RELAXED AND PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL
NOTES ON PRACTICAL APPROACHES AND METHODS

Notes for participants in PRA familiarisation workshops
in the first half of 1997

These notes are an updated foundation. Most of the stuff on the wall charts is additional to (and may be more useful than) what is in these notes. The later headings indicate some of the range of the subject, and especially some of the many methods now known. They are bits of a menu, not a syllabus! I hope they are of some use, if only for occasional reference. You won't want to read all this.

Things are moving very fast. This is a bit scary, but also exciting. For development professionals of all sorts, a good time to be alive. It is not easy to keep up-to-date.

What is PRA?

Perhaps each of us should give our own answer to this question. "Use your own best judgement at all times" is at the core of what PRA is becoming.
It is evolving and spreading so fast that any solid definition would mislead. One description of PRA has been:

"a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, act, monitor and evaluate".

RRA, or rapid rural appraisal, is about finding out. It is data collecting, with the analysis done mainly by us. Good PRA, which evolved out of RRA, is in contrast, empowering, a process of analysis and action by local people. There are methods which are typically RRA methods (observation, semi-structured interviews etc) and others which are typically PRA methods (mapping, diagramming, comparisons etc). PRA methods can be used in an RRA (data collecting) mode, and vice versa. I can see nothing wrong with RRA in the right context, done well and responsibly.

Labels are a problem but we are stuck with them. For RRA:

> "relaxed" is a better word than rapid: rushing is a terrible problem
> "rural" misleads since many applications are urban etc
> "appraisal" is OK.

But for PRA "appraisal" is too limited since good PRA is a process, involving much more than just appraisal. The main publication RRA Notes (numbers 1-21) has been renamed (numbers 22-26) PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) Notes. Participatory Learning and Action is closer to what many practitioners of PRA believe in and are doing, but PRA remains the usual label.

PRA is about empowering. It is linked with a distinctive behaviour, attitudes and approach. "We" are not teachers or transferers of technology, but instead convenors, catalysts, and facilitators. We have to unlearn, and put our knowledge, ideas and categories in second place. We enable local people to do their own investigations, analysis, presentations, planning and action, to own the outcome, and to teach us, sharing their knowledge. We "hand over the stick" and facilitate "their" appraisal, presentation, analysis, planning and action, monitoring and evaluation. They do many of the things we thought only we could do - mapping, diagramming, counting, listing, sorting, ranking, scoring, sequencing, linking, analysing, planning....monitoring and evaluating. "A PRA" is a term which many PRA practitioners and trainers consider should be reserved for a process which empowers local people.

Three common elements found in a PRA approach are:

* individual responsibility and judgement exercised by facilitators, with self-critical awareness

* a commitment to equity (especially the excluded, deprived, women..)

* recognition and celebration of diversity

Enough. You can add to this list, using your own best judgement.

Origins

Some of the methods come from social anthropology. Some, especially diagramming, were developed and spread in Southeast Asia, as part of agroecosystem analysis, originating in the University of Chiang Mai in 1978 with the work of Gordon Conway and his colleagues. For RRA, the University of Khon Kaen in Thailand was a major source of innovation and inspiration in the 1980s. Other methods, like matrix scoring, seem to be new. What is also new is the way they have all come together, and the way both RRA and PRA seem to know no boundaries of discipline or of geography. Interestingly, RRA and PRA, developed in the South, have been transferred to and adopted in the North, are spreading now especially in Canada, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK (Scotland and England).

The term PRA was used early on in Kenya and India around 1988 and 1989. Some of the early PRA in Kenya was linked with the production of Village Resource Management Plans, and some with Rapid Catchment Analysis. In India and Nepal from 1989 onwards there was an accelerated development and spread of PRA with many innovations and applications (see especially RRA Notes 13). Parallel developments took place in other countries around the world, with lateral sharing and convergent evolution.

