

NOTES OF THE DISCUSSIONS AT THE WORKSHOP ON RAPID RURAL APPRAISAL

held at

The Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex

26/27 October 1978

These notes are a record of the meeting largely for the benefit of participants. It is intended to produce a report for a wider audience based on these notes which incorporates the additional comments and material received after the meeting.

Participants

Bina Agarwal (IDS); Jeff Alderson (Oxfam); David Barker (Bedford College); Andrew Barnett (SPRU); Deryke Belshaw (ODG, UEA); Ian Carruthers (Wye College); Robert Chambers (IDS); Edward Clay (AFRAS, UoS); George Gwyer (ODM); M.A. Hamid (Univ. of Rajshahi, Bangladesh); Cecile Jackson (Wye College); John Karimu (SOAS); Richard Longhurst (IDS); Ingrid Palmer; Paul Richards (SOAS); Stephen Sandford (ODI); A.Sattar Mandal (Wye College); Jeremy Swift; Geof Wood (University of Bath).

(Jeff Alderson, M.A. Hamid and Cecile Jackson were not present for the first day and Jeremy Swift was not present for the second day.)

Papers and Notes presented

Barker, David, "Appropriate Methodology: An Example using a Traditional African Board Game to Measure Farmers' Attitudes and Environmental Images".

Belshaw, D.G.R., "Village Viability Assessment Procedures in Tanzania: decision-making with curtailed information requirements".

Clay, Edward J., "Direct and Indirect Methods of Observation in Rapid Rural Appraisal".

Jackson, Cecile, Sattar Mandal and Ian Carruthers, "Notes on Rapid Land Ownership and Management Studies".

Longhurst, Richard, "Rural Stratification and Resource Allocation: Some Thoughts on Deriving Most Useful Information in Short Periods of Time".

Richards, Paul, "'Geography is a bottle of Heineken Lager beer' - How to be the most boring person in development planning and still get your facts wrong".

Sandford, Stephen, "Some Miscellaneous Thoughts".

Sandford, Stephen, "Situations and Trends with Pastoral People and Livestock".

Swift, Jeremy, "Notes on Rapid Rural Appraisal in Dry Pastoral Areas of West Africa".

Wood, Geof, "The Epistemology of Rapid Rural Appraisal?"

Other Documents Available

Other documents made available included:

"Rural Development Tourism (RDT)", (Lightly Edited Notes from the walls of the IDS Workshop on 10 March 1977).

Peter E. Hildebrand, "Motivating Small Farmers to Accept Change", paper presented to the conference on Integrated Crop and Animal Production to Optimise Resource Utilization on Small Farms in Developing Countries, Bellagio, Italy, October 18-23, 1978.

Wolf Ladejinsky, "The Green Revolution in Bihar - The Kosi Area: A Field Trip", and "The Green Revolution in Punjab: A Field Trip" (Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 4, No. 39, 27 Sept., 1969, and Vol. 4, No. 26, 28 June 1969 respectively).

The Oxfam Field Director's Handbook.

Coleman, Gilroy, Adam Pain and Deryke Belshaw, Village Viability Assessment in the Framework of Regional Planning in Tanzania, UNDP/FAO Project UR1/75/076, Follow-up Assistance in Regional Planning, Overseas Development Group, University of East Anglia, June 1978.

(Michael Collinson), Demonstrations of an Interdisciplinary Farming Systems Approach to Planning Adaptive Agricultural Research Programmes, Report No. 1, April 1977, Part of Siaya District, Nyanza Province, Kenya, CIMMYT Eastern African Economics Programme, CIMMYT, P.O. Box 25171, Nairobi, Kenya.

Robert Wade, "Mysteries of the Dhora", Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. X, No. 29, 19 July 1975.

Jeff Alderson, "Oxfam and Evaluation" A Policy Paper, August 1977 (S38/77/JA/REL)

Michael Harris, "Oxfam and Evaluation" Covering Note, September 1977 (S34/77/JA/REL).

As is natural and proper in a workshop of this sort, discussion did not follow a straight line. There will therefore be some repetition in the notes which follow. In some cases also earlier points of view are modified later on. It would be a big labour to try to sort this out in this document. All we are trying to do here is to record reasonably accurately the main points which were made.

The sequence of discussion was partly determined by the sequence in which we took presentation of papers. This was:

OCTOBER 1978

26th a.m.	Introduction - Robert Chambers Geof Wood's paper
p.m. 1	Stephen Sandford's first paper Paul Richards, John Karimu and David Barker
p.m. 2	Stephen Sandford's and Jeremy Swift's pastoral papers.
27th a.m. 1	George Gwyer's comment Edward Clay
a.m. 2	Richard Longhurst Ian Carruthers
p.m.	Deryke Belshaw Jeff Alderson Final Discussion.

Background and Introduction

The letter of invitation to the workshop included the following assertions and questions:

"The background to the workshop is the difficulty which outsiders (government staff, workers in voluntary agencies, researchers, aid personnel, etc.) have in finding out about rural situations. Official statistics are often scant, and where they exist, misleading. Official records kept at the local level are often falsified. Rural people are cautious in what they tell visitors and often have good reason to hide the truth. Outsiders themselves are programmed only to notice and ask about certain things. Moreover, most rural appraisal is concerned only with the present, and not in any systematic way with the past or the future, so that long term trends tend to be unidentified. Yet it is on the basis of appraisals conducted under such difficulties as these that many rural development projects and programmes are identified, designed and implemented.

"One response is the call for more surveys and detailed research. But these have their own problems - of cost, staff recruitment, data collection, data processing, data analysis, and then (if things get that far) using that analysis to identify and design projects and programmes. The results are often long delays and planning without implementation. The main beneficiaries may be the white ants that devour the wasted paper.

"An alternative response, which this workshop would seek to explore, is to improve 'quick and dirty' work. Is there some optimality somewhere between the full-scale survey on the one hand and casual empiricism on the other? How, for example, can an outsider find out quickly and accurately about the distribution of land holdings and the trends in the size of holdings in an area? Similar questions can be asked about the environment (soils, vegetation, ground water, renewable energy supplies), ownership of the means of production other than land, population, technology, cultivation practices, wages, prices, migration, employment, health, education and so on."

The letter then said that the question the workshop would address was to what extent, and how, an 'outsider' could rapidly, cheaply and accurately identify the current position, trends, probable futures in a rural environment.

Robert Chambers noted that the workshop followed two earlier and related workshops - one on rural development tourism (notes of which were available), and one earlier in 1978 on Indigenous Technical Knowledge (the papers of which were to be published in an IDS Bulletin). The background to the workshop had been given in the letter of invitation. Many decisions concerning rural areas were taken by urban-based people in urban areas. These included government staff, staff of voluntary agencies, and staff of aid donor organizations. Their perceptions and the quality and nature of the information which they had available appeared an important area for study, as did the nature and methods of the research which generated some of the information.

An initial impression was that perceptions and information suffered from serious distortions, omissions, and inefficiencies, including the following:

- (i) biases in contact and observation. Biases affecting the perceptions of outsiders and the information available to them included: urban, peri-urban, tarmac, roadside, developed as against underdeveloped region, project as against non-project, seasonal (dry season as against wet season), male as against female, elite as against non-elite, users of services and facilities as against non-users, and settled people as against migrants. Many of these biases could be seen to be linked (though not exclusively) with time constraints for obtaining information.
- (ii) the overcollection of data in formal research. Both the open ended participant observation of classical social anthropology and the very detailed data collection of large scale surveys appear to over collect data in relation to particular purposes.
- (iii) gaps. A long list of common gaps in perception and knowledge, partly relating to the biases mentioned above, could be identified. These had included women, smaller farmers, landless labourers, rural migrants, small livestock, domestic technology (including cooking practices) and so on. The question was whether, to use David Barker's expression, there were "appropriate methodologies" for rapid rural appraisal which might lie somewhere between the casual empiricism of rural development tourism in its crudest form, and the conventional respectability of the methods of traditional academic research.

A second question before the workshop was whether we could get some order into the subject of rapid rural appraisal with useful categories and typologies.

George Gwyer asked - RRA for what? Were we concerned solely or at all with project identification? (The answer that emerged was that project identification was indeed one of quite a large number of purposes for RRA, see Annex II.)

Ian Carruthers considered that the distinction between academic and policy oriented methods was artificial; he argued that all researchers find out things at a late stage in field work, and are forced to do a quick and dirty investigation to plug the gap.

Stephen Sandford thought that four relevant questions were:

- What sort of information is needed?
- How quickly?
- What standards of accuracy are required?
- What techniques should be used?

Paul Richards asked who was the 'you'? (The person carrying out RRA). He also wondered to what extent there was a split between long-and-clean and quick-and-dirty. Were we looking for quick and clean? Is it possible that 'long' might also be 'dirty'?

Geof Wood considered that it was important to distinguish RRA which was concerned with policies which existed already, and RRA which was intended to initiate policy proposals. RRA might often have an ideological support function. In this connection the degree of autonomy of the appraiser was an important factor. Full time freelance consultants, for example, being concerned to secure future work, might be particularly likely to provide support for rather than question existing policies.

Ian Carruthers addressed the question of ^{the} possible audience for serious work on RRA. He thought this was very large. There might be half a million people on tour in rural areas without even notebooks.

