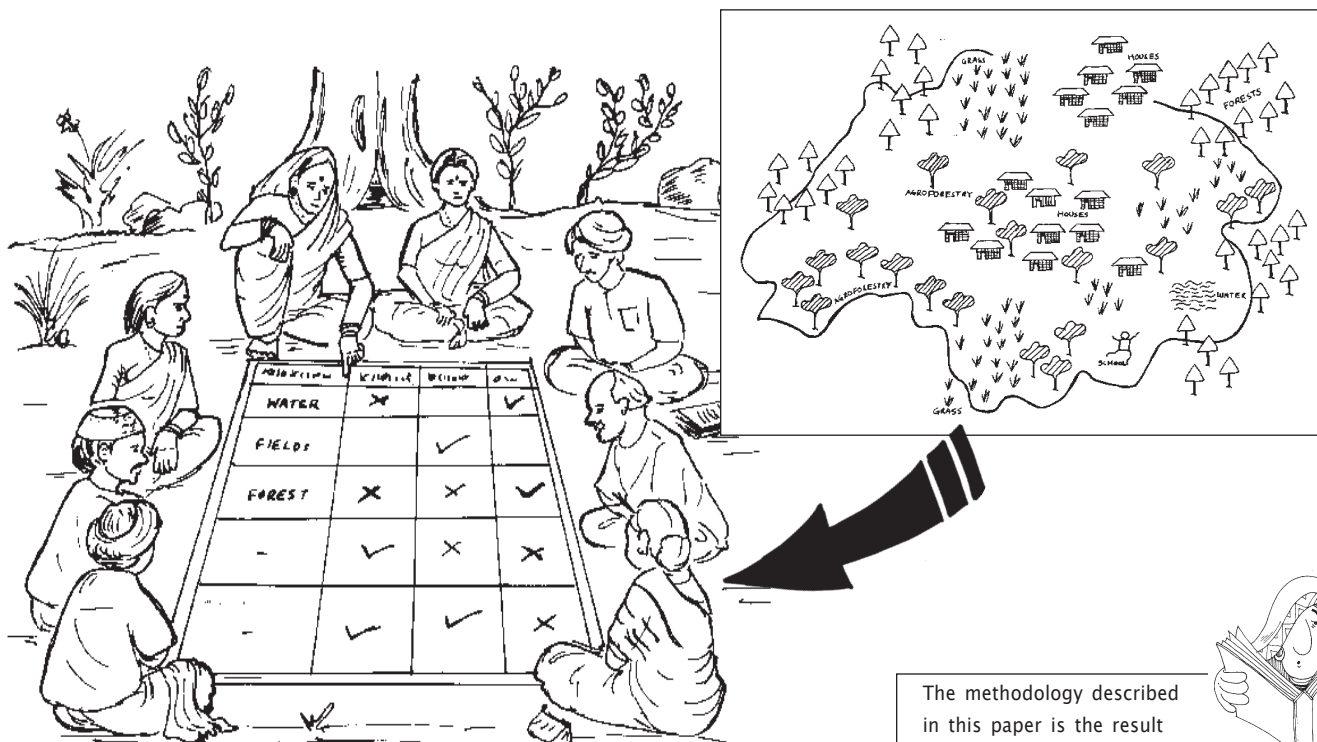
I t is now widely recognised that participation of all stakeholders is crucial during the whole project cycle, including project formulation. This holds particularly true for projects meant to be innovative, demand-driven, poverty-oriented and based on the principles of decentralisation and support for bottom-up village initiatives. For this type of projects, in fact, it is important that all stakeholders are involved early on and participate in project design and formulation so as to ensure the following:

- a common understanding of the issues that a project expects to address;
- capacity-building of would-be implementors and all other stakeholders in the process; and
- fostering beneficiaries-and other stakeholders-ownership of the project concepts and methods.

A participatory diagnostic study (PDS) is an analytical instrument and an iterative methodology which allows for:
- establishing a typology of livelihood systems;
- identifying causes and effects of their evolution
- focusing on the vulnerability contexts of different socio-economic groups;
- revealing the untapped potentials, strengths and priorities of different groups; and
- rapid and progressive learning.

Why a Participatory Diagnostic Study(PDS)

Several reviews of investment projects conclude that problems encountered at implementation stage can be traced to misjudgments that occurred during the course of project design formulation. These problems are attributed to poor diagnosis of the issues the project was meant to address or to poor institutional arrangements. Similarly, governments formulate most proposals for investment projects in response to national priorities, i.e. increasing production, reducing regional disparities or poverty alleviation, but the success of these projects rests upon beneficiaries' perceptions, motivations and priorities. It is therefore important to understand the latter – differentiated by socio-economic strata, caste and gender – and to examine whether the priorities of the intended beneficiaries converge with those of government. The convergence (or lack thereof) is best illustrated by the diagrams below which indicate farmers' perception of their problems versus the problems as perceived by technicians in South Kalimantan, Indonesia, during a diagnostic exercise.

Problems as Seen by Farmers and Technicians, Aniungan Desa-Halong, Indonesia
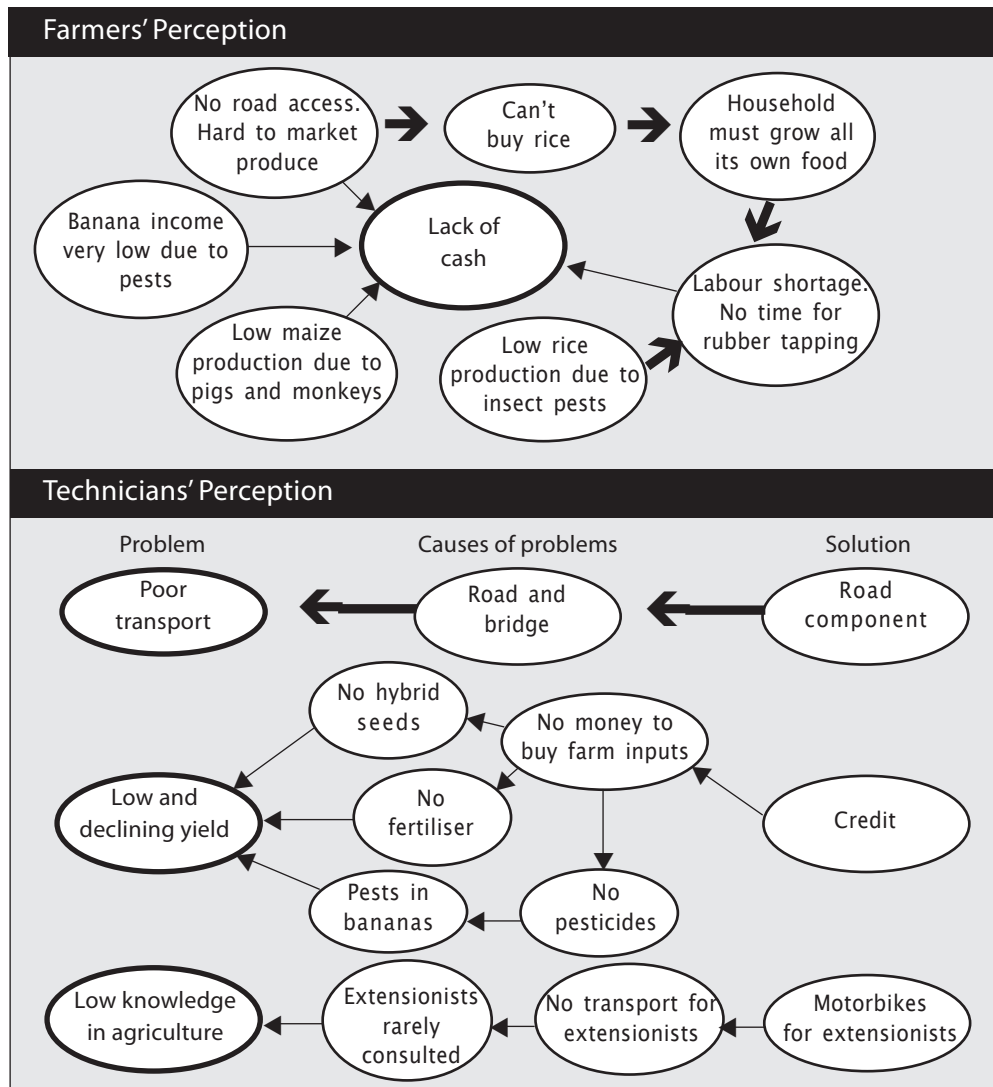
Source: *FAO/TCII. 1997. South Kalimantan Agricultural Area Development Project - Social Assessment Report.*

The farmers perceived their main problems as economic; poor road access caused low income by making it difficult to market produce. Income from rubber was low due to labour shortage. Lack of cash was a result of a series of problems, not the reason for non-adoption. According to the technicians who accompanied the diagnostic team, the main problem in the area was low production – attributed to lack of high yielding seeds, fertilisers and pesticides – which, in turn, was traced to lack of money and low knowledge of agriculture. Inevitably the solution became credit and agricultural extension.

As a result of participating in the diagnostic study and of talking to farmers, government technicians gradually saw the problems through the farmers' eyes. Farmers' views prevailed and consensus was reached on the project concept and its components.

What is PDS?

PDS is an analytical instrument, which uses comparisons between a limited number of cases to facilitate analysis of differences between agro-ecological zones, livelihood systems, and type of villages and of households, as a basis for project design. Each case is analysed as a **system**, to shed light on the relationships between the parts and the whole (see chart on the next page). Cases are grouped into types, which are then compared in order to generate hypotheses about cause and effects and the evolution of the livelihood systems over time. PDS can reveal untapped potentials, strengths and priorities of different types of communities and categories of people, but it cannot tell us how many villages are of a particular type or how many households belong to the same category. It relies on qualitative methods, e.g., participatory rapid appraisal (PRA); it is an **exploratory and highly iterative methodology** which allows for a process of rapid and progressive learning to take place.

The purpose of a PDS is to:
- acquire a thorough understanding of the people in the project area, of their livelihood systems and of the vulnerability context of each group – differentiated by socio-economic strata, gender, ethnic groups/caste – of the strengths, potentials and priorities of each sub-group as a basis for project design;
- facilitate a dialogue between the key stakeholders – intended beneficiaries (smallholders, landless households, rural women and youth, ethnic/caste households), government agencies, NGOs and financing agencies – as a basis for reaching a consensus about project objectives, scope and activities; and
- generate information required for project preparation, which can then be used for several other purposes.
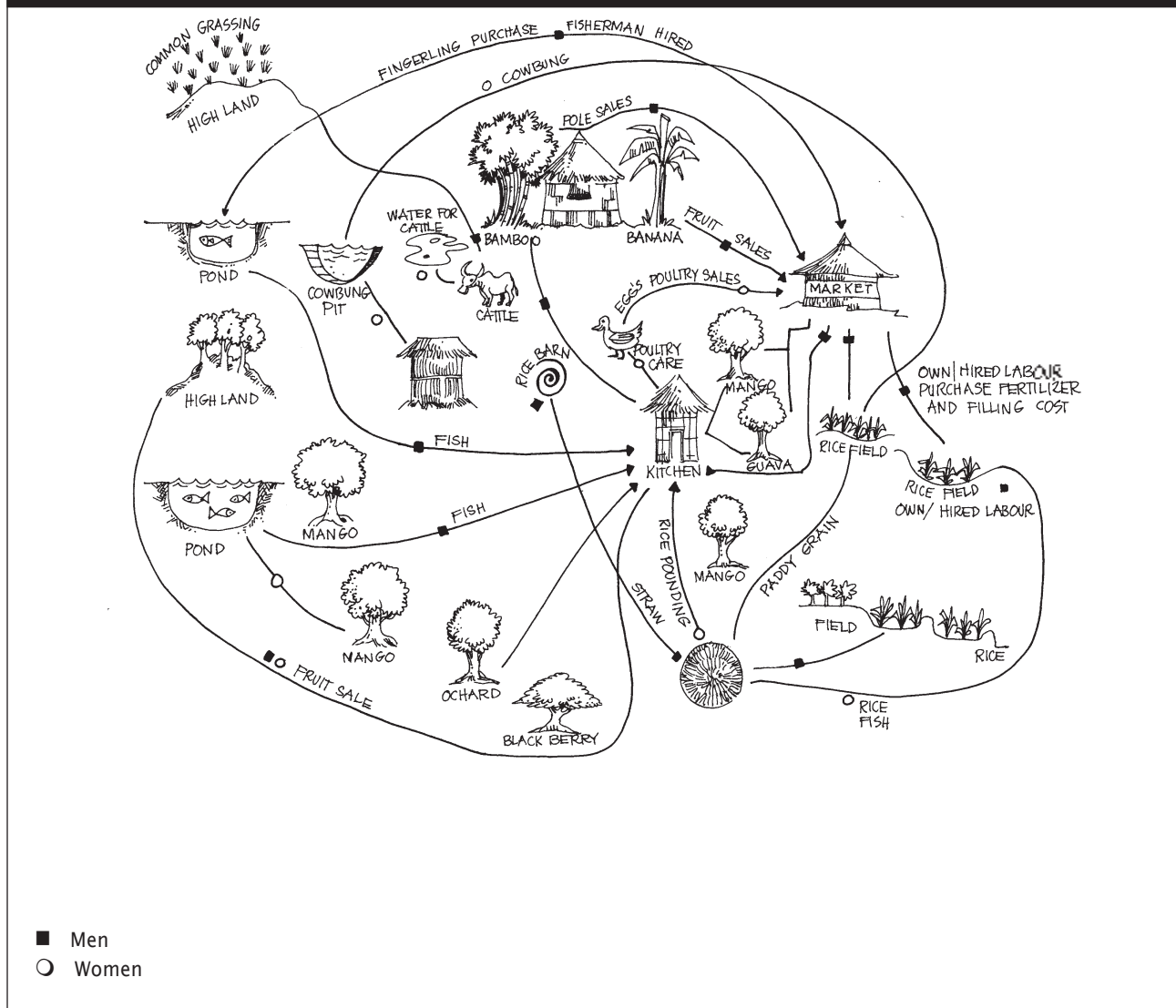
Who Carries Out a PDS?

Depending on the circumstances, two or more multi-disciplinary teams of national specialists are constituted, each with three to four members (a rural sociologist/anthropologist, technical specialists – depending on the type of project, agronomist/livestock expert/natural resources expert – and an economist). Experience indicates that it is better to mix government technicians with NGOs and/or university personnel. Each team in general covers about 8 to 10 villages, spending two to three full working days per village. Local authorities, line agencies staff, private sector input suppliers, produce traders and relevant NGOs are also interviewed. Prior to going into the field, team members are trained/refreshed in the utilisation of diagnostic participative tools and on drawing implications for project design both in a classroom situation and in the field by an experienced TCII staff member.

How Do We Carry Out a PDS?

Generally, the work for the diagnostic study is divided into several phases.