Spread

PRA has spread:

from NGOs to Government Departments and Universities
from a few countries to many, and from South to North

from methods to behaviour and attitudes, and sharing
from methods to professional change
from behaviour and attitudes to personal change
from sharing and partnership to institutional change
from appraisal to process, including M and E

from field applications to changes in procedures in organisations
from field PRA to PRA applied to organisations
from a few sectors to many (including urban violence, gender
    awareness, land rights, conflict management, refugees,
    integrated pest management, poor people's livelihood
    analysis..)
from rural to urban
from practice to theory (asking - why does it work?)

Learning experience workshops for PRA have been convened in many places and countries now, including International South-South PRA Exchange Workshops, several in India and one in the Philippines. The most recent was in South India, and on behaviour and attitudes. There have been at least 50 cases of sharing where trainers have gone South-South from one country or continent to another to conduct PRA training, one of the most recent being from Mongolia to Kyrgyzstan.

The spirit of inventiveness and improvisation (optimal unpreparedness) which is part of PRA is spreading, and helping people in different parts of the world to feel liberated and able to develop their own varieties of approach and method. People (both local and outsiders), once they have unfrozen and established rapport, enjoy improvising, varying and inventing methods and applying them as part of participatory processes. Creativity has been shown by fieldworkers, and by local people with whom they have been interacting. PRA activities are often engrossing, both popular and powerful.

In some countries and regions, the use of PRA has become almost normal. This is said to be the case in Nepal, and also in Andhra Pradesh in India.. National networks are being established in all continents. The countries where PRA training has been conducted, and where there is activity or where we can put you in touch with useful contacts (those underlined have active PRA-related networks) include

Albania, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, <u>Bangladesh</u>, Belize, Bhutan, <u>Bolivia</u>. Botswana, Brazil, <u>Burkina Faso</u>. Cambodia, Cameroon, <u>Canada</u>. Cap Verde, Chile, <u>China</u>. Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, <u>Egypt</u>. El Salvador, <u>Eritrea</u>. <u>Ethiopia</u>. <u>Finland</u>. the Gambia, Germany, <u>Ghana</u>. Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, <u>India</u>. <u>Indonesia</u>. Iran, Ireland, Jordan, <u>Kazakhstan</u>. <u>Kenya</u>. <u>Kyrgyzstan</u>. Honduras, Lao PDR, Lebanon, <u>Lesotho</u>. <u>Mali</u>. Malawi, Malaysia, <u>Mali</u>. Mauritania, <u>Mexico</u>. <u>Mongolia</u>. Morocco, <u>Mozambique</u>. <u>Namibia</u>. <u>Nepal</u>. <u>Niger</u>. <u>Nigeria</u>. <u>Norway</u>. <u>Pakistan</u>. Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, <u>the Philippines</u>. Rwanda, <u>Senegal</u>. Sierra Leone, <u>South Africa</u>. <u>Sri Lanka</u>. Sudan, Sweden, Tadjikistan, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, <u>Uganda</u>. Uruguay, Uzbekistan, UK, Venezuela, Vietnam, <u>Zambia</u> and <u>Zimbabwe</u> .

Much else has surely been taking place, but which we do not know about.

A current question is what potential the approaches and methods have for different types of institutions. NGOs were the first main pioneers of PRA but many Government field organisations, training institutes, and universities are now using and evolving variants of PRA. Most major donor organisations and Northern-based NGOs are promoting, supporting,and/or being challenged by, PRA. Some examples of widespread applications are village-level planning, watershed development and management, social forestry, tank rehabilitation, women's programmes, credit, client ("stakeholder") selection and deselection, health programmes, animal husbandry, agricultural research, agricultural extension, and increasingly policy (with PPAs = participatory poverty assessments). Training institutes are interested in adopting and adapting the approach and methods for the fieldwork and field experience of their probationers and students. After a slow start, many people in universities, especially students, are showing interest, and increasingly faculty are recognising the potential of PRA methods, and introducing these into their courses.