Geof Wood observed that there was no journal in which to publish concerning methods of RRA. Stephen Sandford pointed out that there were various statistical journals (but he did not suggest that they might publish on RRA). There was no professional statistician in the workshop, an omission. Ian Carruthers thought that statistical

methods tended to keep people in their offices and that they were in some opposition to RRA. To this Stephen Sandford replied that quick and dirty indicators were used by statisticians as for example in monitoring progress with the United States economy.

Presentation by Geof Wood based on his paper

Geof Wood said that the need for RRA could be predicted. It should be incorporated as part of a regular activity in planning. He was concerned about RRA by 'outsiders' who were ignorant. They might efficiently collect data but not know what it meant. There were important epistemological questions in RRA and in research.

An illustration could be taken from Bangladesh. Until recently there had been little rural research in the social sciences apart from that in Comilla. There had also been little work on social structures and relationships. Much material had however been collected on the basis of assumptions originating in Michigan State University and which ignored issues in political economy. In 1974 he went as a research consultant to Comilla. At that time he found only one recent 'social anthropological study' for the whole of Bangladesh which was useful to him, but this had been carried out in 1966 (although there were some much older ones).* The response to this lack was that the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies designed a research proposal for 50 village case studies, a proposal for massive overkill. Fortunately this came to nothing.

He considered that there should be a continuous relationship between academic research, RRA and planning, and that the same people should be involved in all three.

Both a positivist approach, and traditional research methods, raise problems. A positivist approach threw up what he called an "unprepared appraisal"; hypotheses were needed for without them "we do not know what to ask". The traditional solution of this problem - the use of classical anthropology - was leisurely with many unstructured questions and took a long time. In consequence anthropologists writing theses had problems! His own experience in Bihar had been that after four months field

* Edward Clay felt his point was disputable; he cited the work of Arens and Beurden, the recent work of Jim and Betsy Boyce from the US and the Village Studies of Shapan Adnan.

work he still had no questionnaire since he still did not know exactly what questions to ask. The logic of a questionnaire anyway tended to crowd out information, and imposed a pattern. What it might confirm or refute was one's own hypotheses.

One should not expect too much from RRA. There might be a tendency to overload it. He felt that RRA could only add descriptively to existing knowledge within existing concepts. There was a problem of indicators and of the meanings to be attributed to them being a function of previously known concepts. As an example he asked what role kinship played in the location of tubewells; family relations matter for some allocations of resources and some purposes (e.g. the siting of tubewells) but not for others; a stress on kinship might obscure the fact that market relations existed between brothers.

A major issue was to what extent RRA had an ideological and legitimating role. Premises were rarely examined by consultants. What they did could be described as "adding a gloss of rationality" to what had already been decided on, and this might reflect an "agglomeration of class interests".

Geof Wood summarised his presentation and made the following points.

- The shorter the RRA the more the appraiser concentrates on his own hypotheses and the less unexpected data will be generated.
- It should be a condition of appraisal that time should be allowed to enable respondents to tell stories.
- A qualitative idea of issues in political economy could be obtained by purposively selecting some "keyhole" informants and asking them many questions.
- There was a distinction between a rigorous RRA and casual RRA. Rigorous RRA required some sampling.
- There was a tendency to investigate only those involved in a programme. To what extent should those who were not included be considered? What role might RRA have here?

- Some issues are thought to be sensitive and are not. In one case he had found data on indebtedness flooding in unexpectedly and had difficulty in handling it.
- There were important questions concerning the appraiser. What views did he hold? Are views suspended for the period of the analysis? What autonomy does the appraiser have? There are issues here of financial and institutional distance.

He concluded by reflecting that there was a myth of the rural development specialist. A former director of Comilla had described himself as a technician. But RRA was not just a technical matter. It raised epistemological and ideological issues which should be confronted and analysed.

Andrew Barnett observed that as consultants reports quite often came to conclusions which are contrary to the client's, their legitimising role might be tested by research.

Edward Clay pointed out that there were similar activities in rich countries, but much of it occurred within governments. Developing countries have to draw on outside expertise more often than the richer countries. Some of the people engaged in these activities did not accept the rules of the game, posing problems both for the person concerned and for the government, including how to handle "fissile material", and questions of legitimation.

Geof Wood said that this was the "dirty" part of RRA. The terrain of objectives was established external to yourself, and the objectives implied a view of social relationships. For example the concept of "trickle down" effects are based on a false understanding of class relationships, but in practice class relationships set boundaries to multiplier effects.

Ian Carruthers noted that there was a personal dilemma where one differed from a government. Should one try to move it gradually, a mild, radical approach? One possible view was "I may do less harm than someone else".

Geof Wood said that he was involved with such questions. How much responsibility did one have to expose the nature of the beast? Are the policy makers left out of the equation? Policy makers' interests tended to distort the reality perceived. For example did the World Bank have a "hidden agenda" in Bangladesh which might lead to certain intended results? Policies might be dressed up as intended for the poor but in practice there was the question of what surplus was extracted and where it was invested.

George Gwyer observed that the urban poor might benefit. There were also the policies of donors to benefit certain target groups. Did these not count for something?

Geof Wood felt that it was necessary to examine what actually happened. He cited the example of share croppers who were target groups in the Kosi crop insurance scheme who used credit to solve problems other than those intended. Problems of finding out what really happened were more acute in RRA because of the constraints within which it had to operate. He concluded from this that it should be connected with research through the maintenance of a research base in rural areas. He doubted whether quick and dirty work could adequately handle questions of cause related to concerns in political economy.

Bina Agarwal observed that even long-term surveys may not confront these issues. Much depended on the political consciousness of the researcher. If the researcher were politically conscious then even RRA could throw some light on such questions.

Deryke Belshaw said that class concepts could themselves be considered quick and dirty approximate categories.

There was some further discussion of the use of consultants and researchers.

Edward Clay noted that non-national consultants and researchers tended to be self-selecting according to type of regime - for example radicals tended to work in Tanzania but not in Brazil. Geof Wood was concerned about the role of consultants (in this case nationals) in the extension of the World Bank first phase integrated rural development programme for nine thanas in Bangladesh to the second phase with 29 thanas. The second phase programme was based on an assembly of very unreliable secondary statistics with no consideration of issues in political economy, presented in thick weighty documents. Was there some cynicism here?

In following up Geof Wood's earlier point about the need to establish a continuous relationship between academic researchers, RRA and planning, Edward Clay pointed out that there were problems in establishing longer term relationships between governments and other institutions as these links were perceived as sometimes involving the subordination of academic institutions to government.

Paul Richards made the plea that appraisers and researchers should include in their accounts a map showing where they had been.

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Afternoon - First Session

Stephen Sandford argued that we should avoid approaching the issues in terms of either/or - either quick and dirty or other methods. The method depended on various factors including the purpose. How should one decide where RRA was applicable? It depended, he suggested, on what information was needed, how quickly, how accurately and what techniques were available. He felt that class structure was only one corner of the appraisal scene. It was important to ask who needed the information and what for. Was it, for example, needed to justify a project in advance?

He emphasised quick-and-dirty as a possible set of techniques for speeding up the process of moving from an idea to implementation. He used a metaphor of a chain. Was the problem the length of the chain, the length of one link, fitting the links together, or the complexity of the chain? If studies were carried out in the right order it might not be necessary to have to loop back along the chain. If complexity of the chain was the problem, switching from lengthy investigations to quick-and-dirty work would not help. Or, he asked, could RRA help to design the chain itself?

Ian Carruthers contrasted the views of Geof Wood and Stephen Sandford: he felt that Geof Wood had said that there was a tendency for complicated important components of the situation to be left out; while Stephen Sandford seemed to be suggesting that quick-and-dirty could help, as for example with a pilot study for an irrigation scheme, to define the system and to see what relationships should be studied in more depth.

Richard Longhurst asked why one could not do RRA on social structure.

Stephen Sandford was concerned by the speeding up of decisions. It was important to make it possible for reinterpretation to take place. If a quick-and-dirty survey led to a quick-and-dirty decision he was against it.

Edward Clay suggested that one should ask where quick decisions were inevitable. Such situations included processes of decision-making which recur within an existing system, for example within annual agricultural cycles or financial years, involving the supply of inputs (level, source, price of the supply), seeds to farmers (where demand cannot be estimated more than six months in advance), fertiliser demand (which has to be based on last year's figures), pricing decisions, and decisions affected by the weather. Could not decisions of these sorts frequently be improved by RRA?

Stephen Sandford, concurring, cited the need for rapid information such as an attack of army worm.

Edward Clay noted that there could be a high cost in having a continuous monitoring system. Monitoring should be distinguished from emergency situations. Monitoring requires more resources. One approach was to have monitoring resources and move them around as needed.

Paul Richards observed that some "monitoring" occurred as a political process, as with political protest (e.g. rioting outside the Prime Minister's Office).

Deryke Belshaw felt that Edward Clay's paper treated RRA as a second best. But it might be superior if decision making processes were related to a "do and adapt" approach which could use small bits of information. A key issue here was the extent to which decisions were reversible or irreversible. Where decisions were irreversible might there not be high payoffs from RRA? Costs and benefits of information had to be examined in relation to decision-making processes and the nature and timing of the decisions involved.