- **Review of secondary data**, especially "grey" literature

- **Key informant interviews**

- **Zoning of project area:** a number of homogenous areas, each with similar agro-ecological conditions and production systems (e.g. similar soils, topography, dominant crops, market opportunities) are delimited. These zones are then overlaid with zoning based on human settlement patterns and/or distance from main roads, tribal/caste areas, poor versus non-poor areas, etc. Sample villages are then selected within each zone to represent the range of variation in natural resource base, livelihood systems and socio-economic conditions.
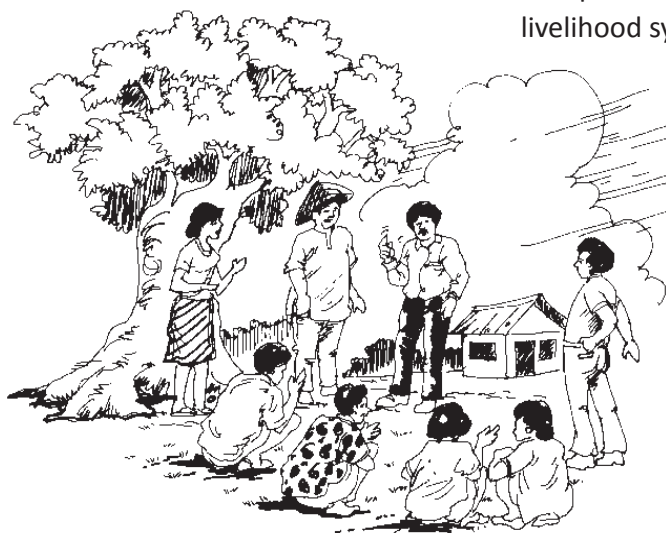
- **Field work:** participatory consultation and interviews in villages

- **Preliminary data analysis:** one full day of data analysis after completing each village; the teams come together in the same place and compare and contrast findings from the villages. After completion of diagnostic work in a cluster of 4 to 6 villages, they draw a preliminary typology of villages, livelihood systems and households characteristics of the cluster

- **Cross-cutting analysis and synthesis** of main findings by agro-ecological zone and socio-economic strata

Village Level Participatory Sequence (2-3 days per village)

```
Group Meeting
Introduce team and discuss
purpose of PDS
```

SUB-TEAM A Development Context	SUB-TEAM B Livelihood Analysis
■ Spatial dimension: Participatory mapping ■ Time dimension: Time line (with old men/women) ■ Time dimension: Trend lines ■ Transect walk	■ Production system diagram ■ Benefits analysis flow chart ■ Seasonal activity calendars ■ Gender role in production systems (resource picture cards and daily activity clocks)

With crop farmers, livestock keepers, fishermen, etc. ⟵ **Focus Group Meetings** ⟶ With women, youth, landless, etc.

```
Wealth ranking
Indigenous ranking criteria,
household listing by socio-
economic stratum
```

```
Community groups and
international linkages
Venn diagram and linkage
maps; group profiles
```

```
Household Interviews
```

HH 1 Upper	HH 2 Middle	HH 3 Lower	HH 4 Female head	HH 5 Landless	HH 6 Middle

```
Cross-cutting analysis of
household interviews
```

```
Restitution
```

```
Priority analysis
```

```
Community action plan
```

```
Pre-implementation activities
```

What PRA Tools Do We Use?

In each village, after explaining the purpose of the study to village leaders, a group meeting is generally held with up to 50 farmers (men and women). During this group meeting several PRA tools can be used. Some of the tools that may be considered are shown in the box here beside and an example of the output of an exercise is presented on the next page.

PRA Tools Used	
Development context tools	Livelihood tools
■ Village resource map ■ Village social map ■ Time line ■ Trend lines ■ Transects (or cross section) ■ Institutional profiles – Venn diagrams – Institutional linkage map	■ Livelihood systems diagrams ■ Benefits analysis flow chart ■ Seasonal activity calendar ■ Daily activity clocks ■ Resources picture cards

■ **Focus group discussion**

In each village, focus group discussions are then held with separate sub-groups of 10-20 people per group. Each focus group selects a spokesperson. At the end of the group discussion, he/she, or a literate person on her/his behalf, will write down each strength, skill and potential identified and the group's views on the initiatives to und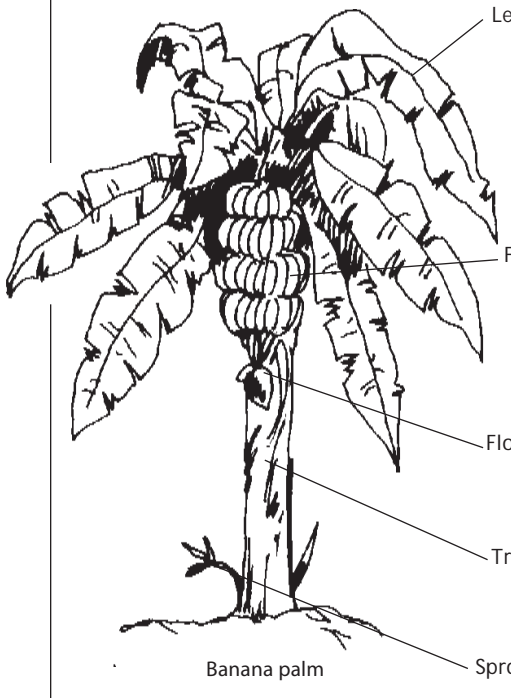ertake. Recently, through the use of appreciative inquiry, there has been a shift from identifying peoples' problems to highlighting strengths, potentials and opportunities of each group. Attempts are currently being devised in Nepal to link the results of appreciative inquiry with inventories of assets and (untapped) potentials of natural resources of each locality. Visioning this encompasses the people and their institutions as well as their natural resources.

■ **Household interviews**

During the focus group meeting, at least six households are selected for interviews. The selection is based on representation of different types of villagers, as exemplified by the wealth ranking exercise. For instance, a very poor landless labouring household, a tenant farmer, an average smallholder, a better-off smallholder, a farmer/innovator and one or two female headed households. Household interviews are usually conducted at peoples' house at a previously agreed upon time. These have been found crucial in providing insights on the strengths and potentials of different socio-economic groups and in trying to address issues related to the poor segments of society.

■ **Restitution and planning meeting**

After completing the household interviews and at a time agreed to with villagers, a public meeting is held in the village, chaired by the village headman (or someone designated by him). At this meeting, a spokesperson for each of the focus groups presents the initiatives selected by the group. The villagers then discuss the proposals, agree or disagree, and suggest changes. The proposed interventions are entered into a matrix and scored on several criteria selected by the people (e.g., extent of impact on livelihoods, number of people able to benefit, feasibility and ease of implementation with local resources, etc.). On the basis of the scores obtained, interventions are ranked in order of priority. The diagnostic teams make a copy of all the tools prepared by the villagers/groups as well as of the results of the micro-planning exercises and leave the originals in the village.

By-Products	How used	Who decides on use	Who does it	If sold how cash is used
Leaves	– Umbrella to protect from sun and rain – As dish or platter – As wrappers for foods	Anybody ♀	Anybody ♀	
Fruit	– Sold at local markets and stores – Given to friends/family if asked (social exchange) – Home consumption: eaten boiled, fried or raw – Processed and sold at local social events	♀ ♀♂ ♀ ♀	♀ Children ♀♂ ♀ ♀ Children	To buy household food needs and other basic necessities
Flower	– Home consumption: eaten as vegetable or salad – Given to friends/family if asked (social exchange)	♀ ♀♂	♀ ♀♂	
Trunk	– Shaved into pig feed	♀	♀♂	
Sprouts	– Transplanted onto household plots – Given to friends/family if asked (social exchange)	♀♂ ♀♂	♀♂ ♀♂	

Banana palm

Source: Buenavista and Flora. 1993. AMECOGEW Case Study, Blacksburg, VA.

From Diagnosis to Implications for Project Design

After completion of all fieldwork, the diagnostic teams undertake cross-cutting analyses (by clusters/ districts, agro-ecological zone, by household type and gender). Preliminary results are then presented and discussed at a series of local area (district or equivalent) workshops, which generally last for two days. These workshops are also occasions for "ground truthing" the results of the diagnostic work. Implications for project design are discussed and consensus is reached – or areas of divergences noted, if these exist. Participants to these local area/ district workshops include all local stakeholders: elected representatives, representatives of line agencies and of international NGOs operating in the area, representatives of private sector, representatives from the villages studied, etc. The diagnostic team then prepares a reportbased on the analysis of the information gathered and the results of the local workshops.

The Mentoring Team

The mentoring team and the financing agency then review the report. The syntheses of the PRA findings and of the implications for project design, discussed at the local area workshops, are then presented at a

Why an Advisory and Mentoring Team

the formulation process. It is also meant to champion the goals, strategies and approaches proposed by the project. It generally comprises committed, experienced and respected nationals (six to 10) who, on a voluntary basis, are prepared to act as resource persons. Their profiles may vary. The concept of the mentoring team has proven successful in the Asian context, especially in the case of innovative projects (viz. Bihar/ Madhya Pradesh Tribal Development Programme).

National Project Planning Workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to build consensus of all stakeholders on the project's approach, concept and components and to jointly prepare the project logical framework. Participants to the national workshop include representatives of the implementing agency(ies), of participating service providers and NGOs, of districts and intended beneficiaries and of the financing agency(ies). Members of the mentoring team and of the formulation team also participate in this workshop.

Project Formulation

On the basis of the results of the diagnostic work, workshops and field visits, a formulation team comprising national and international experts prepares a detailed design of project components and a costing of project activities, refines the implementation arrangements and estimates foreseeable project benefits. The results of the formulation work are then discussed in a wrap-up meeting with the concerned Ministry (Finance, Planning and other concerned line Ministries) to clarify issues and agree on design and implementation arrangements.

From Formulation to Implementation

Since, in general, there is a big gap from the time of formulation to when the project is really effective on the ground, pre-implementation activities are sometimes carried out to capitalise on the momentum created by the process described above. Experience indicates that pre-implementation activities facilitate project implementation a great deal.

Lessons Learned (from 15 years experience)

The participatory diagnostic process described here has proven relevant throughout the project cycle:

■ For implementation purposes
The initial diagnosis undertaken at formulation is deepened and/or enlarged to other communities during implementation and communities/groups develop their own action plans. Moreover, in demand-driven and flexible projects that adopt an adaptive learning approach, this methodology has been used for yearly re-diagnosis and planning.

■ **For monitoring purposes**
Concerned communities/groups use the tools they have created during the diagnosis (their own maps, matrices, activity plans, etc.) to monitor their own progress.

■ For the purpose of conflict management

Participatory diagnosis is utilised to work backward and forward from the points of conflict to prompt collaborative mechanisms. For example, existing resources uses, changes and competition are analysed in sequence; different options aimed at conflict management are subsequently jointly identified. Options ranked by different stakeholders are then discussed during reality-check workshops to reach consensus.

Limitations

Time and funds are required to undertake a proper participatory diagnosis. This has proven a limitation as funding agencies are often pressed for time, and funding provisions are either inadequate or non-existent, especially at the design stage.

PDS is quite demanding and requires a mix of attributes and competence (commitment, attitudes and analytical skills) that is not always locally available. The single most difficult skill found lacking is the translation of the results of the diagnostic studies into implications for project design. Until now, this phase has been supported by TCII staff.

Prepared by:
Vanda Altarelli

Monitoring and Evaluation of Participatory Research

Participatory research is a term used to describe different levels and types of local involvement in and control over the research process. It encompasses a variety of methods, tools and approaches, including participatory rural appraisal (PRA), participatory action research (PAR), farmer participatory research (FPR), etc.

Types of Local Involvement in Participatory Research

For evaluation purposes it is useful to differentiate between different levels and types of participation in order to understand how this influences research results. Depending upon the level of community control over the process, the stage of research where participation occurs, and the level of representation of different stakeholders and community groups, participatory research has been characterised in the following ways (Biggs and Farrington, 1991):

- **Contractual**
  Farmers lend land to researchers.

- **Consultative**
  Researchers consult farmers and diagnose their problems.

- **Collaborative**
  Researchers and farmers are partners in research.

- **Collegiate**
  Researchers encourage existing farmers' experimental activities.

Degrees of Participation

- Consultative participation (e.g., researchers consult with local people in order to make decisions about community needs and to design interventions)
- Active participation in experiments or monitoring (e.g., partnership between researchers and farmers in on-farm experiments)
- Decision-making and problem-solving (e.g., facilitating local people to develop new management practices and resource boundaries, priority setting for research or development interventions, etc.)

Different Types of Participation in Research (McAllister and Vernooy, 1999)

Type of local involvement in the research	Who* controls and makes decisions?	Who undertakes activities?	Who benefits from the results?	Are the process and results separated by social group?
Investigation and problem identification				
Setting research priorities and goals				
Choosing options, planning activities and solutions				
Taking action and implementing activities				
Monitoring of activities Evaluation				

"Who" can either be interpreted as distinguishing between researchers and local people, or between different subgroups in the community who may have different interests in the research.

Rationale for Encouraging Participatory Research

- Functional or empowering
  To encourage involvement of local people to improve effectiveness of research and enhance its usefulness. To empower marginalised peoples and communities by strengthening collective and individual capacity and decision-making power.

- Participation at different stages
  Problem identification, prioritisation, data gathering, monitoring, analysis, evaluation, etc.

- Level of control or ownership
  People have their own research process.

- Sectors
  Agriculture, fisheries and health may influence the appropriateness of different participatory research approaches.

Contextual Issues in Monitoring and Evaluation of Participatory Research

Participatory research needs to be understood within the context in which it occurs. Various parameters define what is appropriate and feasible in a participatory research project. These guide what we can realistically expect from the process and results of the research and therefore need to be considered in monitoring and evaluation of participatory research.

Contextual Issues that Influence Participatory Research

- Social and political issues surrounding the research question
- Initial capacity of local people to work together (social capital) and tradition of participation and cooperation
- Attitudes and skills of the researchers working with the local people
- **Participatory Research**
- Broader social and political context
- Local perceptions of the research

Why Monitor Participatory Research?

The main clients interested in monitoring and evaluating participatory research are donors, researchers and the community.

- To assess project results
  To find out if objectives have been met and have resulted in desired changes.
- To improve project management and planning
  To better adapt to social and power dynamics that may affect the research process.
- To promote learning
  To identify lessons of general applicability, to learn how different approaches to participation affect outcomes, impacts and reach, to learn what works and what doesn't, and to identify what contextual factors enable or constrain participation in research.
- To understand different stakeholders' perspectives
  To allow different people involved in a research project to better understand each others' views and values, and to design ways to resolve competing or conflicting views and interests.
- To ensure accountability
  To assess whether or not the project is effective, appropriate and efficient in order to be accountable to the funding agency.

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: A RESOURCE BOOK ON PARTICIPATION

What to Monitor and Evaluate in Participatory Research
(Monitoring Impact in Participatory Research)

Quality of the outputs

It is important not just to assess the "production" of outputs (whether activities occurred or certain products materialised), but to consider also the "quality" of the outputs. (What was the nature of the activities? Were all those interested in the project able to participate? Are the outputs useful and for whom? Did the outputs provide concrete benefits to the local participants and communities?)

Quality of participation and representation of different social groups or stakeholders in the process are affected by:

- **The level of social analysis**
  Were the different groups and individuals that may be affected identified, and how were their differing or conflicting interests managed?

- **"Genuine" participation or representation of different stakeholders/social groups**
  Indicators for representation can include quantitative information such as "how many people" or "who attends meetings", but should also include selective qualitative observations. (Who was vocal and who was silent? What were the social dynamics of the event? How were conflicts managed? How were decisions made? Whose interests were served?)

- **Disaggregation of methods and results**
  In situations where underlying relations of power affect individuals' and groups' willingness to express themselves in participatory exercises (particularly group exercises), it is best to hold separate exercises with different social groups or individuals. This will better allow marginal groups to openly express

themselves. It is especially important if the research deals with issues that may place the less powerful against the interests of the more powerful (e.g., land or resource rights).

■ **Perceptions of non-participants**
It is sometimes useful to seek opinions of local people who are likely to be interested in or influenced by the research but who are not actively involved. This can reveal why people choose not to participate – whether this is because of the methods being used, because the research does not seem relevant, because they are not traditionally involved in such activities, because they are too busy with livelihood activities, or for some other reason. This information will help researchers adapt the process to accommodate the needs of special groups in the community.

■ **Motivation of local people and other stakeholders participating in the process**
Was participation truly voluntary or was it coerced (e.g., the village headman may tell people they must attend the "participatory" exercises)? Are people mobilised by the issues that the research intends to address? If not, perhaps the focus of the research is not relevant to the local situation or not locally defined.