Concerns

There is a mass of bad practice. Quality assurance is now a huge concern among practitioners and trainers. Dangers and abuses include:

> * failing to put behaviour and attitudes before methods
> * rushing and dominating
> * pretending to be experienced trainers when not

* rigid, routinised applications
* taking local people's time without recompense, raising expectations
* demanding instant PRA on a large scale
* cosmetic labelling without substance

The labels "RRA" and "PRA" have been used to justify and legitimate sloppy, biased, rushed and unselfcritical work. Any approach or methods can be used badly, and RRA and PRA, far from being exceptions, provide outstanding examples of bad practice.

Part of the problem is that donors and Governments tend to want to go instantly to scale, in hundreds, even thousands, of communities. There seems no way this can be done both quickly and well. Demand for training exceeds supply, although competent PRA trainers must now number hundreds worldwide. PRA has become a fashionable label, with "expert" consultants saying they can provide it when they cannot. A recurrent prejudice encountered among donors is that somehow trainers have to be recruited in the North, when *PRA was developed in the South and most of the good trainers are in the South.*

Donors and Government Departments, and even NGOs, rarely recognise that major institutional changes - of cultures, procedures and rewards - may be required to sustain good PRA. We are in the process of learning what those necessary changes are. We know that it does not work well to preach participation at the grass roots and maintain an authoritarian hierarchy "above", with donor or department-driven targets, punitive management and the like.

Starting, and going where?

Some people whose attitudes are truly participatory can, with a minimum of exposure, simply go ahead and learn as they go. The short paper "Start, stumble, self-correct, share" encourages such people to start, recognising that much depends on our personal behaviour and attitudes, and that we will make mistakes. Our behaviour and attitudes include critical self-awareness and embracing error; sitting down, listening and learning; not lecturing but "handing over the stick" to local people, who become the main teachers and analysts; having confidence that "they can do it"; and a relaxed and open-ended inventiveness.

Much PRA is enjoyed, both by local participants and by outsiders who initiate it. The word "fun" has entered the vocabulary and describes some of the experience. But some people with a strong disciplinary training find the reversal of teaching and learning difficult. It is not their fault. We can help one another firmly but sympathetically. And we can amiably tease one another when we slip into "holding the stick"; as of course I shall do!

Where does all this lead? How crucial is it that local people should conduct their own investigations and analysis? Does PRA provide a strategy for local empowerment and sustainable development? What happens when it goes to scale? Can self-critical awareness be part of the genes of PRA, so that it is self-improving as it spreads? These are questions you may wish to answer for yourself. For many now they are being answered by sharing experience. To present background, and in search of understanding and answers, here are some headings and notes.

Why Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) Originally in the late 1970s and 1980s?

Need: accelerating rural change, and the need for good and timely information and insights

Recognising "us" and our confidence in our knowledge as much of the problem, and "them" and their knowledge as much of the solution

Rural development tourism - anti-poverty biases (spatial, project, person, seasonal...), and being rapid and wrong

The insulation, isolation and out-of-date experience of senior and powerful people, most of them men

Survey slavery - questionnaire surveys which take long, mislead, are wasteful, and are reported on, if at all, late

The search for cost-effectiveness, recognising trade-offs between depth, breadth, accuracy, and timeliness, assessing actual beneficial use of information against costs of obtaining it

What happened, leading to PRA?

A confluence of approaches and methods - applied social anthropology, agroecosystem analyis, farming systems research, participatory action research, and RRA itself all coming together and evolving...

A repertoire of new methods especially with visuals (mapping, matrices, diagramming.....) and of sequences of methods

The discovery that "they can do it"

The relative power and popularity of the open against the closed, the visual against the verbal, group against individual analysis, and comparing against measuring

The search for practical approaches and methods for decentralisation, democracy, diversity, sustainability, community participation, empowerment....

Principles shared by RRA and PRA

* offsetting biases (spatial, project, person - gender, elite etc, seasonal, professional, courtesy..)