Andrew Barnett introduced the dimension of decentralisation of decision-making. Much RRA was only necessary because decisions were taken away from farmers and taken to administrative headquarters and capital cities. There was a presumption in the papers for the workshop that RRA was independent of the degree of decentralisation, but this was not so. The need for RRA was partly generated by centralisation. It was true that farmers do not always have the best information, but also true that some decisions cannot be made centrally.

Ian Carruthers compared the benefits from RRA to those in the steep section of a classical fertiliser response curve. The implication was that after RRA (getting into more detailed survey work) there were 'diminishing returns' to be achieved from further more detailed (and more costly) research.

Deryke Belshaw argued that in the trade-off between higher research costs and more detailed research the question of the reversibility of the decision was crucial. Irreversibility was common in decisions over dam and irrigation projects. There was some discussion as to what constituted irreversibility. Paul Richards noted that the use of the market or a fertiliser could also be irreversible. Geof Wood considered it possible to predict where decisions might be reversible.

Deryke Belshaw felt that an important dimension of reversibility was whether there were high or low costs from error.

Presentation by Paul Richards, John Karimu and David Barker

Paul Richards saw RRA as a way of shortcutting the research and planning process. One should first ask why collect data? And then what would happen if there was no planning or survey? In Sierra Leone they were now asking how rural people themselves found out about things, and whether planners could enter into this process. This raised awkward questions about what the planner was doing and for whom he was working.

There were problems of the length of the process and chain of causality from a proposal to a ^{research} report to ^{policy} implementation. It might be more effective for planners to be working with local groups. This would mean that information was not nuggets of data in a

positivist sense but rather part of the process which was going on already in the community using people's own cultural apparatus. Then, out of the mix of insiders' and outsiders' ideas something better might emerge. The planner did have something to contribute. He might for example be able to change the scale of analysis to include a wider group of people - such as the villages affected downstream.

- In showing his slides Paul Richards made these points among others:
- An example of planners' errors was a failure to understand that people in Sierra Leone preferred the taste of upland rice to that of swamp rice (which latter had the priority in development programmes).
 - Work had been going on on the variegated grasshopper pest in West Africa for two or three years before a researcher was offered some to eat and it was realised that they were a significant item of diet.
 - Researchers should not work on crops which they do not eat.
 - Group discussions were alright with farmers but they were harder when they included talkative researchers!
 - Questionnaires could be "tyrannical".
 - Stereotyped folk stories could elicit attitudes. In one example, one farmer took his life savings and put his child through secondary school, while another farmer bought fertiliser and later sent two of his children to secondary school. Discussion of a case like this elicits moral and ethical as well as economic values.
 - It was valuable for researchers to do farm work. This not only allowed them to assess yields on their own plots, but also to listen to what people say to one another in field activities. This led to insights which would not otherwise be available.
 - He favoured decentralisation and disaggregation, including experiments in the field context with farmers collecting the results.

- Contrast could be drawn between the example of a well-built dam in Eastern Nigeria under which some rice was grown but which was an official initiative, and a nearby swamp reclamation at the initiative of the people themselves in which there was much local experimentation. (The point suggested was that people may be less active and less experimental where their activities are initially linked with a major official input.)

John Karimu then played a recording of a conversation in the evening while farmers and researchers were drinking palm wine after return from the field. Farmers were asked how they thought that soils were formed. This revealed two schools of thought - those who believed that soils were formed by vegetation, and those who believed that soils were formed partly by disintegrating rock. This led to a long and revealing discussion.

George Gwyer wondered how cost effective an approach of this sort was compared with asking direct questions. In reply John Karimu said that it had the virtue of identifying unasked questions.

Paul Richards added that they had been looking for a process of argumentation which would continue after they left. This might lead to future small scale projects. He cited the work of Etherton with drama students in Zaria and of Ross Kidd in Botswana, both of whom had been experimenting with the use of theatre to identify and dramatise problems and solutions. Geof Wood asked - if problems were well understood what role was there for an outsider? In Bangladesh there were intra family conflicts over the management of fish ponds such that no use was made of ponds because of these well known conflicts. This was very well known to the local people and the outsider might have no relevance. In the event the 'solution', provided by outsiders, was that the various families would rent out the ponds to operators.

Paul Richards agreed and said that agricultural research institutions sought to try to understand farming systems better than the farmers do themselves. This might not be necessary. In response Ian Carruthers asked, rhetorically, why most agricultural research was publicly funded, the implication being that there was much work (seed breeding, other experimental work) which farmers could not or would not carry out themselves but which was likely to be beneficial.

Geof Wood posed the problem whether one could afford expensive participant observation of this sort in which many questions were asked and much time was used to construct a logical framework.

George Gwyer observed that this sort of approach could help to sharpen questionnaires.

Both Ian Carruthers and Geof Wood felt that one could go too far. It was wrong to believe that farmers were always right.

Paul Richards said that farmers in Sierra Leone had appeared to make the most progress (compared with plant breeders) in selecting for the leaves of cassava which people ate. Edward Clay, however, pointed out that the dwarf wheats with higher yields were based on 50-60 years of research.

Andrew Barnett argued that there was a need to change the levels at which decisions were taken. In general those engaged in agricultural research had picked out those problems which were most appropriate for research stations neglecting others. But the wrong locus for research was often chosen. For example, large numbers of people are prepared to build bio-gas plants in universities, even though the fermentation process is well known, while very little work is done on the diffusion mechanisms and variations in local field conditions. The key is to adjust the location for research and decisions to the most appropriate level. But decentralising decisions ran into problems of power, often centralised. Thus in the health services in Ghana all decisions were taken centrally although highly qualified staff were in field positions.

Bina Agarwal drew attention to the Japanese experience in which farmers' innovations had been taken to research stations for testing and further development.

Edward Clay said that extension errors often arose because of the variety of local circumstances. Geof Wood observed that bureaucracies find it difficult to handle decentralised adaptation.

Jeremy Swift asked whether when there are two schools of thought (as in soils example mentioned by Paul Richards) the researcher should take sides. The Marabouts in Mali say that plants grow independently of rain while others say that rain makes plants grow. Where the outside observer knows that one school of thought is correct and the other wrong what should he do?

In reply Paul Richards challenged the planner's right to be a positivist. He was concerned with decision making where it occurred. Even where information was incorrect it might lead to good decisions. For example, those who believed that drought was sent from god explained it in terms of sinfulness which demanded charity and community cooperation which meant the provision of relief for the poor.

Geof Wood asked how you stopped short of saying that people have a right to be ignorant. Paul Richards replied that it was possible to express views in non-authoritative ways, for instance artistically. People could then take them or leave them. People had been brain-washed into thinking that outsiders had some sort of superior knowledge.

Geof Wood said that in participant observation he was asked as many questions as he asked.

Ian Carruthers thought that the work of Paul Richards and others was important because it was at the interface between positivist outputs of research and rural people; indeed it might be more important for informing the laboratory researchers than farmers. If information and ideas could be conveyed in songs or theatre and not in a positivist form so much the better. Scientists were now concerned and puzzled about social appropriateness. He hoped that the work of Richards and others could help to identify criteria which scientists could follow.

Bina Agarwal called attention to a similar experiment conducted in Ecuador by the University of Massachusetts where local games such as 'hacienda' were used to simulate farm production conditions. This served as a learning process for both the participating farmers and the persons conducting the programme. Such games could be adapted to provide even sensitive information such as on the relationship between farm holdings and access to inputs in a rural community.

David Barker started his presentation from a model of the sociology of research methodology described by Philips.* This categorised social relationships at three levels:

- (i) between researcher and local people
- (ii) between interviewer and respondent
- (iii) between researcher and fellow workers.

* Philips, D.L. "Hierarchies of Social interaction in sociological research" in Brenner, Marsh and Brenner, The Social Contexts of Methods, Croom Helm. pp.210-237.

Philips considered the third the most important, constraining research design and the presentation of research results. David Barker added a fourth category - the relationship between researcher and research institutions and sponsors. Regarding the second category questionnaires had implicit rules about the nature of the roles of the persons asking and answering the questions. They put the initiative with the interviewer. The techniques which their team had been using and developing in Sierra Leone put the initiative with the interviewee.

One example was the repertory grid (based on the work of Kelly). This was a way of recreating a person's mental images of his environment. It was based on Kelly's personal construct theory. David Barker illustrated this by eliciting Richard Longhurst's constructs for five pubs in the Brighton area. Stephen Sandford observed the constructs elicited might be misleading. They were all concerned with contrasts between the pubs, while the most important characteristic of one of them might be something they had in common such as a beautiful bar girl. Continuing, David Barker said that it was possible after eliciting the matrix of constructs to scale them, giving weights for each category of item assessed. We agreed that there was a critical jump from perception to behaviour. One of the main values of this sort of approach was the dialogue and discussion which it generated.

Paul Richards said that they intended to test this approach against the use of questionnaires and see which got richer results with farmers. One of the advantages of the repertory grid was multi-dimensional results which were better than a straight ranking. He considered the repertory grid approach was a quick and dirty method of identifying unasked questions. For instance, had it been used with variegated grasshoppers it would, he thought, much earlier have identified that they were eaten.

Ian Carruthers said that he had used the repertory grid technique with tomato growers in Kent. This had revealed that the prestige element in being ahead of the game, in innovating ahead of other people was often more important than costs, rates of return etc. This dimension had not previously been known.

Paul Richards said that in Sierra Leone using the technique with weeds, the approach had "split open" the concept of weeds and separated those which were called "pests" and those which have some utility. (e.g. as herbal medicines.)