Sustained change
A key question for evaluation is what it is that we want to "sustain" and "how" do we know if we are moving towards this. Communities are positioned in a quickly changing global and natural environment with new and evolving external and internal pressures on their resources. Sustainability of the positive effects of the research is not only the "persistence" of the outputs (technology, resource management practice); it is more related to building local capacity to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Key questions to consider in assessing sustainability include:
■ Did the research strengthen local capacity to adapt to changing circumstances?
■ Did the research build local capacity to measure and assess change and to make informed decisions based on this information? Was this learning retained?

Reach
Reach cross-cuts all participatory activities, by asking who was influenced by the research, and who acts because of this influence. It can be considered for various levels of stakeholders (local people, researchers, government officials), and can also include different sub-groups in the community (women, men, landless, etc.), and so is closely related to equity. Reach will be affected by "who" participated and was represented in the research process. Questions to ask when thinking about "reach" of influence of participatory research include:
■ Who was influenced by the research? Who was empowered?
■ Did the benefits/learnings from the project reach beyond those who participated in the process?
■ What is the scope for "scaling up" the impact of the research to other areas?

Prepared by:
Karen McAllister

ENHANCING OWNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY: A RESOURCE BOOK ON PARTICIPATION

Training in Participatory Approaches

Enhancing capacities
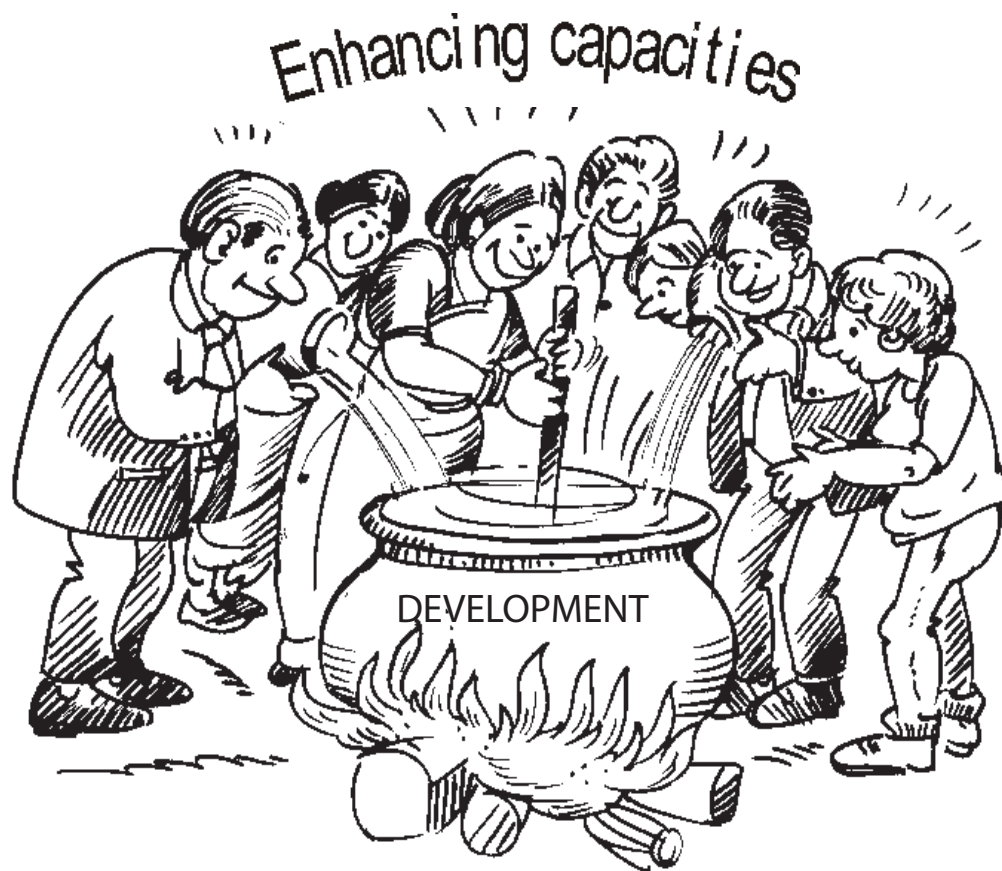
DEVELOPMENT

I n the context of the wide acceptance and spread of participatory approaches, the role of training is becoming increasingly significant. The success of development efforts lies in the application of participatory approaches. Meaningful application depends on the capacities of the actors involved – both primary and secondary. It is in this context that the role of training requires emphasis – more specifically on enhancing capacities for facilitating a process. It is more the participatory way it is done that matters than the technique itself.

What is Training?

Training means "encouraging learning". It is a shift from being a trainer to a facilitator or an agent of change. The capacities developed through training in the context of participation enables the participants to use the skills and knowledge gained "to change their behaviour and attitudes about themselves and others, modify the institutional contexts in which they work and initiate more participatory processes and procedures in their work." (Pretty, Guijt, Thompson and Scoones, 1995).
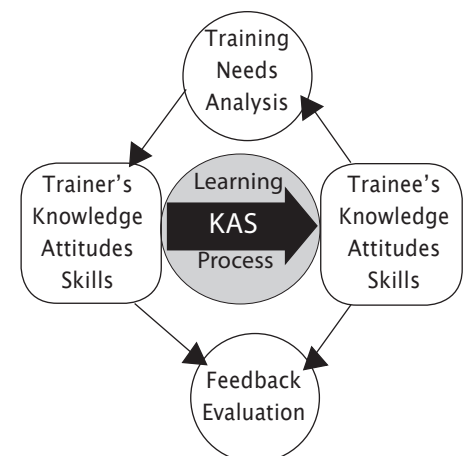
The stakeholders involved in the process of participation in project design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation require the capacities for making it happen – through orientation and training. Stakeholders are "those affected by the outcome – negatively or positively – or those who can affect, the outcome of a proposed intervention" (World Bank, 1996).

What Should the Training Content Be?

Training content in participatory approaches depends on:
- who the stakeholders are;
- the positions they occupy in the organisational hierarchy;
- the participatory approach the organisation wishes or needs to apply; and
- the output required from the trainee after the training – these might be project formulation, social analysis, stakeholder analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and designing research activities.

Key elements in the training content for secondary stakeholders

- Different participatory approaches with emphasis on the conceptual background and principles.
- The use of tools/techniques applicable to various stages of the project development cycle and focused on community-based participatory information generation, analysis, planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- The attitudes and behaviour that must accompany the process of applying the tools and techniques.
- How to facilitate a learning environment

It is important to have tailor-made approaches in training specific to participatory approaches catering to the needs of different stakeholder categories.
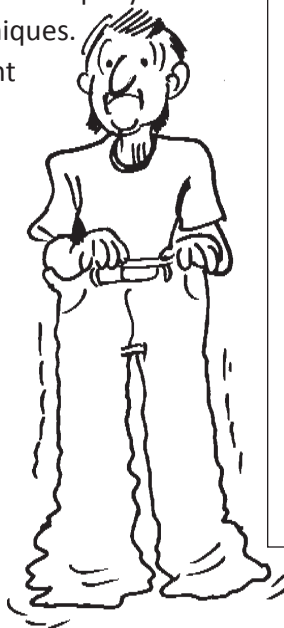
Qualities of a Good Trainer in Participatory Approaches

- Has a clear understanding of concepts and principles underlying the approach.
- Has skills in using associated tools/techniques.
- Demonstrates the attitudes and behaviours underpinning the use of tools.
- Emphasises and demonstrates, during practical exercises and in the field, that the tools are only a means and not an end, to allow the people to participate in information generation and analysis, through which learning and awareness takes place.
- Instills in the minds of the participants that "participation" can only be as effective as the facilitator who provides space for participation.
- Builds on what trainers already know.
- Includes adequate field exercises for experiential learning to increase self-confidence.
- Understands how adults learn best trainees in participatory methods.
- Is committed to facilitating genuine participation.
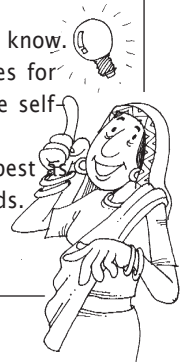
Training Design Suggestions for Different Stakeholder Categories		
Stakeholder category	Training content	Training duration
Policy makers	Brief orientation on the need for and use of participatory approaches, followed by a field visit.	½–1 day
Top-level management	Conceptual background on participatory approaches and their implications for institutional policy/procedural adaptations.	1–2 days
Middle-level management	Familiarisation of conceptual background and tools and focus on attitudes and behaviour. A field-based component emphasising on application of tools with the community is important.	5 days
Field-level functionaries *It is useful to have a combined training programme – with different stakeholders coming together as participants.*	Knowledge of concepts, principles, skills in the use of tools/techniques, sequencing of tools and focus on attitudes and behaviour that need to accompany application along with a field based component. Review aiming at consolidation after a period of practice.	2 weeks

Based on the experience of the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) in Sri Lanka

Training in the Context of Scaling-Up

Participatory approaches gathering momentum and going to scale/mainstreaming have raised many concerns. Inadequacies in the number of competent trainers and the demand to produce results within short time frames have resulted in poor quality training programmes by those who become trainers overnight. This is a serious concern affecting the quality of training, which ultimately affects the participatory process itself. This is especially true in instances when practice of a participatory approach becomes conditional to funding.

How Adults Learn

- Adults are voluntary learners. They perform best when they have decided to attend the training for a particular reason. They have a right to know why a topic or session is important to them.
- Adults usually come with an intention to learn. If this motivation is not supported, they will switch off or stop coming.
- Adults have experience and can help each other to learn. Encourage the sharing of that experience and your sessions will become more effective.
- Adults learn best in an atmosphere of active involvement and participation.
- Adults learn best when it is clear that the context of the training is close to their own tasks or jobs.
- Adults are best taught with a real-world approach.

Sources: Smith, Robert. 1983; Rogers, Alan. 1986; Rogers, Jenny. 1989.

Negative impacts of the scaling-up of training
- Neglect of one's own behaviour and attitudes.
- Top-down training.
- Training in classrooms by people without field orientation or experience.
- Opportunists claiming to be trainers and using participatory approaches without sensitivity.
- Systems which emphasise targets for disbursements and for physical achievements (often donor-driven) without emphasis on quality.
- Field workers rushing in and out of communities in order to achieve pre-set targets for villages covered and amounts disbursed.
- Routine and ritual use of participatory methods.
- Training used for one-time extractive appraisal without analysis, planning or action.
- Interaction only or mainly with those who are better off and visible.
- Generating community initiatives and empowerment before the institution is ready or willing to respond.

> " During the training of village heads, the trainers tended to rely on overhead transparencies producing 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 incomplete with their own perception of their role as trainers."
>
> *Nilanjana Mukherjee*
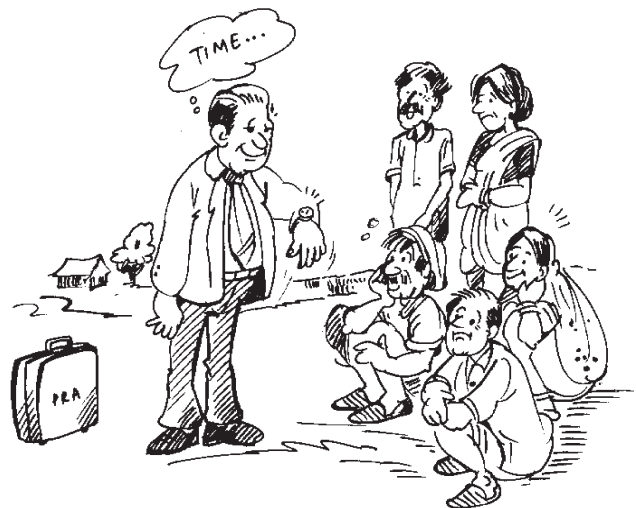
Addressing Quality-Related Concerns

Some training-related suggestions
- Adopt a learner-focused approach to training in participatory methods that encourages creativity and reflection by the trainees and leads to changes in attitudes.
- Provide opportunities for interaction among trainers. Networks, newsletters can play a significant role in sharing experiences/learning and thus contribute to the improvement of the training quality.
- Invite master-trainers as observers during the initial training conducted by new trainers – to give feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Set-up feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement in training quality.
- Promote self-reflection by trainers using a self-evaluation tool.
- Train a critical mass of trainers or core groups of trainers within large organisations and independent practitioners.
- Build field-based and on-the-job-training into training designs.
- Prepare a code of ethics as has been done by many PRA Networks.
- Develop a code of conduct for trainers.

Some institution-related suggestions

- Allot more time for participation and institution-building in the early stages of programmes and provide projects with adequate budgetary provision for training.
- Promote internal working groups in organisations for following up on quality and research, e.g., participation groups in World Bank and FAO (Chambers 1997).
- Keep a provision for unspent budgets to be rolled over from year to year.
- Change project procedures to allow for participation and diversity.
- Follow a process approach permitting continuous revisions in on-going projects.
- Include PRA types of activities involving the community and not just follow LFA or ZOPP.
- Ensure continuity for a longer period by facilitating/backstopping.
- Promote stability in the form of supportive senior management.
- Promote participatory management cultures in organisations.
- Provide opportunities for sharing experiences/reflection and evolving corrective measures – specific to locations and contexts.
- Promote training as a part of the overall programme and organisational strategy.

Prepared by:
Mallika Samaranayake

How to Make Log-Frame Programming More Sensitive to Participatory Concerns

Sustainable development means empowering people, the primary stakeholders, to enable them to influence initiatives and decisions which affect their lives. Participatory planning therefore forms a key element/foundation in the project development cycle. The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) placed in the above context provides a framework for participatory planning and management. In recognition of this fact, most of the funding organisations, bilateral donors and international development organisations use LFA to plan projects.

The logical framework approach (LFA) originated in the USA in the 1970s. It was further developed and adapted by GTZ as ZOPP in 1984. It was adopted in all GTZ-funded projects. Similarly, LFA was widely used by donor agencies in Scandinavian countries, Japan, Canada, Australia and among the UN agencies, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), to mention a few. Funding support for project proposals became subject to the use of the LFA to project formulation.

What is LFA?

It is a planning and management tool, which lends itself to be described as a "participatory planning tool". It encourages participants/stakeholders to come together to achieve consensus on key project objectives and planning decisions. It provides a systematic framework for the planning process and for developing project concepts.

The LFA Process: Analysis and Planning

The planning and designing process is usually undertaken at a workshop of about 5-10 days duration. Participants usually consist of project staff (local and expatriate), heads of relevant departments, specialists, consultants, field officers and NGO representatives.

Steps of the LFA process

- Situation analysis
- Project/programme planning matrix (PPM), also known as logframe
- Action/operational plan

Linking Participation Analysis with other Analyses and Planning Steps

Problem Analysis
Whose problems are to be analysed?

Indicators
In which social and institutional areas are goals to be achieved?

Analysis of objectives and alternatives
Whose interests are being served? Who is participating?

Participation analysis/ Stakeholder analysis

Assumptions
How is the project connected to its environment?

Summary of objectives and activities
Who is doing what?
Who is responsible for what?

Situation analysis

Situation analysis consists of participation analysis, problem analysis, objectives analysis and alternatives analysis.