* rapid progressive learning - flexible, exploratory, interactive, inventive

* reversals - learning from, with and by rural people, eliciting and using their criteria and categories, and finding, understanding and appreciating RPK (rural people's knowledge)

* optimal ignorance, and appropriate imprecision - not finding out more than is needed, not measuring more accurately than needed, and not trying to measure what does not need to be measured. We are trained to make absolute measurements, but often trends, scores or ranking are all that are required

* triangulation - using different methods, sources and disciplines, and a range of informants in a range of places, and cross-checking to get closer to the truth through successive approximations

* principal investigators' direct contact, face to face, in the field

* seeking diversity and differences

The Core of PRA? (but make up your own)

PRA, as has evolved, is all this and more. Some of the "more" is:

* facilitating - they do it: empowering and enabling local people to do more or all of the investigation, mapping, modelling, diagramming, listing, counting, estimating, ranking, scoring, analysis, presentation, planning... themselves, and to share and own the outcome. Analysis by them, shared with us.

* our behaviour and attitudes: for this, the primacy of our behaviour and attitudes, and of rapport, more important than methods, - asking local people to teach us, respect for them, confidence that they can do it, handing over the stick...

* a culture of sharing - of information, of methods, of food, of field experiences (between NGOs, Government and local people)

* critical self-awareness about our attitudes and behaviour; doubt; embracing and learning from error; continuously trying to do better; building learning and improvement into every experience

Some Problems and Dangers

* how to find the poorer, and enable them to do and share their analysis

* rushing (rapid and wrong again)

* lecturing instead of listening, watching and learning. Is this problem worse with men than women, worse with older men than younger, and worst of all with those who have retired? Who holds the stick? Who wags the finger? Who teaches? Who listens? Who learns?

(The ERR, which I will explain, is relevant here)

* interrupting and interviewing people, and suggesting things to them, when they are trying to concentrate on mapping, ranking, scoring, diagramming...Learning not to interview is not easy

* imposing "our" ideas, categories, values, without realising we are doing it, making it difficult to learn from "them", and making "them" appear ignorant when they are not

* finding the questions to ask! (We assume we know what to ask. The beginning of wisdom is to realise how often we do not know what we do not know)

* normal professional pressures, including the tyranny of (bad, not good) statisticians, the desire for formal statistical respectability, and the compulsion to measure things rather than compare, rank, score, identify trends...

* wanting to be snug and safe in the warm womb of a preset programme and method

* male teams and neglect of women (again and again and again and again and again and...). What are the proportions of women and men among us here?

* rushing, lecturing and interrupting instead of listening, watching and learning. Forgive me, but it needs repeating. This can be a personal problem which we do not recognise in ourselves. (It is a problem for me, as you will discover). It is best treated as a joke, and pointed out to each other when we err. Which we all do.

* senior people (and also younger ones) reluctant to spend time in the field let alone camp or nighthalt in a village

* consultants who claim but lack expertise, and do not understand the need for fundamental changes in behaviour and attitudes

* large-scale implementation of "PRA" in a blueprint mode, demanded by donors and Governments, routinised, top-down, with no changes in behaviour and attitudes. Instructions to all in an organisation that they will immediately "use PRA". Rapid unselfcritical adoption leading to poor outcomes, and discrediting PRA.

(See also "Participatory Methods and Approaches: sharing our concerns and looking to the future" in PLA Notes 22; and "Sharing Our Experience: An appeal to governments and donors" (July 1996))

Approaches and Methods

"Approach" is basic. If our attitudes are wrong, many of these methods will not work as well as they should. Where attitudes are right and rapport is good, we can be surprised by what local people show they know, and what they can do.

PRA entails shifts of emphasis from:

dominating	to	empowering
closed	to	open
individual	to	group
verbal	to	visual
measuring	to	comparing, ranking and scoring

and of experience (when things go well) from

reserve	to	rapport
frustration	to	fun

Don't be put off by the length of the list that follows. Probably no one in the world has used all these methods. The purpose of listing them is to show that the menu is varied. There is much to try out and explore, and much to invent for yourself and to encourage local people to invent..