David Barker doubted whether for interpreting the matrices sophisticated mathematics was needed. Almost the same information could be obtained by "eyeballing" a matrix.

Paul Richards discussed the example (described in more detail in his paper to the workshop on Indigenous Technical Knowledge) of the contrast in categories between extension trainees and farmers when thinking about weeds. They found no overlap between the farmers' and the extension workers' constructs. The exercise had been valuable in leading to discussion by the extension trainees about the relevance of their training. Ian Carruthers thought it was important that there should be feedback from this work to the syllabuses of agricultural extension training institutes.

Deryke Belshaw saw this approach as being complementary to others. It might apply to the first phase of hypothesis generation. Later, testing could follow and might involve a questionnaire. He thought that Paul Richards had something of an epistemological hangup. There was a need to identify good working hypotheses. In reply, Paul Richards explained that he was against the idea of mining nuggets of data as though it was gold, but Geof Wood believed that even with these new approaches nuggets were still being mined.

David Barker explained that once a personal construct (such as ease/difficulty of removing a weed) had been elicited, it could be scaled using the mancala board. On such a board the position of each hole represents a scale location or grade along the personal construct. Ayo seeds are grid elements (e.g. weeds) which can be dropped into individual holes to reflect the degree of difficulty in their removal.

Paul Richards said that they had gained new insights when a farmer used the game differently from the way intended. He changed the mode of playing to incorporate an idea of progress over a lifetime of farming.

Bina Agarwal wondered whether in the weed example there were some farmers whose perceptions were the same as those of extension workers, and other farmers whose perceptions differed; and whether this may reflect differences in the diffusion of new knowledge among different categories of farmers, rather than necessarily reflect upon the relevance of the extension workers' knowledge.

Geof Wood asked about the speed of the construct approach. It had been suggested that it was a "non-positivist shortcut".

Ingrid Palmer saw this sort of approach had many potential uses including as an extension tool, in activities similar to group therapy, etc. Not all of these would be RRA. They could for example include general consciousness raising of extension staff and of their clientele.

Paul Richards said that they had confused two aspects of quick and dirty. They were deliberately trying to fudge the difference between knowledge generating and extension. The survey would then not be a waste of time even if the project was. The approach also had the virtue of being entertaining and not a bore as questionnaires were. There was a whole repertoire of possibilities. He mentioned one example: farmers were given 25 seeds, each representing an amount of currency and asked how to divide them between for example different pests or different weeds, indicating relative importance by numbers of seeds put in holes representing the pests of weeds. This had worked well and as a very quick method for obtaining information.

Pastoral Appraisal (presented by Sandford and Swift)

Stephen Sandford said that the great instability of pastoral areas posed problems. There was always the question of what part of a season or of a trend data referred to. In one area one and a half times the size of Wales there had been three counts of livestock in a year, giving results varying from 800,000 animal units down to 200,000 animal units. It might have been thought that edge effects would have cancelled out over such a large area, but this was not the case. The animals had moved.

Conventional surveys and planning operations required data such as animal population numbers, structure, mortality and fertility; vegetation; human consumption; water points; migration patterns; and marketing price data. Seasonal variation was important.

In considering appropriate methods it was necessary to ask what the data was going to be used for. In practice there might be trade offs between quick-and dirty and long-and clean. The issues could be illustrated by two examples:

- (a) Population Counts. There were six possible methods:
- (i) aerial survey using a sampling technique and counting animals which were seen between struts below the wing of the aircraft. This could be used both for animals and for humans (by huts).
 - (ii) by satellite (technically possible).
 - (iii) using questionnaires.
 - (iv) sampling at water points (providing long enough was taken).
 - (v) numbers vaccinated for e.g. rinderpest.
 - (vi) by rainfall (! according to the assertions of David Bourne).

With population counts there was no real choice between quick-and-dirty and long and clean. Aerial survey was superior to all other methods, and happened to be quick.

- (b) Population Structure and Parameters
- (i) Questionnaires (calves born, died, etc.)
 - (ii) Aerial photography, getting the age structures of herds through lengths of animals.
 - (iii) A year's survey with selected flocks.
 - (iv) "interview an animal" technique. Take an old breeding female. There were usually no problems about getting information with this approach.

In this case, with population structure and parameters, there was more of a choice between quick-and-dirty and long-and-clean.

Deryke Belshaw asked whether measuring a single variable could be considered RRA.

Edward Clay said that if costs were not a constraint, superior quick methods were sometimes available. For example forest resources could be assessed nowadays by satellite. This was the only reliable method and it had shown that earlier work had given very misleading estimates.

Geof Wood observed that there were relationships between methods and variables. For instance, there might be three different methods for determining a single variable, each taking a different length of time to apply. Once the method had been chosen a relevant question would then be what other variables could be measured in the time period adopted for the original variable.

Stephen Sandford said that there were diseconomies sometimes in covering several variables at once. If one asked about herd size then other data would be bad.

Jeremy Swift said that if RRA was to work it should be part of a super-structure of longer-term academic research. It could be the existence of longer-term research that made the RRA possible.

In pastoral areas there was scope for making systematic use of pastoralists themselves for (a) long-term and (b) one-off investigations.

He explained a proposed approach to data collection which he hoped to try out. This would combine pastoralists' own knowledge and modern scientific knowledge. It would include:

- (i) status and trend of grazing land. Pastoralists had views about changes in plant species composition and the over-use of vegetation. Pastoralists' observations might be linked with Landsat to give a two-dimensional view of ecological change.

- (ii) livestock herd structure and output data. This would cover fertility, mortality, offtake rates, and age and sex structure of flocks. It would use the detailed terminologies of pastoral societies which have been found to check well with information from the examination of teeth. It should open up the way to rapid description of age and sex structures of flocks and herds. It would include animal life histories with camels and cattle, something which herd owners enjoy providing. (This was not quick, but it was reliable.)
- (iii) Household income and consumption data. The proposal here was to construct a barter cost of living index using relative prices expressed in animals or milk against cereals and cloth. The data was easily available, through administrative records.

He emphasised the value of pastoral informants although there were problems of selection, especially since some literacy was needed. However, pastoralists often had trading experience which provided them with useful skills for this purpose. The advantages of the proposed approach were that the data should be more reliable than that gained from questionnaire surveys; that time series data should be obtained with a range of values (it might be more crucial to know the lowest fertility and the highest fertility, e.g. once in five years or once in ten years, than to have an average value); and that it might also help pastoralists to influence policies. In the latter connection the simple cost of living index could be prepared by pastoralists themselves with the proviso that if it passed a certain threshold they would have automatic access to an official to seek intervention. In general, the data from this approach should be better (cleaner). Such a network would not be quick to set up. Once set up, however, obtaining data would become relatively quick. It should thus have a high capital cost to set up but a low running cost.

Richard Longhurst observed for example that it was useful to link health monitoring by the people themselves with choices available to them. Paul Richards wondered whether reporting of information for a cost of living index by pastoralists themselves, being as it would be,

linked with benefits, might not lead to distortions of information. Jeremy Swift replied that only four or five items would be reported. At present the price data was gathered by government officials. It was inaccurate because there was no pressure on the officials to make it accurate. However, accurate data was easy to obtain and there would be no problems in checking the pastoralists' data. A major advantage of his proposal was that there would be some transfer of power to pastoralists. It would, he hoped, make the governments more responsive.

Geof Wood mentioned problems of diary keeping. It required careful monitoring and supervision. Jeremy Swift agreed and wondered whether he would be able to devise a game approach similar to that of Paul Richards.

Andrew Barnett gave examples of engineers currently undertaking social research in Nepal and Bangladesh who had found that school leavers were very keen to help research. In the first case, diaries were successfully kept and in the second the unemployed school leavers had transformed the research by greatly increasing the sample size at minimal cost and with little fall in quality. Paul Richards speculated

Geof Wood noted that students in agricultural universities had collected these sorts of data but it had been generally poor.

(End of the first day.)

SECOND DAY

George Gwyer's Observations

George Gwyer was not yet convinced that RRA was a substitute for longer term studies. He reviewed the previous day's discussions.

Geof Wood had said that RRA should not be in vacuo. He established the need for links between researchers and practitioners. George Gwyer agreed especially concerning the identification of target groups. In the Philippines he had been asked where the rural poor were. He found them on hillsides- a locational identification. Those who had been pushed onto the hillsides had incomes lower than those with access to lower land. Similarly in a reconnaissance for a fertiliser programme in India he had gone into Harijan villages and interviewed groups of villagers. This sort of thing could be done quickly.

On RRA which legitimises government policies he said that ODM does take up with governments issues such as those of human rights. An attempt is also made to identify key individuals, including indigenous voluntary agencies, which are sympathetic to ODM policies of more aid for the poorest.

On Geof Wood's point about the uneven spatial distribution of research (as in Bangladesh) he observed that academics cherish their independence. ODM respected this, and it was not an ESCOR requirement that there should be policy relevance. Researchers were, however, occasionally asked to pay particular attention to certain aspects. He wondered whether other academics agreed with Geof Wood's proposition about the extent to which planners should have a say in research.

Turning to the contributions of Paul Richards, John Karimu and David Barker, he thought their approach was not a substitute for other research, but could be useful for sharpening up questions.