- **Participation analysis/stakeholder analysis**
  The first step in situation analysis is to identify the key stakeholders of a project – any group/ individual/organisation – who can affect or is affected by any intervention under the project, either positively or negatively.
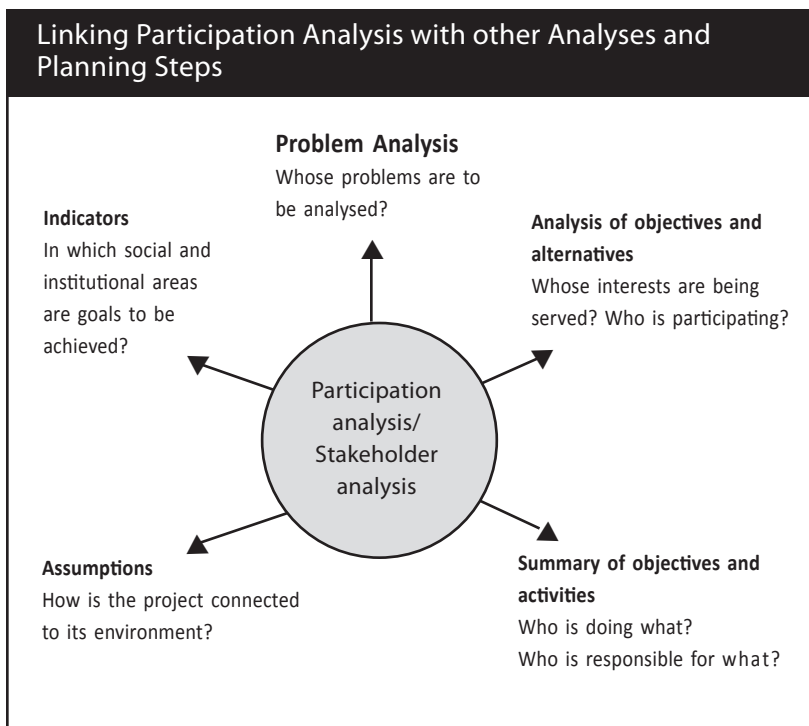
Format for Participation Analysis

Groups/institutions/individuals	Interests	Problems	Potential		Implications for planning
			Strengths	Weaknesses	

The data is collected for each category identified. The analysis helps to identify whose problems and priorities should be taken up for deeper analysis. It also indicates what might be the implication to the other steps in the analysis.

■ **Problem analysis**

Problem analysis is the second step in the process of situation analysis. It is done in two stages:

1. Brainstorming on the problems: some issues have already been identified during the participation analysis.
2. Identification of the "core problem"/starter problem, followed by analysis of the causes and effects of the core problem.

Problem Analysis

Effects

Core problem

Causes
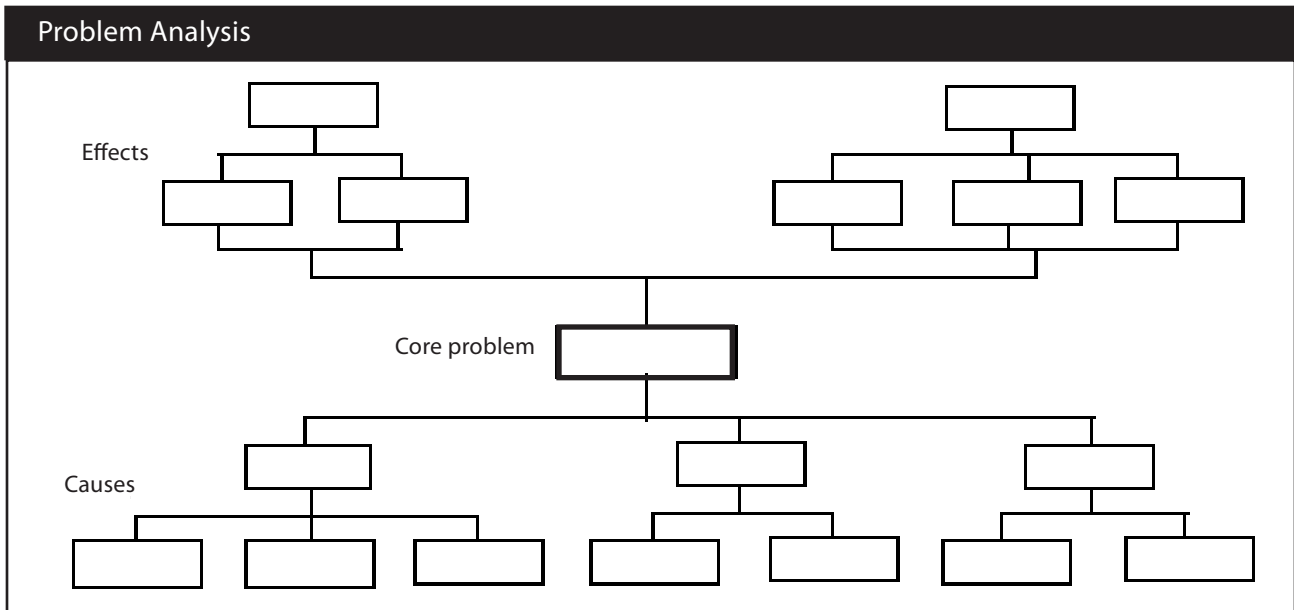
■ **Objectives analysis**

Objectives analysis is the third step in situation analysis. Using the foregoing problem analysis, objectives are derived by converting each of the problems into a feasible, achievable and desired state.

Objectives Analysis

Ends

Core objective

Means
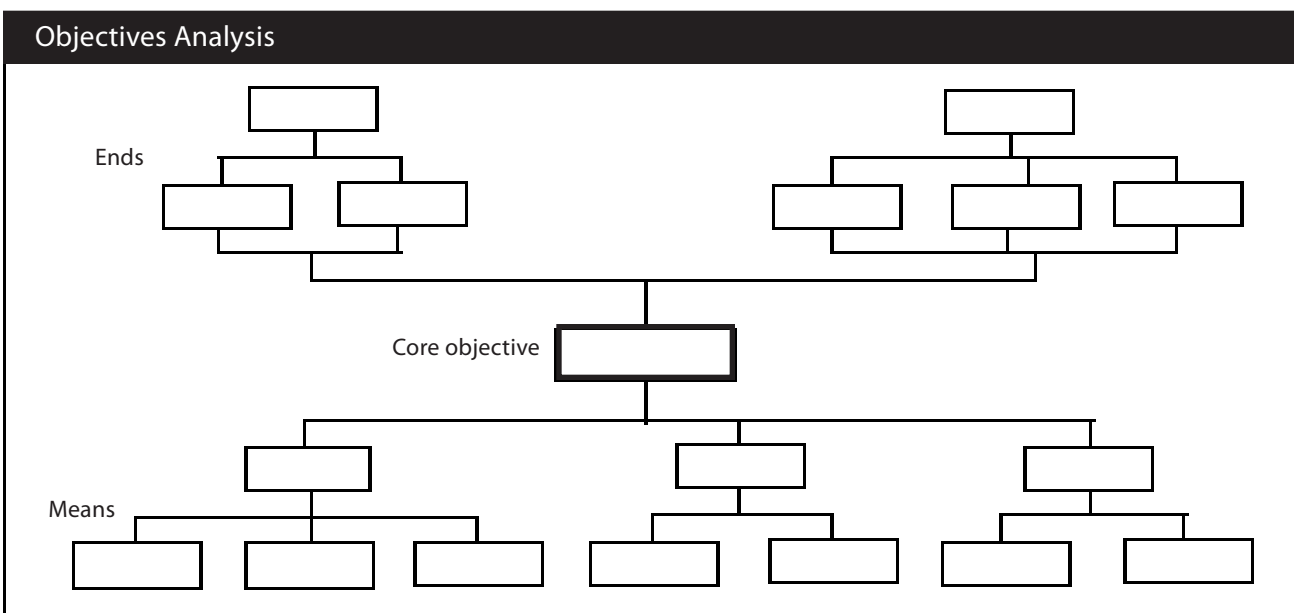
■ **Alternatives analysis**

The fourth step in the process of situation analysis is alternatives analysis. Using the objectives analysis, specific "ladders" of possible strategies are identified. It could also be combinations of the "sets" of objectives. These are assessed on the basis of their technical, social and financial feasibility.

Preparation of the Project Planning Matrix (PPM) or Log-frame

The following format is used for the preparation of the PPM matrix.

Project Planning			
Summary of objectives	Objectively varifiable indicators	Means of verification	Assumption/external factors
Goal (vision)	Impact indicators	Where/how to find the information	For long–term sustainability
Purpose (mission)	Outcome indicators		For contribution to the goal
Outputs (results)	Output indicators resulting from completion of activities		For achievement of project purpose
Activities	Resource inputs/costs Local and external Personnel Funding Materials and equipment		For achievement of project outputs/ results
			Pre–conditions for achievement of activities

The preparation of the log-frame continues at the workshop, using the results of the situation analysis. The PPM is based on a vertical and horizontal logic.

■ Vertical logic

The different levels of objectives are achieved only if the relevant assumptions prevail positively. In the matrix, the assumptions refer to the level above in the levels of objectives as follows.
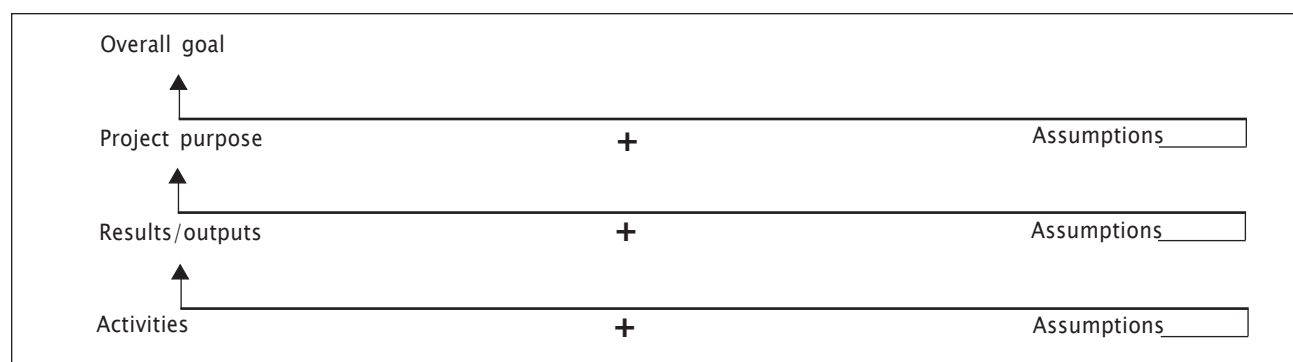
■   **Horizontal logic**

The horizontal logic runs across the first three columns at each level of the PPM, as follows.

Objectives ──────────▶ Indicators ──────────▶ Means of verification

The PPM/Log-Frame gives an overall picture of the project concept – useful for understanding the rationale and achieving a common understanding among the stakeholders and between governments and donors. It provides a tool to describe the project even to those who did not participate at the planning workshop.

Project Rationale in the PPM/Log-Frame

■ Why the project should be carried out?
■ What the project is to achieve?
■ How the project plans to achieve the results?
■ What external factors are important for achieving the objectives?
■ How to measure the extent to which objectives have been achieved?
■ Where the data to evaluate the project is located?
■ How much the project will cost?

Preparation of the Plan of Action

All activities related to the outputs/results in the PPM/Log-Frame are arranged in a sequential order, so that the different sets of activities are clearly linked to each other. Sub-activities are identified, thus, enabling the assignment of responsibilities. The action plan itself becomes a monitoring/management tool during project implementation. It details the operational plans. **Stakeholder participation in preparation of the plan is essential, as the different activities and the responsibilities can be classified and agreed upon, and collaborative efforts can be enlisted. Realistic time-frames can be set. The plan is formulated in the form of a Gantt chart below.**

Format for Plan of Action					
Outputs/activities	Time-frame	Indication of completion (interim indicators)	Responsibility	Collaboration	Cost
	By year/month/week				

It is noted that key monitoring and evaluation activities can be built into the Action Plan, e.g., periodic progress reviews, mid-term reviews and end-of-project evaluation.

The steps of the analysis are further strengthened by the use of visualisation techniques and moderation. Ensure that the moderator is strong in facilitation skills as this goes a long way in getting active and open participation from the participants. Building consensus on key issues increases the commitment of each stakeholder.

The success in using the method however depends **very much on the enabling framework conditions, attitudes and behaviour.** Many limitations arise by trying to apply the method rigidly. Experience shows that the flexibility and space for adjustment can only be effective if the users develop a **learning perspective and a process-oriented approach.**

Critique of LFA

The use of this tool came under heavy criticism from project managers during the early 1990s. This was the time when participatory approaches like PRA were gaining ground, with their emphasis on the need to involve the primary stakeholders in situation analysis, project planning and implementation. The article "Whose reality counts?" (Chambers) highlights such issues.

As LFA was used for development and technical cooperation by funding organisations in bilateral aid agreements, adjustments were made to make the framework more relevant in addressing ground realities. It was a positive turn of events, as LFA continues to provide the basis for project formulation and planning.

GTZ provides an example of how such adjustments were made to their official planning and management instrument, ZOPP, which is based on LFA. Bernd Schubert (1996) refers to the changes that occurred after the late 1980s: "Then came 1990 and its [ZOPP] slide into disrepute for inflexible and ritualistic use. A general overhaul in 1995 in response to massive criticism, the new flexible and reformed ZOPP became the core of a Project Cycle Mangement (PCM) approach."

Concerns over LFA/ZOPP

- People as targets – people are treated as objects rather than subjects.

The Logical Framework: A Tool for Better Project Cycle Management (PCM)
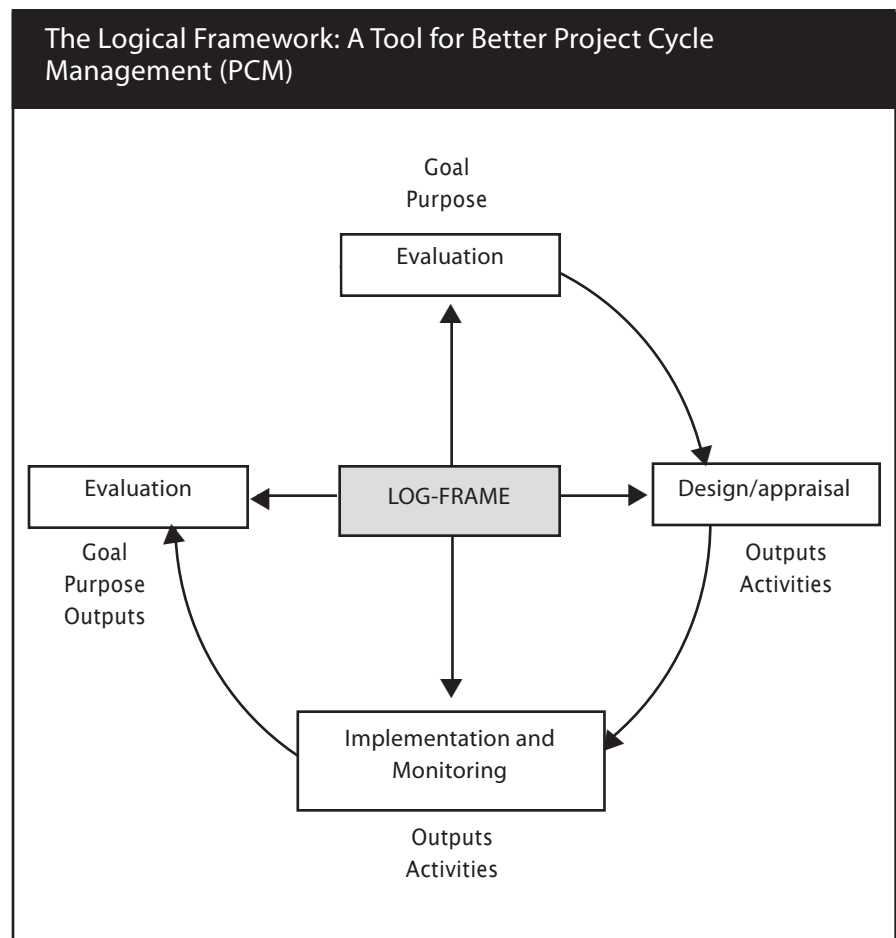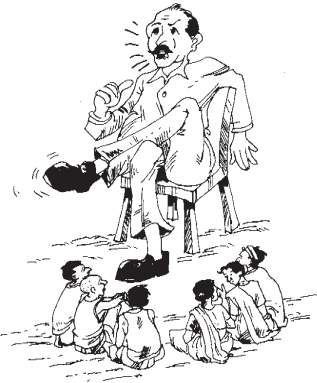
- Who is present? Who participates? And on what terms? How frequently and with what degree of empowerment (to express their reality) have poor women been involved in LFA/ZOPP workshops?
- The top-down descending sequence of LFA/ZOPP workshops.
- Reductionism to one core problem. Life simply is not like that. Different people have different problems and different mixtures of problems.
- Language – fluency in language used, usually English – enables some participants to dominate and marginalise others.
- LFA/ZOPP is a sequence of procedures which has tended to impose the reality of "uppers" and "lowers" and reinforce the tendency (Chambers, 1996. GTZ Workshop Report: ZOPP marries PRA).
- The imperative of consensus – can reflect the interests and wishes of the powerful and the articulate, rather than those of the weak and inarticulate (in LFA/ZOPP workshops).