You may already have used some of these methods. Some are plain commonsense and common practice. Others are ingenious and not obvious. Some are quite simple to do. Others less so. You can anyway invent your own variants, interacting with local people. Appropriate attitudes and behaviour are often the key. The first eight methods and approaches come especially from the RRA tradition:

Some "RRA Methods"

* offset the anti-poverty biases of rural development tourism (spatial, project, person, seasonal, courtesy...)

* find and review secondary data. They can mislead. They can also help a lot. At present, for the sake of a new balance, and of "our" reorientation and "their" participation, secondary data are not heavily stressed in PRA; but they can be very useful, especially in the earlier stages of e.g. deciding where to go

* observe directly (see for yourself) (It has been striking for me to begin to realise how much I do not see, or do not think to ask about. Does education deskill us? Am I alone, or do many of us have this problem?) Combine observation with self-critical awareness of personal biases that result from our specialised education and background, and consciously try to compensate for these.

* seek out the experts. Ask: who are the experts? So obvious, and so often overlooked. Who knows most about changes in types of fuels used for cooking? Medicinal plants? Seasonal rainfall? Who is pregnant? Goats? Treatments for diseases? Edible berries? Water supplies? Ecological history? Fodder grasses? Markets and prices?
  Factionalism and conflict? Changing values and customs? Resolving conflicts? The priorities of poor people?....

* semi-structured interviewing. The Khon Kaen school of RRA has regarded this as the "core" of good RRA. Have a mental or written checklist, but be open to new aspects and to following up on the new and unexpected

* sequences of analysis - from group to key informant, to other informants; or with a series of key informants, each expert on a different stage of a process (e.g. men on ploughing, women on weeding... etc)

* key probes: questions which can lead direct to key issues such as - "What do you talk about when you are together?" "What new practices have you or others here experimented with in recent years?" "What happens when someone's hut burns down?"

* case studies and stories - a household history and profile, a farm, coping with a crisis, how a conflict was resolved...

Some "PRA Methods"

* groups (casual or random encounter; focus or specialist; representative or structured for diversity; community/neighbourhood; or formal). Group interviews are often powerful and efficient, but relatively neglected. Because of our obsession with counting through individual questionnaire-based interviews?

* they do it. as in all PRA: Local people as investigators and researchers - women, school teachers, volunteers, students, farmers, village specialists, poor people. They do transects, observe, interview other local people. Beyond this, their own analysis. presentations, planning, action, monitoring and evaluation....

* do-it-yourself, supervised and taught by them (levelling a field, transplanting, weeding, lopping tree fodder, collecting common property resources, herding, fishing, cutting and carrying fodder grass, milking animals, fetching water, fetching firewood, cooking, digging compost, sweeping and cleaning, washing clothes, lifting water, plastering a house, thatching, collecting refuse...). Roles are reversed. They are the experts. We are the clumsy novices. They teach us. We learn from them. And learn their problems.

* <u>participatory mapping and modelling</u>: people's mapping, drawing and colouring on the ground with sticks, seeds, powders etc etc or on paper, to make social, health or demographic maps (of the residential village), resource maps of village lands or of forests, maps of fields, farms, home gardens, topic maps (for water, soils, trees etc etc), service and opportunity maps, etc; making 3-D models of watersheds etc. These methods have been one of the most popular "discoveries" and can be combined with or lead into wealth or wellbeing ranking, watershed planning, health action planning etc. Census mapping can use seeds for people, cards for households...

* <u>local analysis of secondary sources</u>: For example, participatory analysis of aerial photographs (often best at 1:5000) to identify soil types, land conditions, land tenure etc; also satellite imagery

* <u>estimates, comparisons and counting</u>: often using local measures, judgements and materials such as seeds, pellets, fruits, stones or sticks as counters or measures, sometimes combined with participatory maps and models

* <u>transect walks</u> - systematically walking with key informants through an area, observing, asking, listening, discussing, identifying different zones, local technologies, introduced technologies, seeking problems, solutions, opportunities, and mapping and/or diagramming resources and findings. Transects now take many forms - vertical, loop, along a watercourse, combing, sometimes even (in the Philippines) the sea-bottom.