He felt that in the discussion justice had not been done to the farming systems work of the international agricultural centres. Paul Richards and his colleagues had been working closely with the IITA.

He agreed with Stephen Sandford on the long term nature of research on pastoral areas. It was true that developments in technology had changed the trade-offs between speed and accuracy. A further example was programmable calculators which could be used in the field.

On Jeremy Swift's contribution he emphasised the difficulties of keeping diaries. He knew of a case in India where they had not been maintained through lack of supervision. Diaries might also have a bias against the poorer people in the society. Children of the bottom 20% of the population probably did not go to school.

In conclusion he made three points:

- (i) it would have been useful to have had both a statistician and a representative of the Land Resources Division of ODM at the workshop.
- (ii) there was a tendency to make assertions on the basis of little evidence. The letter of invitation sent out by Robert Chambers had overstated some points without substantiation - for example concerning the limitations of official statistics.
- (iii) it had to be emphasised that RRA was a pressurised time-bound activity.

Andrew Barnett said that one aspect of government influence on research was a requirement for research clearance. This was necessary with almost all third world governments. It took time, and there were difficulties when the researcher strongly opposed the Government. There was a difference in the morality of ODM and IDRC on the one hand and the Government of Bangladesh dictating the direction of research in Bangladesh.

Edward Clay said that there were pressures on new researchers to do work in geographical areas where work had already been done. It was much easier to go where there was time series and bench mark data than where there was none. Concentration on particular areas

could be illustrated by the work of IRRI and the research in the Comilla area in Bangladesh. Certain types of research and analysis were dependent upon the time series data available in such areas. There were thus costs to researchers in going into new situations. Planners could play an important role in this as they have done in Bangladesh in shifting some research to the north-west in recent years. But practitioners should be cautious in laying down guidelines, recognising that there were often mistakes where they specified details of the sorts of report they wanted. In influencing choices of location for research, however, intervention by planners was necessary and desirable.

Geof Wood felt it was useful to distinguish between types of questions, the orientation of the researcher and questions of location.

One participant pointed out that Edward Clay was postulating benevolent institutions. However OECD two to three years ago had wanted to conduct research on multinational corporations but the United States did not support this so they worked on rural water supplies instead.

Deryke Belshaw asked how one could evaluate research in terms of social utility when the most socially valuable research might turn out to be the least acceptable to the public process. He went on to argue that the case for RRA was based on the scarcity of resources, especially resources for carrying out investigations. In assessing uses of those scarce resources one should look at social utility.

Paul Richards took up the points about the geographical location of research in relation to population. Research tends to be overly concentrated within a days drive of universities, for example. He asked whether we could not have simple quality control indices using maps to indicate the geographical distribution of research.

Robert Chambers said that we should not neglect the benefits from concentration of research of different sorts in the same area but he agreed with the general point. A study by John Harriss of the geographical distribution of research in rural India reported in

the Economic and Political Weekly during some of the years of the early green revolution had shown a very marked concentration in the areas of the intensive agricultural district programme which covered only 17 out of over 300 Indian districts. Various explanations were possible, including the tendency for social scientists to work on whatever was new and had government priority, and the preferences of funding bodies. The recent development studies register of research in the United Kingdom 1977-78 also showed up the tendency of research funded in the UK to concentrate in some countries more than others. Botswana with a population with 700,000 had 10 research projects whereas India with almost a thousand times the population had only 50, a difference in relation to population of a factor of almost 200. Similarly Kenya and Sri Lanka (two favourite countries) had much higher ratios of research projects to population than Bangladesh.

Andrew Barnett observed that to a considerable extent expatriate researchers had to go where they could get in and this clearly has an effect on the value of the research. The major criterion for the location of the IDS health project in Ghana was being able to get in and get in quickly.

Ian Carruthers noted that there were low rates of return to research work in backward areas where there was a poor data base. He asked whether academics should have two standards in evaluating students' research - for situations where there was basic data and for situations where there was not.

Richard Longhurst pointed out that maps showing research distribution would also show geographical gaps which needed to be opened up.

Edward Clay's Presentation

Edward Clay reverted to the distinction between situations where RRA was inevitable and where it was not inevitable. It was inevitable where there were cyclical or adaptive processes requiring decisions which had to be taken quickly without much information. A question was how we could move from anecdotes to a system and how to explain this to both students and officials. Working with decision makers

he had found that they often do not want the degree of accuracy which social scientists think they should provide. Decision makers often wanted qualitative information, for example that something was improving or that it was deteriorating. Examples of this were cited in his paper. The early supply of qualitative information was often very important, and this could be confirmed later by more detailed social science work. Ladejinsky's brief field visits were an example. As early as 1969 there were attempts by governments to take account of the differential impact of the green revolution noted by Ladejinsky. Ladejinsky had identified in qualitative terms what was happening three to four years earlier than Keith Griffin's report based on social science research. (see for instance his recent report for ILO Poverty and Rural Landlessness in Rural Asia 1977)

For decision makers, who was reporting was important and the form of presentation and the statistical format were often less important. A statistician might say that we were dealing with situations where we restrict the range of possibilities (as for example with Geof Wood's suggestion of a panel of researchers in different parts of the country). Restriction could apply to both the number of questions asked and also the geographical areas in which they were asked. In practice in Bangladesh decision makers use small groups of qualified experienced people making short rural visits. Such persons, because of their experience, could restrict what they tried to find out about. They were at the other end of the spectrum from social anthropologists who were open to a much wider range of information. With academics there were problems of reports supplied late and reports which often did not cover the range of information needed.

Concerning RRA about issues of fundamental restructuring of production, (e.g. land reform or land consolidation) he distinguished two types of situation:

- (i) stable environment: in such a case cadastral surveys might be appropriate and they had been in the consolidation in Haryana;
- (ii) after political upheavals. He had no personal experience of this but the type of appraisal needed might be very different.

He referred to the table in his paper which distinguished between what was observable and what was not observable. There was a tendency for social science research to put into the field people who lack the technical knowledge needed concerning agriculture. This argued for multi disciplinary research and mixed methods. There were big variations by area and culture in the reliability of data. It was often important to know how to ask questions. Social anthropologists might know but often agricultural economists made mistakes. This suggested that one should "choose the horses for the courses". How to tackle the major problem of restricting information depended on who could be selected to do the work. Many visiting missions to Dacca (arriving at some seasons of the year at the rate of 4 a week) made mistakes in the people they selected to take part in the missions.

Deryke Belshaw wondered whether the table of observable - non-observable could be extended to include durables under observable. Paul Richards thought the table could be extended to a matrix checklist which could be used in RRA. Items could then be checked before carrying out RRA. He wondered if the table could be opened up with two or three more columns.

Edward Clay said that social scientists were bad at any learning process except learning by doing. There were serious problems in the transfer of knowledge from one social scientist to another. A framework could help to order learning processes. Decisions about what information was needed was often made by people who were divorced from the situation. For example experts in Dacca had used international models of questionnaires for the 1977 agricultural census in Bangladesh which (initially) included camels and donkeys.

Paul Richards asked whether class could be included. Geof Wood noted regional variations in the sensitivity of the sort of data required. For example, where land holdings were very small land holding size might be insensitive but where large (as in the north-west of Bangladesh) it might be a sensitive issue. In this context Paul Richards asked whether we might become victims of our own

categories and impose them on situations. Geof Wood differentiated between stratification and class relationships. Class relationships could be made into categories. Deryke Belshaw observed that you need a model to construe the data. Stephen Sandford said that Clay said that for RRA you need a tight model.

Deryke Belshaw said that for RRA you have to accept the practitioner's definition of the problem. In ex ante the assessment of environmental potential there was a tendency to over invest in natural resource type data. In the evaluation of projects on the ground it might be possible to use observable aspects which did not constitute full impact indicators.

M.A. Hamid agreed with Clay on the importance to decision makers of who does the research. In Bangladesh a first priority was to find out what research had already been done. Then gaps could be identified together with what was needed. A priority was the execution of policies. The government had announced policies of land reform but they had not been carried out. Slow-and-clean would be more useful for this, involving residence in villages and examination of social structure, etc.

Geof Wood argued that the tendency for agencies to use appraisers whom they trusted meant that they chose those whose premises and assumptions were their own. He asked whether RRA should be used in areas of fundamental restructuring. Controversial results could not be expected from RRA.

Stephen Sandford disagreed. He thought that a neo-classical appraiser working for a neo-classical type of government might raise very awkward issues although sharing a conceptual framework.

Andrew Barnett mentioned the case of investigative journalism as a form of RRA for opening up issues.

Edward Clay said that Ladejinsky had kept within range of those with whom he worked. Much good work was lost because of the language used. If you used the language of the New Left Review you are choosing not to communicate with, for example, an Indian civil servant. Academic reports tended to suffer from

having an eye to several audiences.

Ian Carruthers thought that the "calibre" of people (intellect, training, personality) was more important. Because of this any guidelines produced by the workshop would be important. There would be implications for training for example in India. In the Indian subcontinent he felt that "criticality" was trained out of people. There was a wide potential audience for what the workshop was coming out with. So much was required of a good analyst in our terms that training was especially important. There was a paradox in IDS which was elitist in who it invited and yet advocated simple technology. In this context Paul Richards used the phrase "intermediate academic".