Use of Quantitative Indicators

Being oriented to results, the emphasis, when formulating indicators, is often on quantitative rather than qualitative aspects.

Predominant use of quantitative indicators forces the implementation of the project into a supply-driven orientation. The project staff tends to "teach" the community that they definitely need training on some pre-determined subject areas while their priorities may differ.

Who Participates and Whose Needs?

LFA/ZOPP workshops are often conducted in a "seminar" atmosphere and community representatives are often out of place. The project personnel and high-ranking officers who are used to such surroundings are at an advantage and dominate the discussions. Often, NGOs represent local communities, thus, depriving adequate representation to local people.

Understanding the Logic

Linkages to the several steps are often not easily understood. When carefully explained, participants appreciate the overview – how activities land to outputs/results along

Whose needs? Who decides?

In a crop–livestock integration project, a LFA/ZOPP workshop was organised. Going through the list of participants, the moderator found no community representatives. The organisers were advised to bring in community members. The initial response was that the field officers/NGOs could represent their views. The "language barrier" was not mentioned. Translation was offered. Finally two farmers were identified and invited to the workshop. When goat farming was proposed, the farmers raised their hands in protest. "We want cattle – very useful for our cultivation work and for organic fertilizer." The technicians responded: "It cannot be done, as the experts have suggested that the area is suitable for goats and funding is specifically for that." Farmers went on describing the advantages of cattle rearing as opposed to goat farming and counter–argued expert advice. "At this workshop, nothing can be changed. We have to go back to our principals at the headquarters", was the answer of the expert. The farmer's question: "Then, why are we here?" Finally the moderator agreed to include their proposal in the report for consideration. The workshop continued with the pre–determined outputs, but much later an "open fund" was initiated in addition to goat farming. Thanks to the farmers' arguments.

with specific assumptions and the levels that follow. Analysis of the assumptions/external factors provides early insights to undertake corrective action in the design. The LFA planning the methodology lays heavy emphasis on the assumption of a desirable level of inter-institutional cooperation.

Planning as an Inflexible Blue-print

The technocratic view that all that is needed is a good, technically-sound plan adversely affected the participation of the various stakeholders and particularly the primary stakeholders. They were brought in only at the time of implementation and therefore the community ownership was lacking.

How Can Participatory Concerns be Built into LFA/ZOPP?

Efforts could be made along the following lines:

- LFA should not be taken out of context and be treated as an end in itself. **It should be treated as a means of achieving the desired objective (related to the concerns of the local communities).** This means a shift of emphasis from planning to process. It must be recognised that planning itself is an on-going process – with flexibility for adaptations/changes/innovations.

> PRA-type processes can be applied very early on, involving the poor and marginalised, etc. in their own analysis and identification of their needs and priorities.
>
> *Chambers, 1996,*
> *ZOPP Marries PRA Workshop*

- Changes in staff behaviour and attitudes must be given due emphasis in staff trainings. Flexibility is needed in the application of the tool by planners during appraisal and planning, and by project personnel during the implementation stage. LFA/ZOPP trainers need to be exposed to participatory learning approaches so that changes in the role and application of LFA can be internalised.

- Field based training with the communities in village locations is useful for building sensitivity to ground realities. The World Bank initiative of Village Immersion Programmes (since 1996) for Bank staff – particularly for managers – can be cited as an effort to increase their sensitivity to community perspectives and to the need for recognising the value of community participation in planning.

- Impact and outcome monitoring indicators can be developed along with community participation and included in the Log-Frame. Both qualitative and quantitative indicators could be included to ensure process monitoring is given adequate emphasis.

- Recent efforts have been observed in integrating participatory approaches with LFA/ZOPP. The example of GTZ efforts to change and adapt ZOPP procedures in the light of PCM is encouraging. Procedures cannot change overnight. Institutionalisation of processes takes time. PCM is a step forward, but much remains to be seen in its operationalisation. Practical modifications in response to field realities will be necessary. This also means creating an organisational structure which is committed to a management culture that promotes participatory concerns. Adaptation of the policies and procedures of funding/donor agencies is also required.

> " ZOPP decisions can no longer be looked upon as the all-determining measure for monitoring success. Results from self-evaluations and participatory evaluations must receive their institutionalised place next to ZOPP measures."
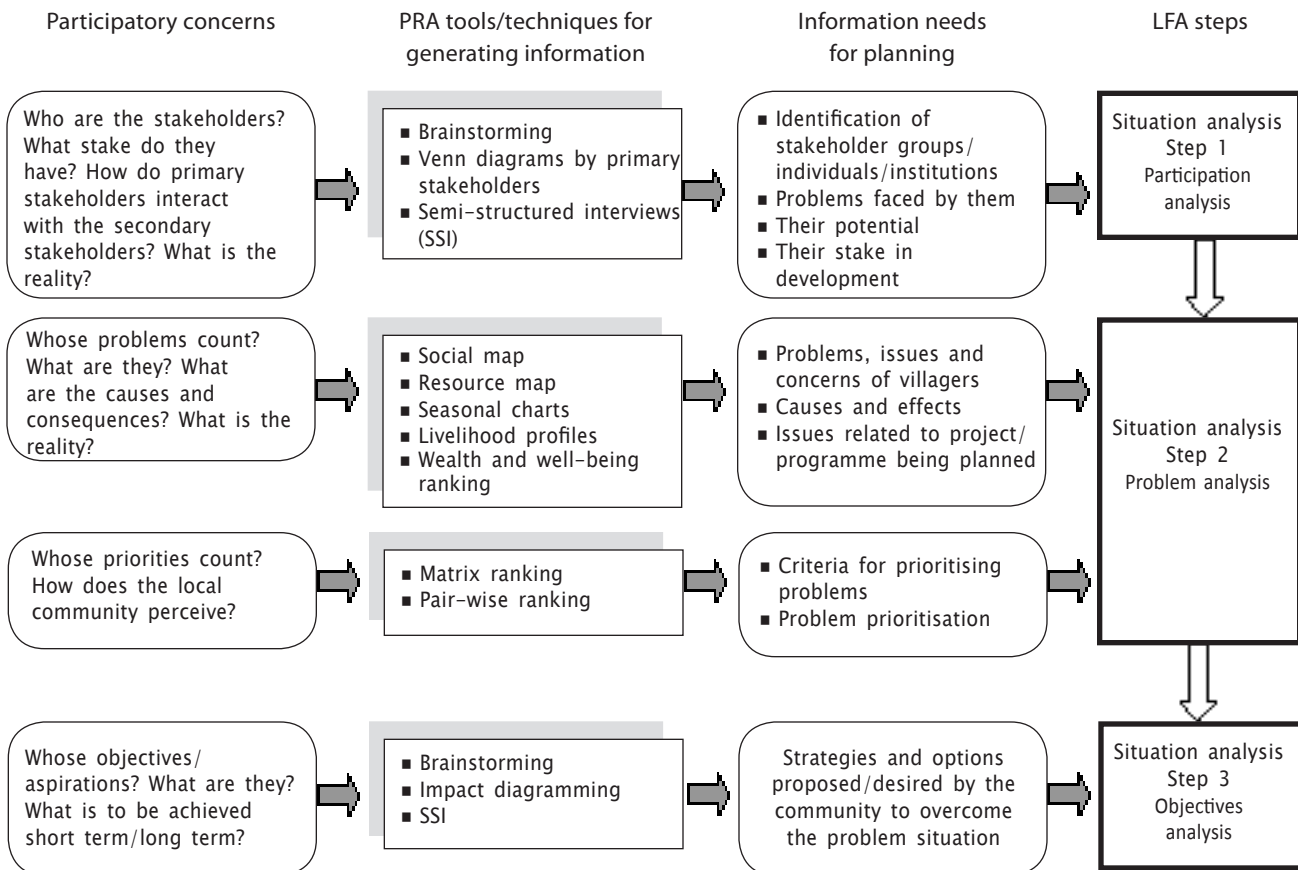>
> *Dieter Gagel (1996)*

- Micro-planning exercises using PRA methods for information generation and analysis by the communities and later using the LFA framework for consolidating the project concept was found to be useful in many cases in Sri Lanka. Projects which used PRA in the context of LFAs in Sri Lanka are the: conservation and sustainable use of medicinal plants project by the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine (supported by World Bank); village development planning in Weerana village as part of the Self-Help Learning Initiative Pilot Project of the World Bank; Fisheries Community Development and Resource Management Project (GTZ); and the Ratnapura Integrated Rural Development Programme (Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council).

  Funding organisations such as NORAD in collaboration with the Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) in Sri Lanka, is initiating training in the integrated use of PRA and LFA for NGOs.

Such experiences show that the rigidity and non-flexibility of the LFA approach has been recognised, and conscious efforts are being made to adapt it to accommodate participatory concerns.

Based on the experiences of IPID in Sri Lanka the following conceptual framework has been elaborated to meet the much-needed requirement of building participatory concerns into the LFA/ZOPP methodology. It builds the PRA/PLA approach to ensure that the community concerns are the key determinants of the sustainable development processes.

Linking PRA to LFA: Addressing participatory concerns

Participatory concerns	PRA tools/techniques for generating information	Information needs for planning	LFA steps
Who are the stakeholders? What stake do they have? How do primary stakeholders interact with the secondary stakeholders? What is the reality?	■ Brainstorming ■ Venn diagrams by primary stakeholders ■ Semi-structured interviews (SSI)	■ Identification of stakeholder groups/individuals/institutions ■ Problems faced by them ■ Their potential ■ Their stake in development	Situation analysis Step 1 Participation analysis
Whose problems count? What are they? What are the causes and consequences? What is the reality?	■ Social map ■ Resource map ■ Seasonal charts ■ Livelihood profiles ■ Wealth and well-being ranking	■ Problems, issues and concerns of villagers ■ Causes and effects ■ Issues related to project/programme being planned	Situation analysis Step 2 Problem analysis
Whose priorities count? How does the local community perceive?	■ Matrix ranking ■ Pair-wise ranking	■ Criteria for prioritising problems ■ Problem prioritisation	
Whose objectives/aspirations? What are they? What is to be achieved short term/long term?	■ Brainstorming ■ Impact diagramming ■ SSI	Strategies and options proposed/desired by the community to overcome the problem situation	Situation analysis Step 3 Objectives analysis

Linking PRA to LFA . . . continuation

Participatory concerns	PRA tools/techniques for generating information	Information needs for planning	LFA steps
Whose options and what? Who shares the benefits?	■ Matrix scoring ■ Options assessment	■ Criteria for assessing options ■ Alternative strategies/ options available to reach the desired objectives	Situation analysis Step 4 Alternatives analysis
Whose reality counts? What needs to change? Who decides?	■ Wealth and well–being ranking ■ Livelihood profiles ■ Mapping, impact diagrams, SSI, etc.	Development of project concept, vision, mission, results, activities	Project/Programme Planning Matrix (PPM) Summary of objectives
How do we measure change/impact? Whose impact? Who shares the benefits?	Base/post–project information derived from: ■ Wealth and well–being ranking ■ Livelihood profiles ■ Mapping, impact diagrams, etc.	Indicators that would capture and measure changes anticipated through interventions	Project/PPM Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVIs)
Who has the information? Who needs to know/ monitor?	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) charts using PRA tools/visuals	Sources of information for monitoring for impact and impact monitoring. Who should do it? For whom? In what form? Records?	Project/PPM Means of Verification (MOVs)
Whose power/influence/ behaviors/attitudes matter?	■ Power relations ■ Historical time lines ■ Seasonal charts ■ Trend lines ■ Specific key events	Attitudes/behaviours, factors, processes, trends, natural hazards/disasters, etc., outside the control of the community/project and affecting them positively/negatively	Project/PPM Important assumptions/ external factors
Who does what and when? Who initiates? Who supports? Who commands access?	■ Brainstorming ■ SSI ■ Seasonal charts ■ Venn diagram	The appropriate activities/ sub activities, time periods and capable groups/ institutions and persons for project/programme implementation	Action plan/ operational plan Activities/ sub-activities Time frame Responsibilities

Prepared by:
Mallika Samaranayake

Result-Based Project Planning

This paper discusses how result-based project planning is undertaken. Result analysis helps determine what results are expected to be achieved in a project. It therefore provides critically important information in preparing a result-based logical framework.
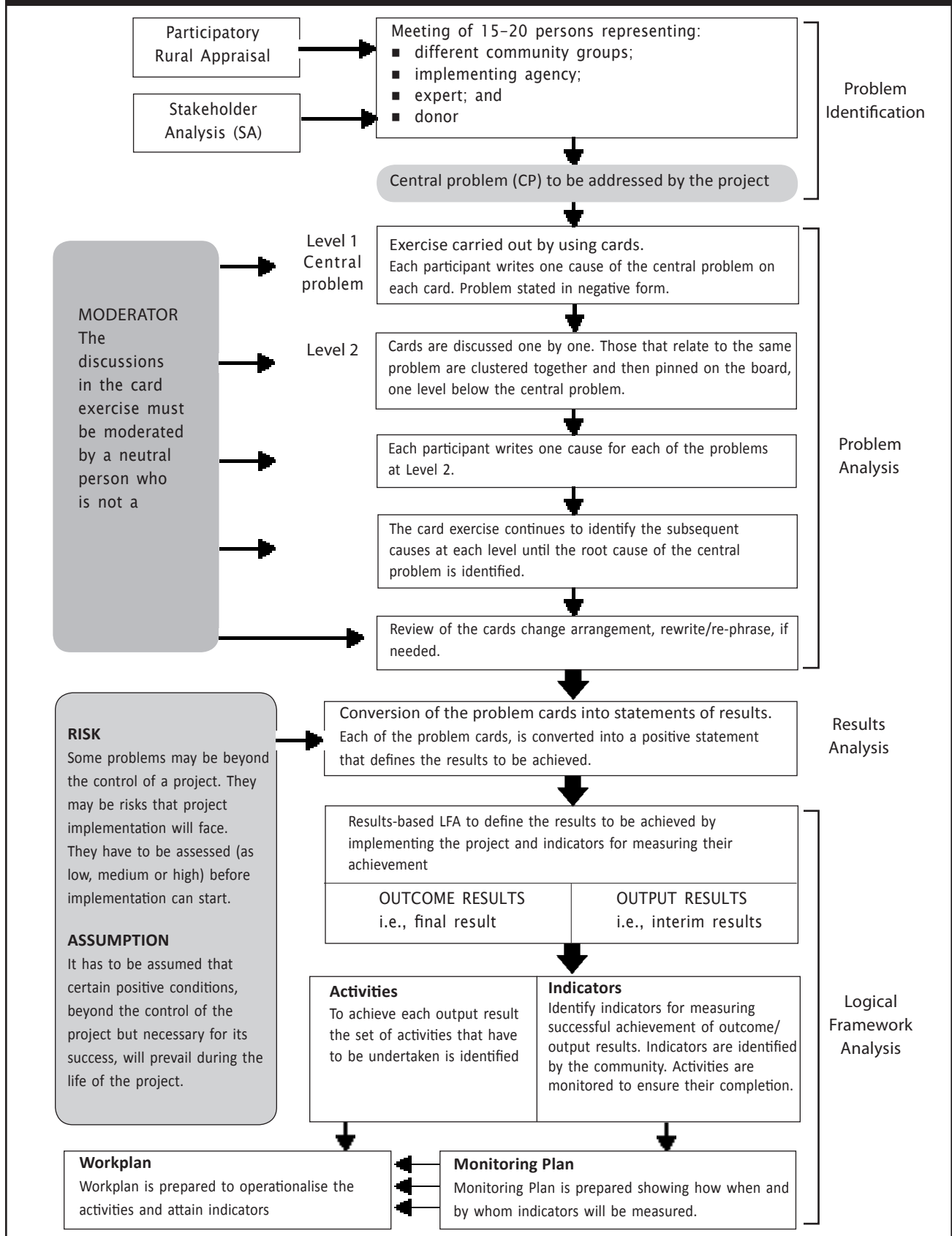
An important first step in this process is usually problem identification often undertaken using participatory rural appraisals (PRA) and stakeholder analysis. The goal of these methods is to identify the central problem to be addressed. This is best done when representatives of different groups get together to define what that core problem is, root causes and cause-effect relationships. (*Refer to Levels 1 to 4 in the chart on page 139.*)

Development problems, especially those involving people, are viewed differently by different individuals and groups. A comprehensive picture of the problem as viewed by different categories of people, must be put together. This is best done when their representatives contribute to defining the problem, identifying the factors causing them and determining what the desirable results should be.
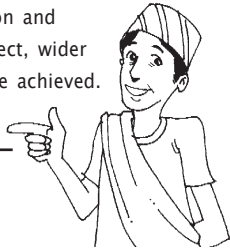
When we understand the range of problems and their root causes, the discussions must shift to defining the desirable results. An important next step is to identify the indicators of achievement (this enables monitoring). This information is critical in a logical framework analysis (LFA) effort. Once the LFA is defined the work plan (for project implementation) and monitoring plan are prepared.

