

# Shortcut Methods of Gathering Social Information for Rural Development Projects

Robert Chambers

Decisionmakers need information that is relevant, timely, accurate, and usable. In rural development, a great deal of the information that is generated is, in various combinations, irrelevant, late, wrong, or unusable anyway. It is also often costly to obtain, process, analyze, and digest. Although many professional social scientists have given thought to improving information gathering, it remains a remarkably inefficient activity. Criteria of cost-effectiveness have not often been applied, and manifest inefficiency is sometimes met by demanding not better information, or less, but simply more.

## The Problem

The challenge is to find more cost-effective ways for outsiders to learn about rural conditions—ways that lead closer to the optimal in tradeoffs between the cost of collection and learning, and the relevance, timeliness, accuracy, and actual beneficial use of the information and understanding that is gained. Some of the approaches and methods which seek such optimal tradeoffs have come to be known as rapid rural appraisal (RRA).<sup>1</sup> RRA has been developed for, and can be applied to, generating social information on various factors, whether visible, such as housing, physical assets, and some services, or invisible, such as social organizations, power structures, and social institutions.

In the context of designing rural development projects, RRA appears especially necessary and relevant for the initial phases: project iden-

tification, preparation, and appraisal. Information is needed quickly; decisions are preempted by the passage of time. Commitment to projects and to details of projects sometimes becomes irreversible early on, and a premium is set on timely information. But RRA is also relevant later, during project implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Rural development projects are not like construction works, with engineering blueprints which precisely predetermine what will be done, but rather like voyages into uncharted areas where direction and steering will change with new soundings and sightings. Techniques of RRA are hardly a new radar to prevent shipwreck, but they may at least reduce the dangers by showing more clearly and more quickly what is happening.

In practice, however, we seem to be trapped by two sets of inappropriate methods for generating social information. These can be described as the “quick and dirty” and the “long and dirty,” where “dirty” means not cost-effective.

### *Quick and Dirty*

The most common form of quick-and-dirty appraisal is rural development tourism—the brief rural visit by the urban-based professional.<sup>2</sup> This can be very cost-effective with the outstanding individual; one example is Wolf Ladejinsky, who in two remarkable short field trips in India saw what was happening in the green revolution and reported it years before plodding social scientists came to the same conclusions to two (spurious) decimal points.<sup>3</sup> But more commonly, rural development tourism introduces biases that work against perceiving rural poverty, reinforce underestimates of its prevalence, and prevent understanding of its nature. These anti-poverty biases are:

- *Spatial (urban, tarmac, and roadside).* The poorer people are often out of sight of the road, having sold out and moved away. They tend to be concentrated in regions remote from urban centers and to live on the fringes of villages or in small inaccessible hamlets.<sup>4</sup>
- *Project.* Outsiders link up with networks that channel them from urban centers to rural places where there are projects, where something initiated by outsiders is happening or is meant to be happening, to the neglect of nonproject areas.
- *Personal contact.* Rural development tourists tend to meet the less poor and the more powerful, men rather than women, users of services rather than nonusers, adopters rather than nonadopters, the active rather than the nonactive, those who have not had to

migrate, and (inevitably) those who have not died. In all cases the bias is against perceiving the extent of deprivation.

- *Dry season.* In many tropical environments the wet season is the worst time of year, especially for the poor, since it brings hard work, food shortages, high food prices, high incidence of disease, and high indebtedness.<sup>5</sup> Urban-based professionals, however, usually travel in the postharvest dry season when things are better.
- *Politeness and protocol.* Courtesy and convention may deter rural development tourists from enquiring about and meeting the poorer people. The visitor is also short of time, and the poorer people stand at the end of the line.

Moreover, these biases interlock. The prosperity after harvest of a male farmer on a project beside a main road close to a capital city may color the perceptions of a succession of influential officials and foreigners. The plight of a poor widow starving and sick during the wet season in a remote and inaccessible area may never in any way impinge on the consciousness of anyone outside her own community. The biases pull together to direct attention toward those who are better-off, and away from those who are poorer and more deprived.