Ingrid Palmer raised the issue of women. A class analysis was possible here concerning for example the division of labour in green revolution farming. Were women interviewed in RRAs? She thought that women might require sudden ad hoc RRAs. This point could be illustrated by an experience on famine patrol in New Guinea. Fourteen villages were visited. The reception and the information gained depended critically on whether it was the men or the women who came first to meet them. Whichever group it was, the investigators were stuck with them. Men wanted tobacco and lied. Women took them to the fields and told the truth. Men had interests in continuing famine which gave them powers of patronage. The women, in contrast, wanted famine issues to stop because then they would come back into their own as producers.

She liked Paul Richards' idea of giving units representing money to people and asking how they would distribute them between purposes. She thought that shy women would be likely to participate in a "game" of this sort.

Paul Richards said that there was almost an inverse relationship sometimes between what men wanted and what women wanted, for example over water. Identification of such conflicting interests would merely confuse the policy maker and he did not think this would serve any useful purpose. Bina Agarwal said this was merely an argument for maintaining the status quo. Ian Carruthers observed that in Kenya water had become a priority as women had become prominent at village level. Ingrid Palmer emphasised

the importance of consciousness raising of planners and researchers; otherwise the same argument could be used to ignore questions of divergent interest between classes. Bina Agarwal said that policy makers were often aware of complexities and conflicting interests between groups and the rhetoric of the five year plans usually expressed the need to take account of interests of specific groups, such as women. RRA could help decisions makers in this context to identify relevant programmes, such as water provision, if they wished to help these groups.

On how to make decisions Deryke Belshaw speculated about the possibility of quantitative thresholds and then identifying who was below them. There followed some discussion about how confused decision makers were or should be by complex situations and what consequences there were from urging on decision makers more and more complex objective functions.

(continuing after coffee break)

Richard Longhurst's presentation

Richard Longhurst saw his paper as contributing something on the subject of "how" - a third column to Edward Clay's table. His suggestions required (a) some familiarity with the area, (b) that people in the area should be familiar with the investigator.

RRA was liable to be specific and to tie an appraiser down over questions and solutions. This occurred where a decision had already been taken on a project. The impact might be rather slight quite often with ex post evaluations, much ex ante work and much monitoring which did not change what happened on the project. Much research also came out with preconditioned answers. In the case of his one quick-and-dirty in Kenya, three quarters of the time had been spent in Nairobi. More time should have been spent in the field. This is especially important with a donor's team if the recipient government is tied by the donor's requirements.

He asked to what extent RRA could be used to open up policy issues, as a lobbying device, and as a public relations tool. Hunger had been 'discovered' in the USA by a CBS documentary. Shelter in the UK had had a similar role.

Edward Clay thought that what one man could do a team could also do. It had been difficult to persuade FAO to have a social scientist and a woman on the post-harvest technology mission to Bangladesh. It was also important to have the right social science component. Geof Wood pointed out that Ladejinsky before his 10 days in Kosi had been in India for a long time and had a lot of relevant experience.

Bina Agarwal observed that journalism was an interesting example of RRA and it could in certain circumstances also influence policy and long term research concerns. The function of journalism in consciousness raising regarding women's issues in India was a case in point. Eight or ten years ago research in this area was limited and journalistic articles had played a role in influencing funding bodies towards current priority for research on women. She also noted that RRA can show up gaps between stated public policy and its implementation. Journals like the Economic and Political Weekly also served as a forum for printing results of RRA work.

Paul Richards speculated whether there were different methodologies for different types of RRA.

There followed a discussion of outlets for what Paul Richards called "a high grade of academic journalism". The Economic and Political Weekly appeared to many people to be a model with no exact equivalents elsewhere. In East Africa there was Hilary Ngendo's equivalent of Newsweek which Ian Carruthers thought might be expanded to include for example reports of research carried out by the IDS (University of Nairobi) staff. It was pointed out that the EPW did not only publish the results of quick-and-dirty work. It was however a place where such work had been published (as in the case of articles by Ladejinsky and Robert Wade already quoted) and it was academically prestigious to write in. It was thought that it might be viable only in a country like India where the market was very large.

Stephen Sandford moved onto the question of "outsiders" and "insiders". Did we see quick-and-dirty as the tool only for outsiders? What could farmers learn? Consciousness raising for farmers was a possible benefit.

George Gwyer thought that Stephen Sandford's first notes usefully included data which already existed. This contrasted with the tenor of Robert Chambers' letter. He noted that the Land Resources Division of ODM was recognising that overcollection of data occurred in soil surveys, and that simpler measures including finger sampling of soils while walking through an area had their uses.

Stephen Sandford saw planning as a process of dragging people into commitment to proposals. This was an entirely cynical but realistic view. Perhaps we often need something irrelevant - a monument in the form of a report - in order to secure commitment. Long reports which might be condemned on other grounds could be used to overawe opposition, destroying its ability to oppose something effectively.

Discussion moved to action research. M.A. Hamid said that in Bangladesh there had been investigations from 1975 onwards of a quick-and-dirty sort with no formal research methodology in which information had been sought in villages and then conveyed to government. These investigations identified constraints on implementation which could not easily be solved. Thus quick-and-dirty could help to identify problems but the next stage might be action research involving staying in villages and observing how problems can be solved, learning from the people. Quick-and-dirty could not solve such problems.

Deryke Belshaw said that much potential for action research was not realised because of lack of demand on the part of governments and difficulties over permission. One obstacle was that a district administration might have to relinquish some of their control to allow action research to take place. This was a large area of work with implications for both quick-and-dirty and slow and clean.

M.A. Hamid stressed the need to understand detail at the local level. To understand the working of the deep tubewell programme in Bangladesh required detailed analysis of large landholders, small farmers, landless labourers and so on. There were problems in changes such as abolition of the share tenancy system. The people

who suffered from the old/^{system} did also derive benefits from it. Some had no other way of living. In order to understand this one had to be on the ground and farmers had to dictate to some extent how we could help them.

Sattar Mandal felt there was often a need for deep investigations. This could apply to the relationships and relative benefits of share tenancy and land owners. It was also illustrated by research on a cooperative farming project in Bangladesh. One professor (from Mymensingh) had found joint management occurring. Another professor (from Chittagong University) had found a trend towards individual /^{management}. The quick and dirty work of the latter had been useful in identifying what was happening (the implication was that quick and dirty might correct slow and clean).

Reverting to questions about outsiders, Stephen Sandford asked about getting people from districts to district offices to try to understand what went on in government (a sort of reversed RRA). Geof Wood said that rich classes of farmer knew very well what went on in government and visited frequently. District officials were "inundated" with visits from certain classes of farmers. These visits stressed the brokers' role of officials. George Gwyer said that in India there were cases where well motivated graduates in villages encouraged small farmers to organise. Geof Wood mentioned the April 1975 issue of Development and Change for sources on 'Access'.

Reverting to action research M.A. Hamid mentioned this in connection with village government and the question of how it should relate to the union (higher) level. In action research "everything should come from below" but some guidance was needed. In general the people should decide. Deryke Belshaw said that action research was not the same as either planning or monitoring. It starts with a change that is occurring and it need not emphasise that everything should come from below. Geof Wood said that the assumption in action research was that the only way to understand was to set up a piece of action and to study what happens. Action research is therefore long term. Deryke Belshaw said it might take three, four or five years. If a government was committed to "rural test beds" as with the Kenya SRDP

there was a venue provided not only for action research but also for some quick and dirty work.

Ingrid Palmer said that the discussion was getting close to the quick and dirty troubleshooter where there was a problem such as access to an input or if information was being spread in an perverted way. An example was where students had been asked in Java with the early Bimas programme to mobilise consciousness about new practices and experimental plots in the villages. They also spied on the distribution of fertiliser and threatened to write letters to the top when they identified abusers.

Presentation by Ian Carruthers, Sam Jackson and Sattar Mandal

Ian Carruthers introduced the paper. However scholarly we were or whether we worked in government we were all involved in quick and dirty work. They had been asked particularly to deal with questions of land ownership and land control. The methods appropriate depended on the country. The comparison made was between Nigeria (Sam Jackson) and Bangladesh (Sattar Mandal). Much came down to the attitudes of farmers to authority and differential knowledge of farmers (for example in Bangladesh they knew better the sizes of land holdings than they did in Nigeria)

The questionnaire approach was breaking down. Both Sam Jackson and Sattar Mandal had sat in villages more like social anthropologists than as traditional questionnaire surveyors. Key informants appeared the only way to get at information if it had to be obtained really quickly. But how did one identify key informants? Who are they? How could one avoid those who would mislead? Group interviews also had utility. But what general lessons were there about them? What should be avoided?

One method was the use of transects. Purseglove had used this in Kigesi shortly after the second World War, walking in straight lines up and down mountains. One output from this method of reconnaissance was remarkable soil conservation and terracing work. John had recently used the same technique.

A major issue was type of person should carry out RRA. How should they be trained? And how should they be enabled to acquire the necessary traits of personality?

Geof Wood commented that if RRA was related to a policy or a project in an area then a sample would be needed. How in a short time could an adequate sample be set up? In his work in Comilla he had only seven weeks. The first three weeks was spent on a 40% census - the constraint determining the 40% was time.

Sam Jackson distinguished between

- (i) journalistic lobbying (involving quick and dirty)
- (ii) consciousness raising in a group (for which perhaps no data was needed)
- (iii) information required for implementation.

When we were talking about gap filling activities it was best to combine direct observation with the use of key informants.