Result Analysis Process

Participatory Rural Appraisal	→	Meeting of 15–20 persons representing: ■ different community groups; ■ implementing agency; ■ expert; and ■ donor	Problem Identification
Stakeholder Analysis (SA)	→		

↓

Central problem (CP) to be addressed by the project

↓

MODERATOR
The discussions in the card exercise must be moderated by a neutral person who is not a

→ Level 1 Central problem — Exercise carried out by using cards. Each participant writes one cause of the central problem on each card. Problem stated in negative form.

↓

→ Level 2 — Cards are discussed one by one. Those that relate to the same problem are clustered together and then pinned on the board, one level below the central problem.

↓

→ Each participant writes one cause for each of the problems at Level 2.

↓

→ The card exercise continues to identify the subsequent causes at each level until the root cause of the central problem is identified.

↓

→ Review of the cards change arrangement, rewrite/re-phrase, if needed.

Problem Analysis

↓

RISK
Some problems may be beyond the control of a project. They may be risks that project implementation will face. They have to be assessed (as low, medium or high) before implementation can start.

ASSUMPTION
It has to be assumed that certain positive conditions, beyond the control of the project but necessary for its success, will prevail during the life of the project.

→ Conversion of the problem cards into statements of results. Each of the problem cards, is converted into a positive statement that defines the results to be achieved.

Results Analysis

↓

Results-based LFA to define the results to be achieved by implementing the project and indicators for measuring their achievement

OUTCOME RESULTS i.e., final result	OUTPUT RESULTS i.e., interim results

↓

Activities To achieve each output result the set of activities that have to be undertaken is identified	**Indicators** Identify indicators for measuring successful achievement of outcome/output results. Indicators are identified by the community. Activities are monitored to ensure their completion.

Logical Framework Analysis

↓

| **Workplan** Workplan is prepared to operationalise the activities and attain indicators	**Monitoring Plan** Monitoring Plan is prepared showing how when and by whom indicators will be measured.

Monitoring Results

If the (problem solving) strategy being pursued is effective, periodic monitoring will indicate that the objective is being achieved. If it is not happening, the strategy will have to be reviewed.

Indicators should be discussed with the members of the community. They should monitor the progress towards the results to be achieved. Failure in achievements are discussed with the community and corrective measures.

Learning from Result Analysis

- The existing situation (that the project is trying to improve) is reviewed. Problems are identified and visually presented in a hierarchy indicating cause-effect relationships.
- The process captures the ideas, inputs and experience of a range of affected groups and does it in a transparent manner. Often opposing ideas are expressed. Either consensus is reached or there is scope to accommodate both points of view.
- The process is dependent on effective moderation of the discussions and on participants being willing to arrive at consensus.
- The process calls for a certain level of articulation that may not always be found amongst community-level participants.
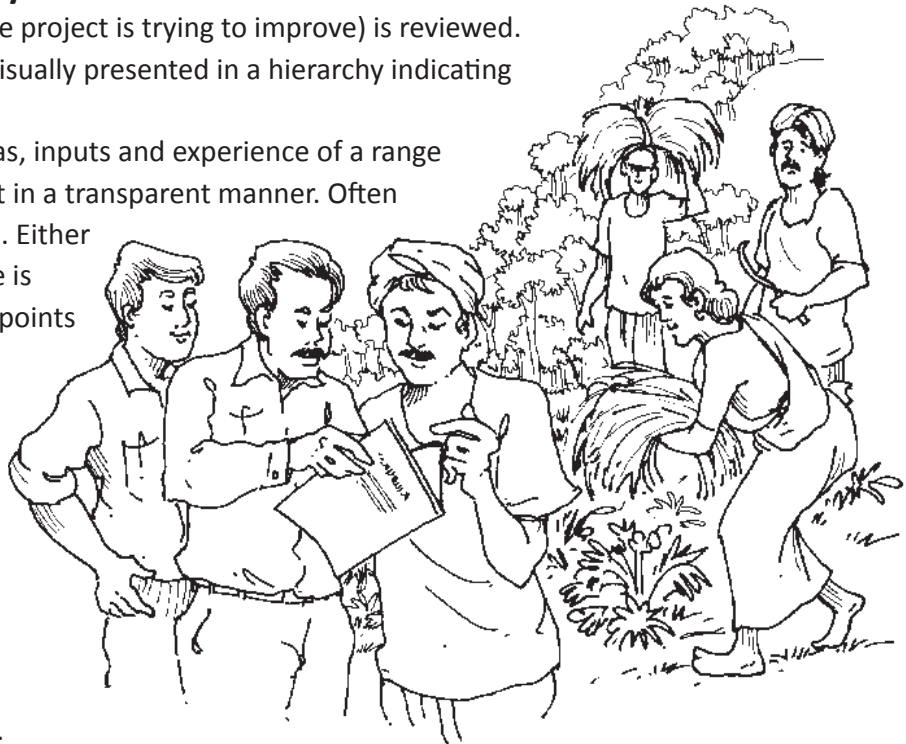
Participatory Technology Development and Dissemination: Some Key Principles

P articipation of a wide-range of stakeholders at various stages of programme design, implementation and evaluation is being increasingly emphasised. For far too long, "outsiders" have attempted to determine what is best for local communities. It is essential to recognise the value of involving the primary stakeholders or end-users in the process of identifying, refining and disseminating relevant technologies. This process is generally referred to as Participatory Technology Development and Dissemination (PTD&D).

Some General Guiding Principles

Acknowledge contributions from indigenous knowledge and modern science

Some of the more successful and sustainable interventions have evolved out of efforts to build upon existing knowledge and practices. The strategic contributions of science are featured within an overall framework that builds on, blends and forges links between indigenous practices and contributions from modern science.
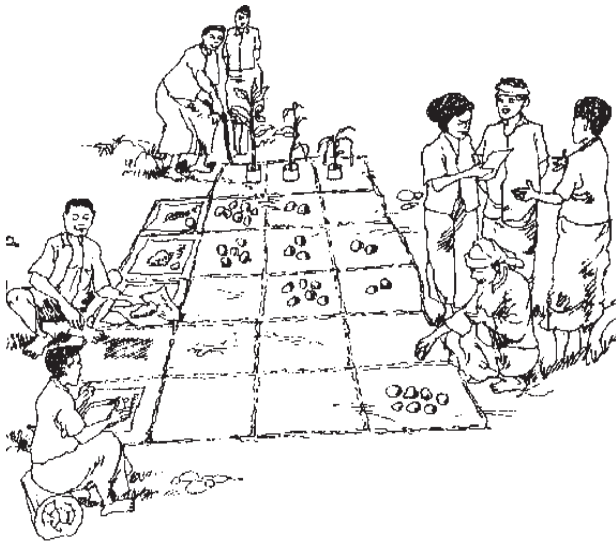
Emphasise and use participatory approaches of relevance to the poor

Many technologies are not scale-neutral and might only be relevant to the wealthier farmers. To reach the poor we might have to be deliberate about the choice of technologies, i.e., those that are known to be pro-poor. Poverty mapping and other participatory tools can help improve the relevance of technologies to the poor. A wealth of approaches are available:

■ Participatory poverty analysis and poverty mapping
■ Participatory rapid appraisal/participatory learning
■ Participatory technology development
■ Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Blend conservation (protective) and development (economic) considerations

The long-term sustainability of livelihoods are invariably affected by the state and quality of the natural resources. Wherever possible, interventions should address economic as well as conservation agenda.

■ Introduce and adopt sustainable-resource use indicators
■ Integrate conservation and development activities and programmes
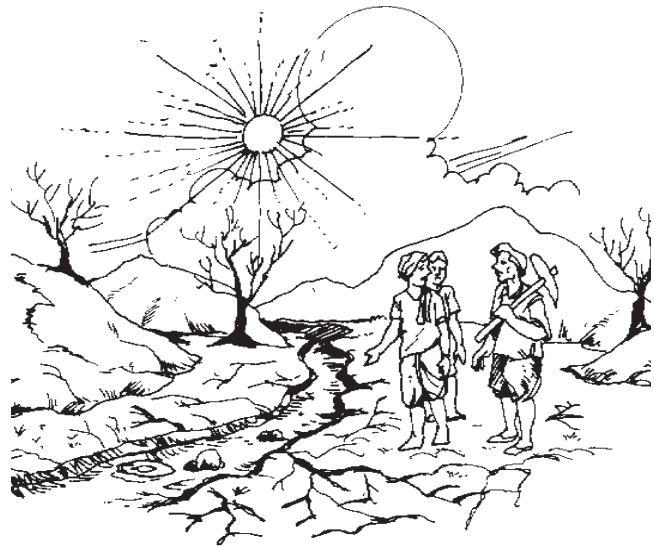
Use an integrated systems approach

Integrated systems meet the needs of the poor by reducing risks and lowering the costs of production and by diversifying outputs and income sources and sustaining the resource base.

■ Focus on smallholders: small increases amongst large populations can make a more significant and lasting impact on poverty alleviation and food security.

■ Assume holistic resource management approaches.
■ Adopt a whole-farm orientation rather than a focus on specific, single commodity.
■ Use integrated nutrient management principles to promote recycling, reduce costs and sustain productivity.
■ Promote integrated pest management that emphasises the value of balanced ecosystems, healthy crops and soils.
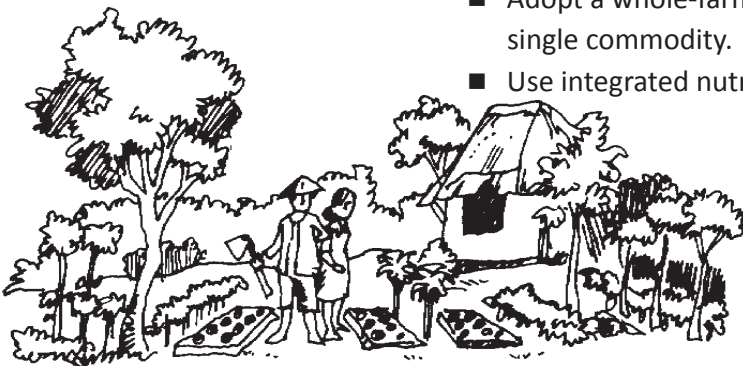
Build in a component for technology refinement and adaptation

An on-going learning and problem-solving approach is ensured if farmers can work within an environment that permits the testing, validation and refinement of options.

- Provide people with opportunities to choose from a range of options (internally derived or introduced from outside).
- Promote information exchanges on local innovations at the community and local-government levels.
- Nurture and strengthen farmer capacities to innovate so they can adapt to future changes.
- Be aware of technology-fatigue among farmer trainers, extension agents and the farmers themselves.
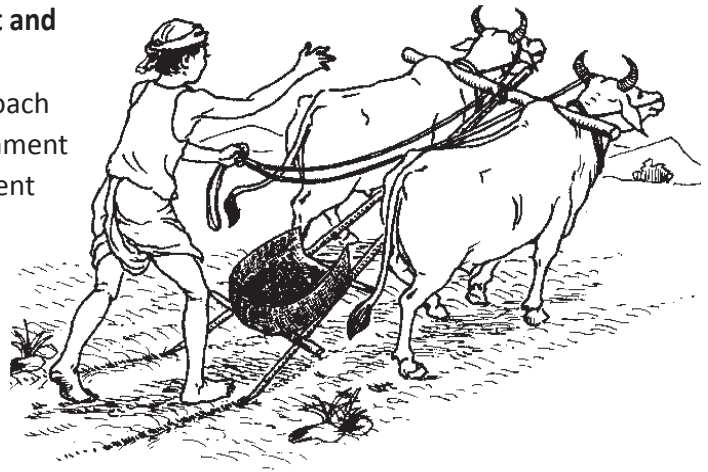
Consider farmer-to-farmer extension as a core strategy

Farmer-centered approaches are increasingly being recognised as relevant, cost-effective and appropriate long-term strategies to support information and capacity-strengthening of primary stakeholders, farmers and fisherfolk.

- Feature cross-visits to successful farms and project sites.
- Deploy farmer scholars selected by and accountable to the village community. Ensure that the farmer scholars are not drawn from the wealthier sections, that they truly represent the poor.
- Revive mutual-help work groups (for labour-intensive operations).
- Recruit farmers to serve as lead trainers with an additional role for follow-up.
- Assign extension workers to serve as orchestrators of the farmer-to-farmer process (not as front liners).

Decentralise and disperse farmer-managed demonstrations

We need to critically review the role of conventional approaches such as institutional demonstrations, i.e., model farms, training centres, demonstrations, etc., and the package-approach to disseminating technologies.

- Institutional demonstrations serve primarily the need for specialised training, remedial training, foundation-seed production and for demonstrating a range of available options. They are not, however, considered as primary strategies for dissemination or sharing of ideas.
- Acknowledge and accept that specific technologies or basic principles will be adopted, not entire "packages". A focus on principles builds farmer capacities to continue to innovate and adapt technologies.

- Emphasise the role of field study programmes for policy-makers and GO/NGO decision makers.

To scale up, use a multiple agency strategy to enhance the utilisation of research-knowledge and exemplary practices
- Broaden the ownership of technologies/practices/approaches by conducting consultation-meetings for key stakeholders and users.

- Compile exemplary practices using information kits. Participatory writeshops (workshops) can bring together field practitioners along with artists, editors and desktop publishers to produce information materials for wide use.
- Build horizontal and vertical linkages (micro-macro links). Involve networks and coalitions in promoting field-tested practices in order to scale up, institutionalise and sustain successes/impact.