* <u>time lines and trend and change analysis</u>: chronologies of events, listing major remembered local events with approximate dates; people's accounts of the past, of how customs, practices and things close to them have changed; ethno-biographies - local histories of a crop, an animal, a tree, a pest, a weed...; diagrams and maps showing ecological histories, changes in land use and cropping patterns, population, migration, fuels used, education, health, credit, the roles of women and men...; and the causes of changes and trends, in a participatory mode often with estimation of relative magnitudes

* <u>seasonal calendars</u> - distribution of days of rain, amount of rain or soil moisture, crops, agricultural labour, non-agricultural labour, diet, food consumption, sickness, prices, animal fodder, fuel, migration, income, expenditure, debt etc etc

* <u>daily time use analysis</u>: indicating relative amounts of time, degrees of drudgery etc of activities, sometimes indicating seasonal variations

* <u>institutional or "chapati"/Venn diagramming</u>: identifying individuals and institutions important in and for a community or group, or within an organisation, and their relationships

* <u>linkage diagrams</u>: of flows, connections and causality. This has been used for marketing, nutrient flows on farms, migration, social contacts, impacts of interventions and trends etc

* <u>wellbeing grouping (or wealth ranking)</u> - grouping or ranking households according to wellbeing or wealth, including those considered poorest or worst off. A good lead into discussions of the livelihoods of the poor and how they cope

* <u>matrix scoring and ranking</u>, especially using matrices and seeds to compare through scoring, for example different trees, or soils, or methods of soil and water conservation, varieties of a crop or animal, fields on a farm, fish, weeds, conditions at different times, and to express preferences

* <u>local indicators</u>. e.g. what are poor people's criteria of wellbeing, and how do they differ from those we assume for them?

* <u>team contracts and interactions</u> - contracts drawn up by teams with agreed norms of behaviour; modes of interaction within teams, including changing pairs, evening discussions, mutual criticism and help; how to behave in the field, etc. (The team may be oustiders only, local people only, or local people and outsiders together)

* <u>shared presentations and analysis</u>. where maps, models, diagrams, and findings are presented by villagers and/or outsiders, especially to village or community meetings, and checked, corrected and discussed. Brainstorming, especially joint sessions with villagers. But who talks? Who talks how much? Who interrupts whom? Whose ideas dominate? Who lectures?

* <u>contrast comparisons</u> - asking group A to analyse group B, and vice versa. This has been used for gender awareness, asking men to analyse how women spend their time.

* <u>drama and participatory video</u> on key issues, to express problems and explore solutions

* <u>alternatives to questionnaires</u>. A new repertoire of participatory alternatives to the use of questionnaires, which generate shared information which can be added up in tables.

* <u>immediate report writing</u>. If there is to be a report, writing it then and there. Easier said than done. But remember the files and queues of supplicants waiting when you get back. Will the report sit in the I-will-do-it-next-week-when-there-will-be-more-time box, and silt over with layers of later papers? And even if you do get round to it, how much will you have forgotten after the lapse of time?

PRA visualisations often combine some of the following:

> mapping
> sequencing
> listing
> comparing
> counting, estimating and scoring
> linking

When any three of these are combined, complex analysis tends to result, often with cross checking accuracy through analysis and presentation by groups.

Practical Tips

* Don't lecture. Look, listen and learn. Facilitate. Don't dominate. Don't interrupt. When they are mapping, modelling or diagramming, don't interfere: let them get on with it. When people are thinking or discussing before replying, give them time to think or discuss.
(This sounds easy. It is not. We tend to be habitual interrupters. Do clever, important and articulate people who think fast find it hardest to keep their mouths shut?)