Richard Longhurst thought that sampling was a way in which key informants might be identified. It could legitimise approaching certain people. There were some people you had to talk to for diplomatic reasons. Conspicuous sampling of for example every tenth house could get you legitimately to those other people whom you wished to interview in a manner which was open, public and recognised as objective.

Bina Agarwal said that the appropriate person to approach depended on the type of information required. Usually a key person in the Indian villages was the Panchayat head. However information on or access to the underprivileged castes may not be readily forthcoming through local leaders belonging to the higher castes. Crop seasons also had a bearing on information obtained through RRA. One should normally avoid busy harvest seasons. Paul Richards entered the qualification that this was true unless one was prepared to help with the harvest.

Edward Clay asked the question why one needed to randomise. It was to obtain information about a distribution. But if you only want points along a distribution, less formality of procedure is needed. People have informal procedures for obtaining a range of values. For example, Ladejinsky spoke to anyone he saw beside a roadside and working in a field. Social scientists in general, however, are

often trapped into a narrower concept of what is random.

Geof Wood liked the idea of keyhole informants who would provide entry points which would lead to other people.

Ian Carruthers thought that in survey work the most overdone area was in sampling theory. RRA occurred too early for sampling. RRA was needed sometimes to identify the universe and its optimal size. The optimal size would depend on the nature of the variable among other things.

Geof Wood contrasted statistical procedures with those which he described as "picture forming".

Paul Richards mentioned sampling; group interviews could thus also serve as ways of identifying 'key informants'. One noticed for example who speaks and in what sequence. There were problems about how you assembled groups in the first place.

Geof Wood said that the problem was sometimes getting away from group interviews in order to be able to ask questions about sensitive matters such as personal indebtedness.

Ian Carruthers said that one way to do this was to walk to the fields. Paul Richards asked whether anyone had tried to get key informants to identify samples.

Edward Clay noted the apprenticeship relationship through which the skills of RRA were passed on. He had learnt about RRA from an Indian with 30 years experience and from another person who had learnt from a colonial official in West Africa. He thought this might have happened a lot. The particular history of Bangladesh had tended to break these relationships or the potential for them and lead to the substitution of training in the new formal methods of American social scientists.

To this Geof Wood added that young academics had been promoted rapidly to senior positions where they were overloaded with administrative and teaching responsibilities. These were not

circumstances in which apprenticeship relationships could be sustained.

Ian Carruthers thought we should distinguish between things people report accurately and those which they report inaccurately. Do these vary by country and by region? Paul Richards referred us to Cole and Gay on the Kpelle in Nigeria, a book written in 1967. This dealt with Kpelle concepts of number, size and area and how accurate local measurements were.

Presentation by Deryke Belshaw

Deryke Belshaw said he would present a case study in Tanzania (this is in his paper). The main purpose was to present a general theoretical argument about the trade offs between types and costs of information. He distinguished decision modes in the public sector into two categories: a directive style; and an indicative style. The directive style involved directing the use of resources or the location of a population. The indicative style involved government indicating direction, for example a new technique for farmers where the private sector could reject it.

A further factor was the scale of resources involved in the decision. The value of data would be greater the larger the resources involved.

Some of the Tanzanian background was provided in an article by Andrew Coulson "Whatever happened to Ujamaa?" in the New Internationalist of February 1977. With the villagisation in Tanzania it had been intended that each village should hold 250-500 families. But in one area the average population was about 1000 per village. (This was where a key decision maker recently released from jail was trying to prove his loyalty by doing better than 500.) One argument for larger villages would be economies of scale in the provision of services. But a countervailing problem was distance to fields. Deryke then described the process of villagisation and some of the mistakes made. Many villages had been badly sited and appraisal was needed of the existing sites. In some cases immediate resiting was needed, while in others some resiting would be needed in the future. It was thought that each village should have a reserve list

of new sites. The Prime Minister's Office had been told to remedy the mistakes which had been made. There were 8,600 registered villages. At the lowest levels in the party there was political opposition to these resittings as this would entail a loss of face by those people responsible for the initial mistakes.

In deciding how to appraise existing village sites a key constraint was the personnel available. There was no chance of using highly trained specialists in technical appraisal. The target time was two days per village assessment. The main question was "is this site capable of supporting at a given consumption level the population which it has?" The planning team responsible for drawing up a procedure consisted mainly of natural scientists and geographers. They made considerable concessions from what they regarded as necessary but were still left with 5 land class types, to mention but one set of categories, so that the whole process would require more than 2 days even if the report was written after leaving (which had the disadvantage of losing villagers' possible amendments and corrections to what was put down). Simplifications had to be made. The training manual now has a 53 step algorithm. A switch was made from professional evaluation of environmental potential to villagers' own estimates. These used categories such as whether land was usable or non-usable. Since there were 83 districts and each required 3 staff members, 249 people had to be trained. The first step was to train the trainers. The system had not yet been pilot tested with staff at field level, but pilot testing in 8 villages had been carried out by the (expert) team.

Ian Carruthers asked whether village viability was thought of only in agricultural terms. Ridley Nelson had shown that water supplies would not be economically viable.

Deryke Belshaw said the new site algorithm had potential uses in other contexts. Had it been used in the first place when sites were originally chosen, many of the existing sites would have been rejected.

Andrew Barnett asked whether the lesson was not that the only way to make such decisions was to decentralise. Paul Richards, however, thought that decentralisation was responsible for the errors in the first place. What one needed was decentralisation plus democratisation.

Deryke Belshaw said that the algorithm should prevent factors being left out of consideration.

Paul Richards asked how one could get this adaptiveness in at the start. He was involved in settlement planning in West Africa and would like to benefit from the experience.

Ian Carruthers said that if there had been quick and dirty work at the time of the original siting of villages, then much might have been avoided.

Deryke Belshaw, explaining the speed at which the move had taken place, said that there had been a policy statement about living in villages for about a year and nothing had been done. Then following the decision to implement the policy there was an inter-district race. Ian Carruthers asked whether the process could have been monitored. Deryke Belshaw said that there was a sort of monitoring through the correspondence columns of the Daily News, filled as they were with first generation problems being reported.

Presentation by Jeff Alderson (Oxfam)

Jeff Alderson was interrupted almost before he had begun by a discussion of the Oxfam field directors' handbook. This is currently being revised and the new edition would be on sale in the New Year for £12 per copy. World neighbours were also working on it. There had been considerable debate about the extent to which books should be reproduced and made available. There was a sense in which it was an internal Oxfam document. Robert Chambers, however, thought that it provided the only known and reasonably adequate guide to RRA and that it should be widely available.

Edward Clay had reservations. He said that there was a danger, as with the USAID small wells manual, that such a manual would not be

sufficiently specific for the needs of particular areas. It had to be sensitive to particular situations. The more generalised a manual was, the less it picked up what caused a problem in a particular area. The Bengal famine code was designed for a particular region, with particular indicators. But the Madras manual was quite different. Robert Chambers replied that one was concerned with weighing broader costs and benefits. The Oxfam field directors' handbook could be assessed in detail against particular situations. What we were concerned with, however, was whether it was better to have it or not. In his view the answer to this question was likely to be that the manual had a potentially considerable contribution to make. In subsequent discussions Edward Clay speculated that such general manuals were most useful in the first few weeks of an assignment but were of decreasing value as the Director gets into the specifics of country problems.

Jeff Alderson said that he had been evaluation officer for Oxfam for two years. In the past, evaluation studies of one sort or another, had often been irrelevant or unintelligible to people in Oxfam. Recently an evaluation panel had been set up as an advisory working group. They were concerned particularly with the social implications of projects and how to assess them. For example they had found in a project in Guatemala that one of the objectives had included increased agricultural production, but in fact the effect had been to increase emigration to the lowland plantations at harvest time and to further marginalisation both of which were contrary to other stated objectives. (At this point George Gwyer asked what would have happened without the project.) Jeff Alderson continued that the terms of reference for an evaluation study were important. It was possible to have a long nicely bound evaluation of 250 pages which told you nothing. They found that there was a problem in Oxfam just to read the report let alone to digest it and disseminate its findings. Questions to ask included evaluation for whom? with what intension? How to be transmitted? and how to be acted upon?

They were finding that secrecy of evaluation reports from project holders (i.e. those who received Oxfam funds and implemented the projects) was increasingly regarded as unacceptable.

A further question was what was meant by base line data. In Orissa they were trying to identify independent variables for this.

They had further work to do on self evaluation. Last year a project was evaluated in this way but it was criticised on the medical side for not giving an idea of what had happened in the project. It was a good educational process for those involved in implementation but not for Oxfam purposes from the point of view of stewardship.

Another issue was who should be evaluators. Someone had said that no-one connected with Oxfam should do an Oxfam evaluation. But they needed people who understood what Oxfam was concerned with. Without such a person there was a danger of receiving an irrelevant report. Choosing suitable evaluators was a difficult business.

Increasingly Oxfam was putting the emphasis in their project activity on "getting things right at the beginning", and away from ex-poste evaluation studies as such. For not only should these evaluations be appropriate to the project and in line with Oxfam's capability to handle them, but also there was little point in having such a study if the baseline data was inadequate or the objectives were not quantifiable. Thus they were at pains to attempt to achieve a full understanding with their partners from the outset so that the project is relevantly and adequately designed to include baseline data, definable objectives, systems for monitoring, and - if it should become appropriate - arrangements for time specific (self) evaluation. This they consider is far more important than taking ex-post studies in isolation.