Empowering Women and Facilitating their Participation for Better Resource Management

This paper proposes a particular strategy for facilitating women's participation in natural resource management, that is, organising women in exclusively women's organisations and giving them long-term lease over common wastelands. This strategy helps to:

- facilitate the capacity-building of women in land development and technical matters;
- give them control over resources from common lands for income- generating activities; and
- empower them to participate in natural resource management.

> " Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision–making process and access to power, are fundamental for the advancement of equality, development and peace. "
>
> *Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 1995*

Poor women in India suffer from a triple and usually overlapping disadvantage – of poverty, of social backwardness and of being women. In the coming decades, conflicts will centre on the access to, ownership and control of natural resources. Participation in decision-making processes regarding the management and use of natural resources is the first step towards equitable and sustainable management.

The strategies described here would be applicable even to the most challenging circumstances – in economically and socially stratified communities with conservative attitudes towards women and where there is considerable environmental stress.

Identifying Homogeneous Groups and Understanding Their Concerns

Rural communities are differentiated by caste/tribe, class and religion and, within each of these groups, by age and gender. Generally, it is the relatively better-off or more powerful constituent groups with visibility and voice that corner the benefits of development. Special efforts must therefore be made to identify the poorest and most marginalised women for participation in developmental activities.

The first step in facilitating women's participation is to understand their needs and concerns as well as their resources.

Guidelines for Building Self-Help Groups (SHGS)

■ Women (as with any disadvantaged group) derive strength through numbers. Poor and socially disadvantaged women sometimes lack the self-confidence – that emanates as much from lack of self-esteem as from economic dependence on the better-off sections – to express their concerns and their needs in an economically and socially mixed group.

■ The members of an SHG should live close to each other for effective day-to-day participation. SHG size should be reasonably small to permit closeness in terms of proximity, affinity and cohesiveness of its members. Homogenous social and economic groups usually have informal arrangements for mutual help and it is easy to build on such relationships.

■ SHGs should address the central concerns of its members and take on decisions that affect their lives.

A common concern amongst poor women is their lack of savings and access to credit. Up to 20 members from the same locality can come together and form an SHG for savings and credit. Women also come together to address other common concerns such as grain banks, creches, drinking water, non-land based income generating activities, domestic violence, etc.

Savings and Credit through SHGs

The effectiveness of SHGs in assisting women to break out of the downward spiral of poverty and indebtedness has been widely demonstrated. SHGs are effective in generating savings and effecting loan recovery. Once the SHG has demonstrated its ability to manage savings and mutual lending and recovery, it can successfully attract institutional credit. The members can then graduate to taking up income-generating activities. The thousands of success stories of such SHGs in India and other countries are testimony to this. Savings and credit activities should, therefore, be used as a catalyst to initiate an organisation.

Empowerment through SHGs

SHGs are an effective first step in empowering women. They can be mechanisms for bringing women out of their homes, building their confidence and self-esteem, improving their skills and making them more aware and informed. Through SHGs, women can be trained to manage their savings and loans. Women's capacity may be also be enhanced through functional literacy – in organising and keeping minutes of meetings, accounting, meeting with government functionaries and/or accessing government programmes.
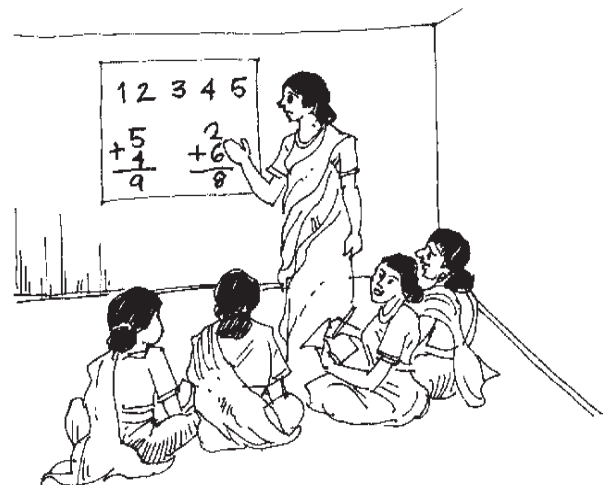
Exclusive Organisations of Women

Despite the proven efficiency of women in managing their own savings, most men do not consider women capable of taking decisions on natural resource management. Savings is traditionally considered to be a woman's task and from the men's point of view, savings undertaken in a group does not qualify women for participating in decision-making regarding natural resources. Many organisations that have both men and women as members often do not give priority to women's needs, which are different from those of men.

Women's Organisations: A Powerful Force

The prohibition movement in Andhra Pradesh began with an organisation of women discussing the issue of alcoholism; similarly, the Chipko movement in Uttar Pradesh was spearheaded by women. There are documented and undocumented development initiatives undertaken by women against all odds even when the men have given up.
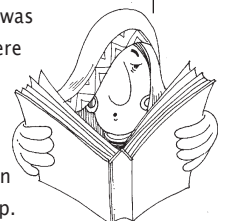
Integrating Women into the Mainstream

Quotas set aside for women on decision-making bodies have proven to be effective in many countries. Women are better accepted when they speak from their own experience.

Land Resources for Women

Land in India is the most significant form of property. It determines economic well-being, defines social status and proffers political power. Legally, both sons and daughters are entitled to have equal rights to property but customary practices have come in the way, ignoring women's share.

Private landholding is not the only productive land resource that women can use. Women in rural areas tend to depend more on common property resources for meeting survival needs due to their negligible ownership of private property. Yet, the degradation of common property resources and the decline in access (to what remains) means harder work and lesser resources for women to meet the needs of their families.

> Independent access and entitlements to common property resources has particular significance for resource-poor women.

An estimated 53 million hectares of common land in India is defined as cultivable wastelands, permanent pastures or grazing lands. The management of these is largely with government departments. These lands are largely treated as open access resources and thereby highly degraded. These common (waste) lands would be beneficially used if leased to exclusive women's organisations for at least 30 to 35 years with rights to the produce. To sustain this:

■ Public funds may be made available to develop these wastelands.

- Poverty alleviation funds can be channeled on a priority basis to the poorest of the poor to make these wastelands productive.
- Savings and credit activities may be used as a catalyst to initiate women's organisations.
- Finally, homogeneous compact women's organisations that have grown from SHGs may be given joint long-term lease over common wastelands.

In brief, the land becomes a source of raw material for the women to subsist on, or to process for the market.

Income-Augmenting Activities

The lack of confidence among poor women to stand up for their needs partly emanates from the economic dependence on men and the better-off. If women have control over alternative sources of livelihood, this improves their confidence and strengthens their bargaining power. This requires that women be assisted to process the produce of the land as a source of income.

This calls for better women's access to credit and training. Existing government programmes and institutes can deliver this. Initiatives should start small, stay in the control of the women and grow correspondingly as the capacity of the women increase. The women must have control over both the raw materials and the processed products.

Sensitising the Men

To reduce the potentials for conflict, it is important to sensitise the men and better-off sections of the community on the need to address the needs of women, especially the most disadvantaged. Experience shows that the process of acquiring access (lease) to even degraded, commonly-owned wastelands, which lie unutilised, is fraught with difficulties.

Some Income-Augmenting Activities

- Animal husbandry
- Bee-keeping
- Basket weaving
- Vegetable, mushroom and horticulture processing
- Pisciculture
- Growing and processing medicinal plants
- Nurseries for forest plantation
- Rabbit rearing

Denying Women Access

An NGO working in a village in one of the semi-arid villages of Rajasthan organised the poor women and gave them access to degraded common wastelands. The lands were so degraded that raising even the most hardy varieties was difficult. This access to a new resource, however degraded it was, angered the big landlord in the village. He retaliated by denying the women access to the only well in the village from where they drew water for drinking and irrigation.

Men also need to be sensitised to share some of the home-related responsibilities with women. All these need to be addressed through well-developed gender sensitivity programmes.

Capacity-Building of Women

In many instances, whenever there are activities to be undertaken by men and women, women are usually employed as labourers. Even in trainings, women are often seen to be "also included" rather than as rightful "participants".

Empowerment through Capacity Building

Successful natural resource management activities adopting the strategy of exclusive organisations of women have created a tremendous sense of achievement and identity among the women. This has been seen in initiatives undertaken by organisations such as, AKRSP (1), SEWA and Deccan Development Society.

The poor women in Bunkura, West Bengal, wanted access to their own land. They were organised in women's organisations by an NGO. Degraded, private waste lands were donated to them by the local landowners. The women raised "arjun" trees that are hosts to "tussar" silk worms. Gradually, over a period of 10 years the women were undertaking a variety of enterprises and have become an organisation with a strong voice, including in the political arena.
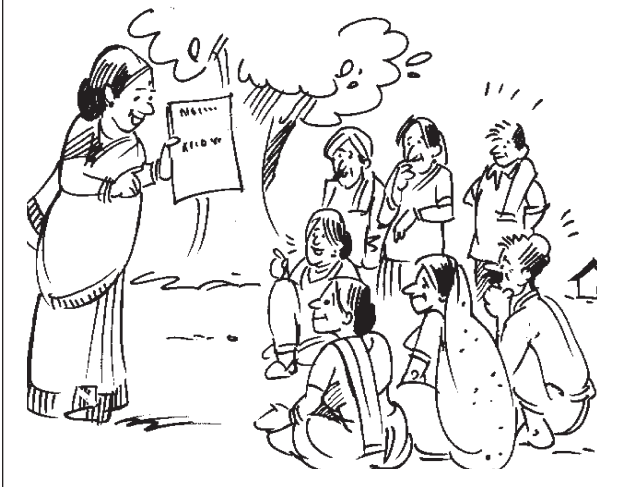

Prepared by:
Jaya Chatterji

In exclusive organisations, women would have to handle all aspects of an income-generating activity – from land development to production, harvesting, distribution, processing and marketing. Their capacities must be built on technical, managerial and organisational matters. This will increase their skills as well as their confidence.

Women gain the respect of the men who begin to negotiate with them. The community at large also begins to accept women in their new role and acknowledges their contributions in public gatherings. Their status within the household also improves.

Conclusion

It is ironic that there are women who are poor, disempowered, asset-less, unemployed and illiterate, when millions of hectares of public wastelands remain unutilised. This requires policy decisions to invest public funds to make these lands productive and to lease them to the poorest women brought together in small, cohesive organisations. A beginning could be made in watershed projects where benefits accrue to landless women. Women should also strive for equitable access as users to other common property resources like forests and water, as well as to private resources.

A Participatory Workshop Process to Produce User-Friendly Information Materials
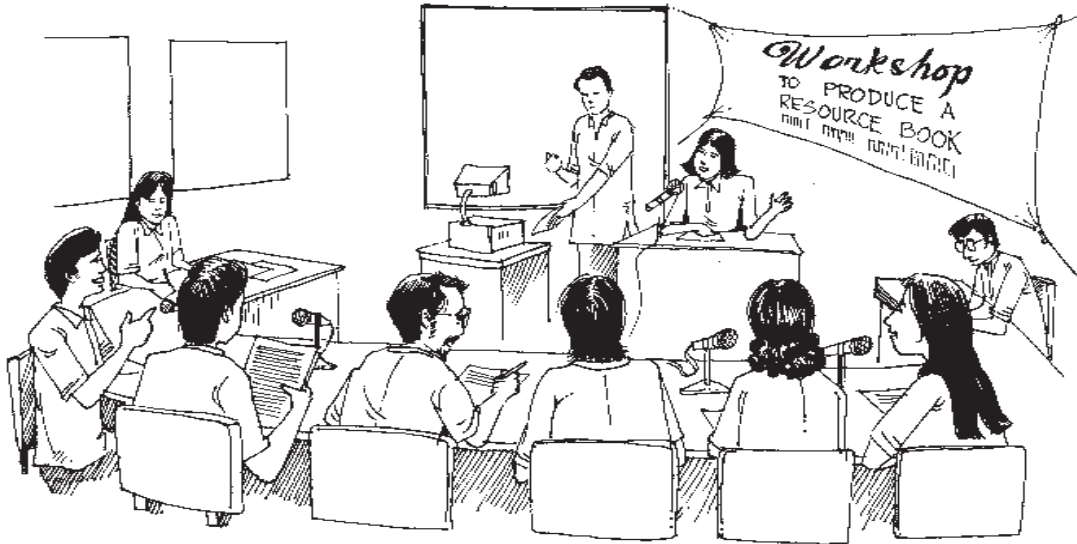
Increasingly, field practitioners and managers are expected to document their experiences and to share them more widely. Unfortunately some of the best field experiences do not get documented because the practitioners are often too busy out in the field (doing what they do best). Or, they might lack the necessary writing and visualisation skills to be able to tell their own stories. It is "outsiders" who write, claim sole credit, repackage others' ideas into neat "concepts", copyright the material, and claim their rewards in the form of book royalties and university degrees. Fortunately, this situation might be changing with the growing emphasis today on an increased role for field practitioners and managers in documenting their own exemplary practices and on giving them authorship or at least co-authorship.

Another dimension less talked about is the relatively poor utilisation of information generated through research efforts. So much valuable information remains on the shelf and is underused. There is a huge need (in this day and age when resources are limited) to ensure that the investment on research shows up, in terms of better utilisation of research results. Much of the materials generated will still have to be presented in conventional form: printed materials which can be adapted and translated into local languages. We cannot and must not ignore the wide gaps in access to information even as we explore the opportunities presented by new electronic communication technologies.

While new information technologies can be expected to improve information exchange and networking, it is likely that this will still be confined to the level of support institutions. Printed materials, in the form of resource books, will still be important for field managers, project leaders, trainers and local government officials.

Producing these information materials can take a great deal of time - one has to write the drafts, edit the text, prepare illustrations and lay out the publication. The resulting prototype is then reviewed by subject matter specialists before final revisions are made. This tedious process often discourages practitioners from coming up with documentations of their experiences.

A participatory workshop process (also known as writeshops) pioneered by the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) and tested for 15 years in over 30 workshops provides new opportunities for retrieving best practices and packaging them into forms that lend themselves to wider use.

These workshops can speed up and improve the production of printed materials. The aim is to develop the materials, revise and put them into final form as quickly as possible, taking full advantage of the expertise of the various workshop participants.

The workshop process is very different from scientific conferences that many are familiar with. It is an extremely flexible process that allows for repeated presentations, critiquing and revision of drafts, giving way to a substantial review of each paper.

The Participatory Workshop Process

To prepare for the workshop, a steering committee lists potential topics and invites resource persons to develop first drafts on each topic. Guidelines for preparing these materials are provided. Participants bring the drafts and various reference materials to the workshop.

During the workshop, each participant presents his or her draft paper, using overhead transparencies of each page. Copies of each draft are also given to all other participants, who critique the draft and suggest revisions.