So Listen, Learn, Facilitate. Don't Dominate! Don't Interrupt!

* spend nights in villages and slums

* embrace error. We all make mistakes, and do things badly sometimes.
    Never mind. Don't hide it. Share it. When things go wrong, it is a chance to
    learn. Say "Aha. That was a mess. Good. Now what can we learn from it?".

* ask yourself - who is being met and heard, and what is being seen, and where and
    why; and who is not being met and heard, and what is not being seen, and where
    and why?

* relax (RRA = relaxed rural appraisal). Don't rush.

* meet people when it suits them, and when they can be at ease, not when it suits us.
    This applies even more strongly to women than to men. PRA methods often take
    time, and women tend to have many obligations demanding their attention.
    Sometimes the best times for them are the worse times for us - a couple of hours
    after dark, or sometimes early in the morning. Compromises are often needed, but
    it is a good discipline, and good for rapport, to try to meet at their best times rather
    than ours; and don't force discussions to go on for too long. Stop before people
    are too tired.

* be around in the evening, at night and in the early morning.

* allow unplanned time, walk and wander around.

* ask about what is seen.

* probe. This sounds easy, but is one of the most neglected skills, often driven out by
    actual or supposed lack of time. All too often we accept the first reply to a
    question as being all that is needed, when there is much, much more to be learnt,
    and people know more, much more, than we supposed

* notice, seize on and investigate diversity, whatever is different, the unexpected.

* use the six helpers - who, what, where, when, why and how?

* ask open-ended questions

* show interest and enthusiasm in learning from people

* have second and third meetings with the same people (But beware of biases)

* allow more time than expected for team interaction (I have never yet got this right)
    and for changing the agenda

* enjoy it! It is often interesting, and often fun

* remember Raul's three rules (remind me to explain) - the first is "Be nice to
    people".

Applications and Uses of RRA and PRA

These are many. You will have your own needs and ideas. Some of the main types of RRA and PRA process have been:

* exploratory, learning by outsiders about conditions generally

* appraisal and planning for the identification, planning and action by and with local people, enabling them to appraise, analyse, plan, act, manage -monitoring, evaluation, reappraisal, ad hoc problem investigation...

* training and orientation for outsiders and villagers

* topic investigations

Examples of topics include the use and deterioration of common property resources; women's time use; women's and men's different priorities; why poor farmers do and don't take loans; why they do and don't plant trees; how poor people spend lump sums of money; the spread of animal diseases; traditional herding, fishing or tree management skills; sequences and preferences in using different treatments for diseases; local practices of soil, water and nutrient conservation and concentration; historical changes in child-rearing practices; the non-adoption of an innovation; why some children do not go to school, or drop out; historical changes in diet; seasonal deprivation; migration; impact of a road; the reality of what happens in a Government programme; urban violence...

Some of the more common applications include:

natural resources and agriculture

* watersheds, and soil and water conservation
* forestry and agroforestry
* fisheries and aquaculture
* biodiversity and wildlife reserve buffer zones
* village plans
* crops and animal husbandry, including farmer participatory research/ farming systems research and problem identification by farmers
* irrigation
* markets

programmes for equity

* women and gender
* credit
* selection: finding, selecting and deselecting people for poverty-oriented programmes
* income-earning: identification and analysis of non-agricultural income-earning opportunities.
* livelihood analysis by poor people, leading to household plans

health and nutrition

* health assessments and monitoring
* food security and nutrition assessment and monitoring
* water and sanitation assessment, planning and location
* emergency assessment and management
* HIV/AIDS

<u>policy</u>

*   the impact of structural adjustment and other policies
*   participatory poverty assessments
*   land policy, etc

Other recent applications include adult literacy (the REFLECT approach),
organisational analysis, gender awareness, children, urban violence, teenage sexual
behaviour.....