Andrew Barnett observed that there seemed to be a trade-off between autonomy and influence: the more autonomous the researcher the less likely it was that he would understand the system being investigated and the less likely he would be in positions to influence policy.

Robert Chambers said that there were very serious problems of interpretation relating to George Gwyer's question of comparing situations "with" an intervention and those which would have occurred "without" it. Controls were likely to be useless in before and after studies in rural areas. Unless one tried to make an appraisal of what would have happened without the project, evaluation was bound to be very incomplete. There were other problems of the universe with which one was concerned. It was quite possible to have a project in an area and to find over the

project life that real wages had declined but that this was a favourable effect because without the project they would have declined even more. There were also serious problems of interpreting causality. Impacts typically resulted from multiple causation. RRA was one way, probably the best way, of trying to identify what that causation was.

Andrew Barnett said that it was difficult to establish causal links between health inputs and health impacts but it was possible to carry out evaluations of management.

Ian Carruthers agreed that 'control' studies were impossible. It was also difficult to generalise from one case to another.

Robert Chambers cited the example of the widespread belief that improved water supplies would lead to improved health. This now appeared not necessarily to be the case. (See for instance White, Bradley and White; Feachem; Warford and Saunders.) We had been misled for a very long time into believing that a clear relationship existed where it now apparently did not. Jeff Alderson pointed to references in the early 1960s (Llewellyn in India and Mitchnick in Zaire) which also cast doubt on any simple relationship.

Stephen Sandford saw a danger of a series of models without data being used. He thought therefore that extensive base line data of the sort collected in some World Bank evaluations might be necessary.

Deryke Belshaw pointed out that evaluation was also an on-going process as the project developed.

Paul Richards said that in the University of Ibadan's Ibarapa Project some people said that the installation of new wells meant that they were now free from certain diseases (especially guinea worm). He did not know whether this was true. It was, however, a legitimate part of self evaluation to identify what the people thought had happened. If you feel better, he suggested, does it matter if you really are not? Ian Carruthers stated that there were few positive relations between improved water and health (though reduced guinea worm infection was likely to be one).

Andrew Barnett said that water supply might be a necessary but not sufficient condition for improved health.

Finally Deryke Belshaw asked "what is the project?" What are the externalities that are excluded? The way sectors were divided up led to mis-specifications. Agreeing, Ian Carruthers mentioned the possibility that a cocoa project in Nigeria might harm other cocoa producers elsewhere through lowering world prices.

general

At this point discussion ceased and we concentrated on writing up lists under certain category headings on the various boards. Edited versions of these lists are attached as appendices I and II.

Discussion on Follow-up

The final discussion concerned follow-up on the workshop.

Ian Carruthers suggested that there was a mass audience through journals like Ceres, Development Forum, New Internationalist, and the Economic and Political Weekly. We had devoted about 30 person days to this subject and there should be some substantial output from it.

George Gwyer said that he thought that technical cooperation staff in the field would appreciate copies of documents.

Deryke Belshaw observed that we were partly attacking conventional ideas about scientific work and what was "respectable".

Ian Carruthers said that some people felt guilty about cutting corners in field work. We should try to give them confidence. We as university people could help them to see that this was good economics. The opportunity cost of people's time was high.

Paul Richards said that there were difficulties with "soft and hairy" techniques of the sort that he and others had been developing. There was a danger that the prevailing professional attitudes in international research stations would squeeze out this kind of work and that publication might be difficult outside specialised 'environmental perception' journals.

Ian Carruthers suggested that each participant should write a note for a journal concerning the workshop and its outcome.

The following volunteers said they would write(or say) something:

Bina Agarwal, Economic and Political Weekly
Andrew Barnett, Radio Brighton (broadcast on the farming programme)
Deryke Belshaw, Ceres and also World Development
Ian Carruthers, Journal of Agricultural Economics
Robert Chambers, the Journal of Administration Overseas
Edward Clay, International Development Review
George Gwyer, Overseas Development
M.A. Hamid, Institute of Bangladesh Studies Journal
Sam Jackson, Development Forum
John Karimu, Africa Service of the BBC
Richard Longhurst, Journal of Development Studies
Paul Richards, Area
Geof Wood, Development and Change.

Paul Richards said that two purposes were (i) to transfer professional views of professional values and (ii) the preparation of a manual for do-it-yourself RRA for people in rural areas. He asked whether we should have a one-day workshop on methods.

Geof Wood suggested an annotated bibliography which might include (i) local perceptions of quantities, (ii) indicators, and (iii) techniques. John Karimu/Paul Richards/David Barker agreed that they would work on an annotated bibliography and would write around for references. Others should send them information and where possible sent xeroxed copies of relevant material, including fugitive stuff. This should lead to an annotated bibliography useful for field work. Andrew Barnett would keep in touch. He mentioned that he might be able to get some research assistance capacity to help in the work.

Ian Carruthers was interested in the teaching materials which should be generated.

Edward Clay said that we needed something which set out the problems to new entrants e.g. graduate students. Geof Wood mentioned that this was a subject on which someone in Bangladesh (for example in the

ADC seat) might want to run a one day workshop concerning methods. He mentioned the potential value of "profiles", citing the way in which the Kosi development commissioner was asked not to do a big survey but to compile some profiles of people concerning a sensitive subject. Deryke Belshaw was worried about the theoretical underpinning of RRA approaches. He mentioned three supports - Karl Popper on epistemology; the economics of information; and perceptions of decision making processes. These were areas where recent theoretical developments were on the side of RRA. He agreed to follow-up and to try a first shot draft on this subject.

Edward Clay said that there was need for a sensitive statistician and a management information science input into any future work. Otherwise we were in danger of rediscovering the wheel.

Geof Wood said that he wanted to explore further the earlier part of his paper. He would be in touch with Deryke Belshaw.

Paul Richards suggested sending copies of papers to Derek Gregory for comment. Ideology, Science and Human Geography by Derek Gregory talks a great deal about research as a process within the community. In this sense, all was quick-and-dirty.

Andrew Barnett was anxious that efforts to develop and systematise RRA should avoid encouraging consultants who were mere "rip-off artists". Ian Carruthers said that there were some good and bad in all fields, and some consultants might conscientiously benefit.

Record of notes on blackboard - Day One

1. Political economy - "target group" analysis in current conventional wisdom.
2. Typologies, structural (cf village studies).
3. How far can RRA get into political economy issues?
4. RRA links with longer term data gathering.

Problems

Selection of informants (especially statistical)

Status of appraiser and authoritativeness.

Problems of use/persuasiveness of non-quantified data.

Purpose in relation to policy.

Scope and focus.

Duration.

Methods (Wye)

Appraiser's assumptions, position autonomy.

Nature of environment/context.

Terms of Reference.

What information needed.

How Quick

How accurate

What techniques

What resources available (from whom)

For whom

With what intention

how to be transmitted

how to be acted upon

long term research in which to "locate" RRA.

An attempt at a typology.

A. Purposes. (Policy or process analysis, Research, Project).

Self education

Detailed design

Justification - CBA

Legitimising/Critique

Mobilization

Research (academic) {

- screening process (first minute)
- Gap plugging (last minute)

Action Research

Emergency Recce

Project identification {

- Target group identification
- "Problem" identification

Monitoring

Evaluation

For project participants or funding agency Government

B. Characteristics of Appraisal

Initiating or responding role

Autonomous \longrightarrow non-A.

Empirical familiarity

Uni and multidisciplinary background

Project Administrative experience

.../

Individual or Team

Constructive or negative experience

In house or external

Congruence of assumptions

Congruence of report language

Degree of outsider-ness

Empathy

C. Methodology/Context

Interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary teams

Inter-agency/single agency

Making models and assumptions explicit

Critique of knowledge formation process (in rural societies, in government agencies, amongst RRA researchers).

D. Techniques

Key informants/and notes

High Technology (Land Sat)

Games

Participant Observation (DIY, drinking etc.)

Repertory Grids

Transects

Questionnaires

Fugitive literature

.../

Archiving

Background and cognate literature

Sampling (short cut)

Self or enumerator observed data

Group interviews

Appropriate indicators, measurement scaling

Calibration

Panels/observatories

E. Characteristics of SOCIETY

literate?

Stratification

Religion

Position of women

Mode of Production

Landlessness

Class Composition of policy makers

Nucleated/dispersed settlement.

F. Problems

Sensitive issues

"meaning" of indicators - arm circumference

Calibration of local indicators - what is "head load"

Representitiveness

Autonomy/influence, capability.

"quantity" of info/centralisation

Time/Distance/transport/punctures

Researchers health.

.../

Garlands

Official entourages

In vacuo of knowledge

In vacuo of social formation

Language $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{knowledge of by appraisal} \\ \text{translatability of concepts} \end{array} \right.$

Quality control

Mapping gaps in research coverage

Dictators

Imposition of theoretical terrain

Tendency to evaluate the phenomena which are easy to evaluate

When to stop an RRA?

Points suggested by Jeff Alderson

Infrastructure

Unit Cost

Coverage

Quality

Impact

or

Effort

Effect

Adequacy of effect

Efficiency

Importance

Significance

or

Physical input

Physical return

Financial } return
Economic }

Social Implications