After each presentation, an editor helps the author revise and edit the draft. An artist prepares illustrations to accompany the text. The edited draft and artwork are then desktop-published to produce a second draft.
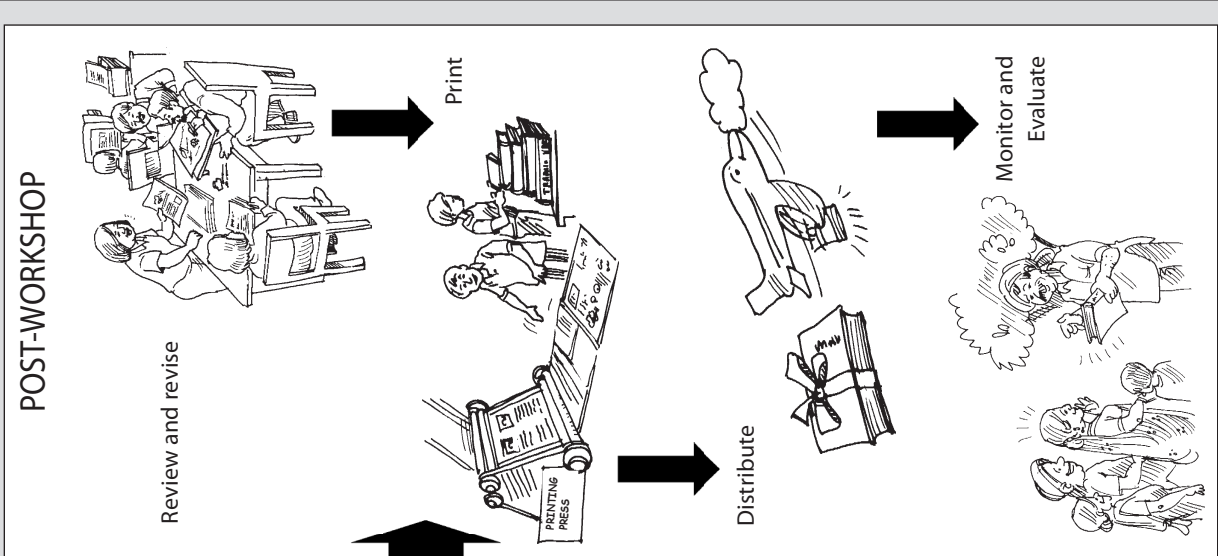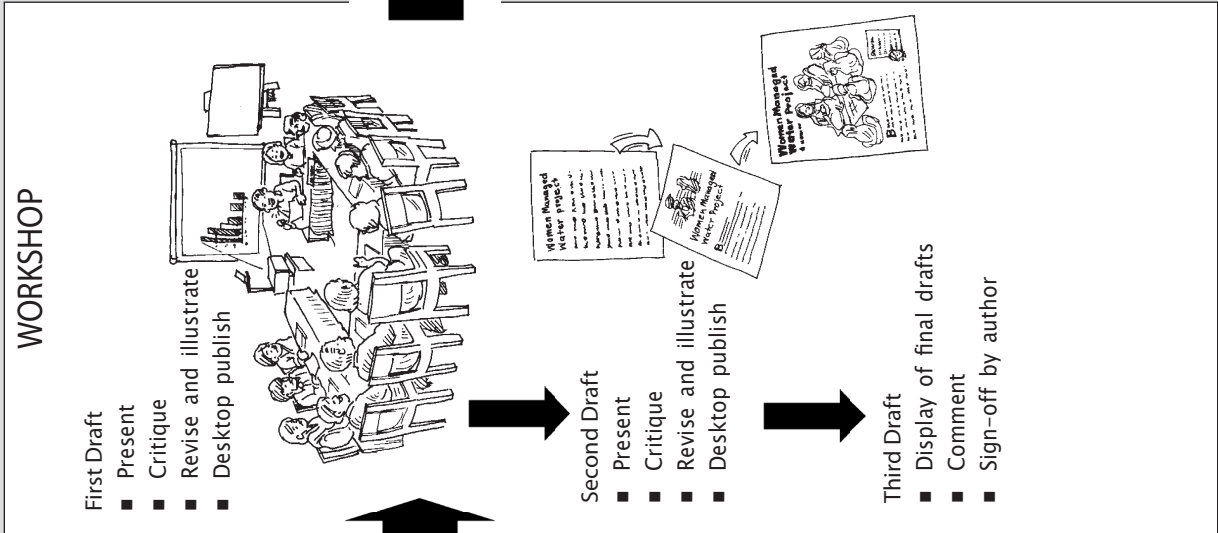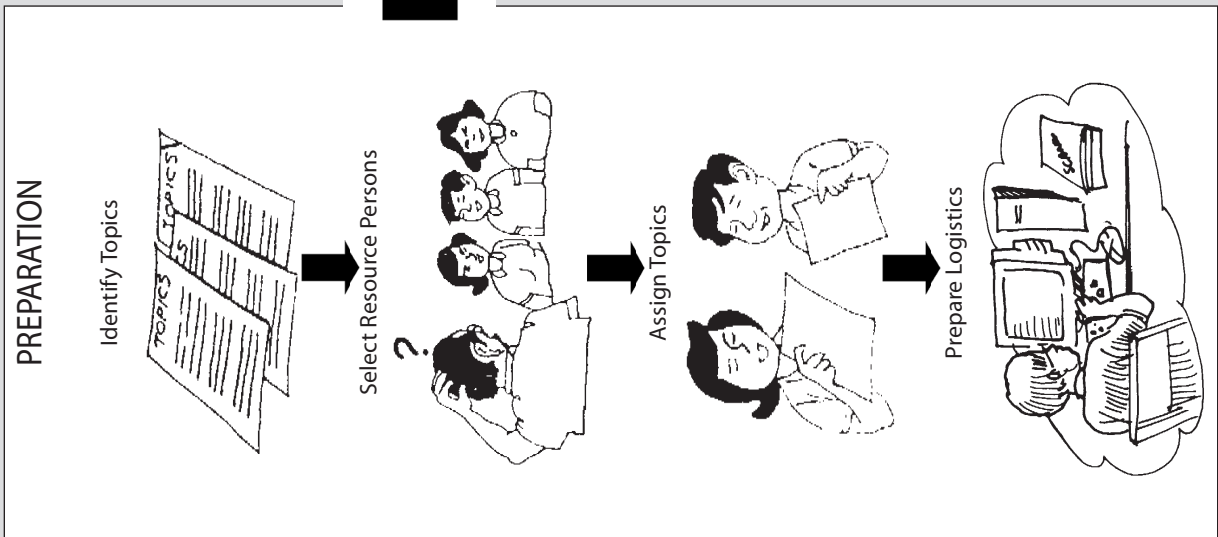
Each participant then presents his or her revised draft to the group a second time, also using transparencies. Again, the audience critiques it and suggests revisions. After the presentation, the editor and artist again help revise it and develop a third draft.

Towards the end of the workshop, the third draft is made available to participants for final comments and revisions. The final version can be completed, printed and distributed soon after the workshop.

A workshop usually lasts from 10-14 days.

The Participatory Workshop Process

PREPARATION

Identify Topics

Select Resource Persons

Assign Topics

Prepare Logistics

WORKSHOP

First Draft
- Present
- Critique
- Revise and illustrate
- Desktop publish

Second Draft
- Present
- Critique
- Revise and illustrate
- Desktop publish

Third Draft
- Display of final drafts
- Comment
- Sign–off by author

POST-WORKSHOP

Review and revise

Print

Distribute

Monitor and Evaluate

Advantages of Participatory Workshops

- The workshop allows ideas to be validated by a range of field practitioners representing different disciplines. Inputs from participants are incorporated, taking advantage of their diverse experience and expertise. The diversity of skills, organisations and backgrounds of participants is key to ensuring that diverse ideas are represented in the materials produced. The gathering of resource persons, editors, artists and desktop-publishing resources at one time and place also enables materials to be produced far more quickly than is typical for similar publications.

- Members of the intended audience (e.g., trainers, extension personnel, project managers) who are also participants in the workshop help pre-test the texts and illustrations during the workshop.

- The repeated presentations and critiquing of drafts allow each paper to be reviewed and revised substantially. Further, new topics are developed during the workshop; papers may be combined, dropped or split into parts.

- All materials undergo a significant transformation as a result of this process and subsequent drafts are presented until a generally wide level of satisfaction and acceptance is ensured. Group ownership of the product is developed.

- Products generated through a participatory workshop process gain wider acceptance, use and ownership.

- The sharing of experiences among participants during the workshop allows the development of networks that continue long after the end of the workshop itself.

- Workshops also provide an opportunity for a crash course on the workshop theme.

When is a Participatory Workshop Approach to Producing Information Materials Relevant?

- When there is a need to pull together diverse experiences (and proponents) working on specific thematic areas (to avoid competition, confusion, duplication, etc.)
- When impact must be demonstrated
- When a project wants to share its lessons and findings more widely
- When a pilot project or other small-scale experiment or activity merits wider expansion and use
- When a program is to be scaled-up by widening the "user" base (e.g., NGO attempting to mainstream its work at the government level)

Characteristics of Information Materials Produced Using the Process

- The publication resulting from the workshop can be loose-leaf, a set of pocket-sized booklets, or a bound book. The format and design can be set beforehand – or decided by the participants during the workshop itself.

- The broad theme is divided into smaller topics, each of which is covered by a manuscript prepared by a workshop participant.
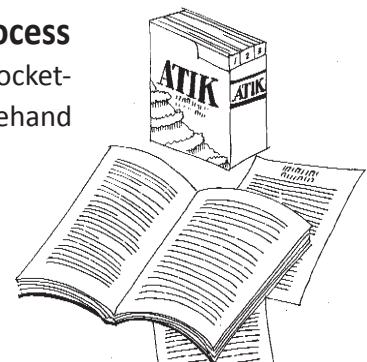
- Each topic contains line drawings to illustrate and simplify key ideas. These are drawn during the workshop itself, and participants are asked to check the drawings for accuracy and ease of understanding.

- The publication contains only relevant and practical information. It is not a vehicle for lengthy literature reviews or for presentation of unnecessary details. Whenever possible, it provides technological options that show more than one way of doing the same thing.

- The concepts presented are compatible so that readers can easily select and combine those that are suitable for their own situation.

Key Findings (Based on 15 years of using the process)

- **There is no need to reinvent the wheel.**
  Today, a huge amount of research outputs and field experience already exists, and there is no need to reinvent the wheel. The focus needs to shift on better use and application of research findings and previously learned lessons.

- **Most field practitioners and those closely linked with field experience are generous and willing to share information on best practices.**
  Practitioners are almost always willing to be invited to share their experiences, accept positive criticism and suggestions for improvement of their papers. In a typical workshop, the number of papers invariably increases as people may volunteer to write new papers in response to the (information) gaps identified during the workshop itself. It is also during this time when participants might decide to organise a focus group to develop ideas for a "new" paper.

> The participatory workshop process is also adapted by other organisations. The Asia–Pacific Agroforestry Network (APAN) and the Forest, Trees and People Project (FTPP) used the process to produce a publication on agroforestry promotion in Thailand after attending the workshop on the "Resource Management in Upland Areas in Southeast Asia".

- **Enthusiasm for the process is generally ensured.**
  Field workers and project managers often value the opportunity to get away from their work to sit down, reflect and write about their experiences. It is rarely a problem motivating them on the need for this, but what is invariably needed is the peer support that is demonstrated during the critiquing process and the 10-14 day period provided for revision.

> IIRR and International Federation for Women in Agriculture (IFWA) collaborated in the production of a publication through a participatory process on "Environmentally Sound Technologies for Women in Agriculture". A large number of researchers, extensionists, artists and production staff prepared scripts on subjects covering various areas. The publication has served as a resource material for enriching lectures, training sessions, radio and TV presentations and extension literaure. Extensionists and trainers in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, etc., have extensively used the kit in their field extension work.

Writeshops enable practitioners to tell their own story. Field workers become "authors" of papers based on their own experiences. Academics and researchers, too, are able to present and share information in simplified language and formats, thereby ensuring wider access by a range of people.
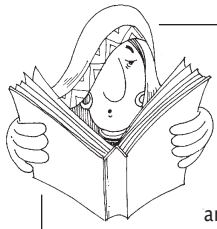
The Agroforestry Technology Information Kit (ATIK) first assumed a full-page format and in loose sheets. After years of use by extension workers, the publication was revised in the Philippines and reprinted in a smaller booklet form to suit the needs of field workers.

■ **A consultation process characterises all stages.**
Consultation is featured at all stages in the workshop process. Right at the outset, when partners and sponsors are being identified, a huge amount of flexibility is demonstrated. If an agency is considered a major stakeholder and a major user of the publication it could be featured at the same place as the major donor. Workshops also provide a platform for all major players to be represented. A multi-agency effort is usually going to result in wider use of materials, thus contributing to scaling up and hopefully reduced competition.

Topics and authors are also selected through a consultative process which continues even through the workshop. Even the format, the cover and the size of the book are all determined in consultation with all the partners. The variation in shapes and size of the book is deliberate and designed to suit the preferences of those who ultimately will be the major users of the publication.

■ **The lack of a copyright is especially attractive to field workers concerned about intellectual property issues.**
There is an upsurge in awareness of intellectual property rights (IPR) issues including the matter of "outsiders" packaging field findings generated by field practitioners (or those close to the experience). The fact that photocopying is also often restricted when publications are copyrighted is also another concern (especially in countries with strict IPR legislation). One could find oneself in a situation of not being able to photocopy one's own article included in a publication with copyrights.

Organisations and individuals are free to translate the information materials. The information kit, The Bio-intensive Approach to Small-Scale Household Food Production, has been adapted and translated in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Laos, Nepal, Thailand and in five Philippine dialects. A Spanish adaptation has also been published.

In contrast, materials produced under the participatory workshop process are not copyrighted. In fact, potential users are even encouraged to photocopy the material. Field workers and managers also come to the workshop to utilise the publishing facilities (editors, artists and desktop publishing staff) for their own purposes and needs.
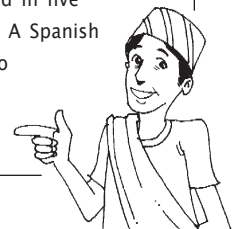
■ **Focusing on basic principles and processes allows for wider application and use.**
The workshops encourage participants to focus on principles drawn from practice rather than on very specific technologies. The emphasis on principles allows for wider application/extrapolation of a practice found to be exemplary in a specific setting. Materials based on this principle foster further testing and adaptation. Focusing on principles and processes (rather than on specific technologies) allows for wider use in scaling-up efforts.

■ **Fostering adaptations in other settings**

Participants attending such workshops return to their respective organisations with a better appreciation for the role of quality materials, the value of subjecting materials to peer review, and the need to carefully scrutinize what goes to print. Feedback from the field has also indicated that staff returning back now write better reports (more useful, reader-friendly and with an increased use of visuals).

The resource book "Regenerative Agricultural Technologies for the Hill Farmers of Nepal" was adapted by the International Center for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) to cater to the needs of women. ICIMOD decided to use a gender screen in revising the materials to ensure special relevance to women. Ironically, some of the materials included in the earlier version (which the proponents said were of special relevance to women) were the first to be rejected by the women in the villages.
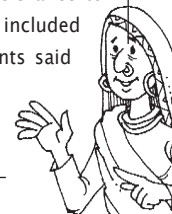
■ **Adequate follow-up can be assured by partnering with the right players**

Generating good materials is not enough. Follow up, utilisation, translation and adaptation of the materials to community settings are equally important. By partnering with Southern "support" institutions and broadening the ownership of the publication, there is an increased assurance of quality follow up beyond the mere generation of materials. This is less likely to happen if materials are copyrighted.

In 1999, MYRADA adapted the "writeshop" methodology to develop its manual on Capacity Building of Self-Help Groups. Instead of completing the entire production at once, a series of workshops lasting 3–4 days each was conducted within six months. In each workshop, teams of trainers from MYRADA's projects listed out possible modules, developed and presented them to the plenary. Each of the 24 modules was critiqued, modified and taken back to the field for testing. The tested modules were modified in subsequent workshops. To keep costs low, two computers were used during the workshops, while the desktop publishing was completed after the fourth workshop.

The "writeshops" not only helped MYRADA put together its training experiences into a book (which was a challenge in itself) but also share and disseminate learning among various persons and projects.
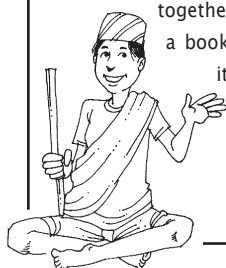
Challenges

■ Participatory workshops are logistically demanding and it takes a lot of time, effort and resources to bring together the various components to ensure a quality product (multi-disciplinary participants, competent production staff, reliable equipment, etc.).

■ Working with multiple partners can at times slow down the post-workshop phase as every partner wants to have a stake on the final product.

■ Feedback from the field on the use of the materials is encouraging, but the systematic monitoring of impact at the community level remains a challenge.

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