Some of the <u>benefits</u> can be and have been:

* <u>empowering</u> the poor and weak - enabling a group (e.g. labourers, women, poor
    women, small farmers etc) or a community themselves to analyse conditions,
    giving them confidence to state and assert their priorities, to present proposals, to
    make demands and to take action, leading to sustainable and effective
    participatory programmes

* <u>the project process</u> including identification, appraisal, planning, implementation,
    monitoring and evaluation, all in a participatory mode

* <u>direct learning</u> and updating for senior professionals and officials, especially those
    trapped in headquarters

* <u>orientation</u> of students, NGO workers, Government staff, and university and
    training institute staff towards a culture of open learning in organisations

* <u>diversification</u>: encouraging and enabling the expression and exploitation of local
    diversity in otherwise standardised programmes

* <u>policy review</u>- changing and adapting policies through relatively timely, accurate
    and relevant insights

* <u>research</u>: identifying research priorities and initiating participatory research

and you may have others to add.

Some Frontiers and Challenges for PRA

* <u>behaviour and attitudes</u>: the development and dissemination of approaches
    and methods for enabling outsiders to change

* <u>assuring quality</u>: how to prevent rapid spread bringing low quality - how to make
    self-critical awareness and improvement part of the genes of PRA

* <u>PRA in large organisations</u>: how to establish and maintain PRA in large
    organisations (government departments, large NGOs, universities.....) the
    flexibility, diversity and behaviour and attitudes required by PRA. are
    compromises and trade-offs needed, inevitable...?

* <u>helping distant donors and others understand</u>. exercise restraint, and change their
    norms, rewards and procedures to permit and promote PRA (including senior and
    middle level officials and NGO staff, in both N and S)

* <u>a culture of sharing and lateral learning</u>: how to sustain and enhance sharing, between outsiders and villagers, between different organisations - NGOs, government departments, universities and training institutes... and to avoid possessive territoriality. Sharing and learning laterally, as when local people themselves become facilitators of PRA

* <u>participatory Monitoring and Evaluation</u>. How better to enable poor people and communities to do their own M and E.

* <u>empowerment, the weak, and conflicts</u>: how to enable women, and the poorer, to take part more and more, and to gain more and more, and how to identify, help the resolution of conflicts between groups in communities

* <u>inventiveness and creativity</u>: how to sustain and enhance inventiveness and creativity with new methods, and with combinations and sequences of methods, and how to develop and spread better alternatives to questionnaire surveys

* <u>trainer/facilitators</u>: how to help more people become good trainer'facilitators, and to have the freedom to provide PRA learning experiences for others. Are new arrangements needed?

And you will have your own list.

<u>Use your own best judgement</u>

This heading has the final word. One can ask:

Are PRA-type approaches and methods a passing fad, or have they come to stay, part of a participatory paradigm? Do they present points of entry for lasting change? Are they part of an agenda for the latter 1990s and the 21st century?

I hope our workshop will help you to make your own judgement about these and other questions and to decide for yourself whether PRA approaches and methods, if they are new to you, can be of use to you and others in your work.

10 January 1997   Robert Chambers
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                                    Brighton BN1 9RE, UK

PS For information about sources and contacts on PRA/PLA and related approaches, please see the sheet "Sources and Contacts", available updated periodically from Jenny Skepper at IDS - fax (44) 1273 621202 and telephone (44) 1273 678490). You will see that specialised information is available in various forms.

PPS I am embarrassed to mention it, but there is some more information in a book I have written and which has just been published: <u>Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last</u>. Intermediate Technology Publications, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH. See mainly chapters 6 Learning to Learn, and 7 What Works and Why, and also chapter 10 for dangers and abuses. The book is £3.25 in the UK (£3.75 per copy inc p and p) from IT Publications, and also available from:

        Legacy Bookshop, PO Box 68077, Nairobi
        Women Ink, 777 UN Plaza, New York NY 10017 ($10.50 incl, shipping)
        Bahri and Sons, Booksellers, Khan Market, New Delhi 110 003
        K.Krishnamurthy Booksellers, 23 Thanikachalam Road, Madras 600017