Many other defects of quick-and-dirty investigators are well known, but a short list can serve as a warning:

- Quick-and-dirty investigators lack rapport with respondents, who give misleading replies that may be deferential, prudent, or designed to avoid penalties or gain benefits and who may evade sensitive topics, state social ideals not actual practice, and so on.
- Investigators—especially outsiders who are “old hands” and who “know it all”—fail to listen. They want to talk and teach rather than learn, and they reinforce misperception and prejudice by projecting their own ideas and selecting their own meanings.
- Investigators overlook the invisible—they observe physical things and activities, but not social and cultural relationships. They may not ask about or correctly understand crucial social facts such as patron-client relations, factions, informal organizations, norms, indebtedness, interest rates, wages, and control of assets and decisionmaking within the family.
- Investigators see only a “snapshot”—a moment in time. Cyclical and periodic events such as seasonal activities and regular weekly markets may never be uncovered, and trends, often more important than a static view of current conditions, are easily missed.

This list could be lengthened, but the point is that quick appraisals can be seriously misleading, especially when they concern the poor. Rapid is often wrong.

### *Long and Dirty*

At the other extreme, traditions of academic research value long and costly investigations that often collect a massive volume of data. The real or imagined requirements of Ph.D. research induce students to seek safety and respectability by avoiding shortcuts and finding out more, not less. So social anthropologists immerse themselves for long periods in alien cultures, and sociologists and agricultural economists plan and perpetrate huge questionnaire surveys. Sometimes the outcome is academically excellent and makes a long-term contribution to understanding and action. All too often, however, the delays are excessive: the social anthropologist's field work is published (if at all) ten years later; the massive survey takes years to process, if it is processed at all.

In its still not uncommon pathological form, the survey questionnaire has thirty or more pages (multidisciplinary, each discipline with its questions), which if asked are never coded, or if coded never punched, or if punched never processed, or if processed and printed out never examined, or if examined never analyzed or written up, or if analyzed and written up never read, or if read never understood or remembered, or if understood or remembered never actually used to change action. Large-scale multidisciplinary rural surveys must be one of the most inefficient industries in the world. Benchmark surveys are often criticized, and yet these huge operations persist, often in the name of the science of evaluation; they preempt scarce national research resources and generate mounds of data and papers, which are an embarrassment to all until white ants or paper shredders clean things up.

Some investigations are long and clean. Many of the insights of social anthropologists later prove useful. Some of the best surveys are those which repeatedly monitor the same villages or people. Examples are the health and nutrition work of the Dunn Nutrition Unit, Cambridge, in Keneba village in the Gambia and of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research in Matlab Thana in Bangladesh, and the social and agricultural village survey of the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India. But most large-scale surveys, except those of a strict census type, are monumentally inefficient, both in the quality of data obtained and in the long delays in the analysis and reporting of that data. Often the most useful information comes not from the survey itself but from informal

observations (in fact, forms of RRA) by those who conduct it. The survey itself is often hardly used at all. Long is often lost.

*Cost-effectiveness: Fairly Quick and Fairly Clean*

The question is whether there is a middle zone between quick and dirty and long and dirty, a zone of greater cost-effectiveness. People in many disciplines and professions have converged on this question, but until recently they may have been deterred from writing it up because the activities were not considered quite proper. They have a sense of responsibility to their professional training or, put differently, they have been conditioned by their professional training and reward system. And yet in the appraisal of natural resources and the environment,<sup>6</sup> of health and nutrition projects,<sup>7</sup> of farming systems,<sup>8</sup> of social, cultural, and economic conditions in agricultural projects,<sup>9</sup> and of organizations<sup>10</sup>—in these and other fields—there is an active search for shortcuts with tradeoffs between timeliness, accuracy, relevance, and actual use of information.

Formidable obstacles impede this process and this search. In the words of one participant at the RRA conference, “by the time people leave university the damage has been done”—inappropriate and rigid professional methods have been imparted and internalized. Another contributor had been forced to abandon the employment of university graduates as enumerators because of their questionnaire mentality and had instead used high school students who were more flexible and more open to learning from respondents.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the biggest single blockage is the hegemony of statisticians and the failure to treat statistical methods as servant, not master.<sup>12</sup> More generally, professional values and reward systems deter improvisation in learning about rural conditions because, even though the improvised methods are cost-effective, they do not seem pure. Better, it is thought, to be long and legitimate than short and suspect.

But cost-effectiveness has its own rigor and should generate its own values. Two linked principles can be suggested: optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision.

- *Optimal ignorance* refers to the importance of knowing what facts are not worth knowing. It requires courage to implement. It is far, far easier to demand more and more information than it is to abstain from demanding it. Yet in information gathering there is often a monstrous overkill.
- *Appropriate imprecision* refers to the fact that especially in sur-

veys, much of the data collected has a degree of accuracy which is unnecessary. Order of magnitude and direction of change are often all that will be used.

## Precepts and Principles

What methods are best depends on purpose and circumstances. Some general precepts can, however, be suggested:

- *Taking time.* Avoiding the tyranny of strict sampling, of the formal questionnaire, of the massive survey will be in vain if the time saved is dissipated in rushing. Many of the defects of rural development tourism come from haste.
- *Offsetting biases.* If thought is given to biases (urban, tarmac, roadside, project, elite, male, user, dry season, and so on), they can be deliberately offset. Wherever possible, for example, male bias should be offset by including women in appraisal teams.
- *Being unimportant.* The limousine–best-village–garlands-and-speeches syndrome should be avoided.
- *Listening and learning.* Rural people should be treated as teachers, and the investigators should consider themselves as their pupils, assuming that the local people have much valid knowledge that outsiders do not have, trying to get inside their skins and see the world as they do, and being open to unexpected information.
- *Multiple approaches.* The same questions should be investigated with different methods, both to cross-check and to fill out the picture.

## A Short Repertoire for Rapid Rural Appraisal

### *Available Information*

For a rural area and its people, a wealth of information is often available for those who take the trouble to look for it. Much can be learned from maps, aerial photographs (especially where time series are available), and satellite imagery about ecology, land use, settlement patterns, communications, and remote and isolated communities. Departmental reports, district gazetteers, technical department surveys, and government statistics can be most useful. Academic papers and books and reports of surveys can be invaluable.

Yet there is a recurrent tendency to ignore these sources and start ignorantly from scratch. The costs can be high indeed. In northern

Nigeria a World Bank–financed rural development project introduced in 1975 emphasized sole cropping, improved varieties less resistant to local weeds (and so demanding more labor), and cotton as a cash crop. Yet the work of David Norman and his colleagues at Ahmadu Bello University between 1965 and 1972 had already shown the importance of mixed cropping as a strategy, the crucial constraint of the labor peak at first weeding, and the allocation of farm labor preferentially to food crops. Moreover, the project relied on an implicit trickle-down from large to small farmers and within households from men to women, when existing socioeconomic literature, especially Polly Hill's *Rural Hausa*, should have warned that this was unlikely to occur.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, the USAID impact evaluation missions now deliberately devote time to studying the sociological, economic, and geographic literature before going to the field. Such study is even more important with project identification and appraisal. Time spent searching for information, even when it is not known whether it exists, is often well repaid and may avert grave errors as well as save unnecessary demands for new data collection.

### *Learning from Rural People*

Development disasters can follow from failing to learn from rural people. The fiasco of the groundnut scheme in Tanzania might have been foreseen by spending more time in the field asking local inhabitants why they did not cultivate in the proposed project area. Rural people often have a wealth of knowledge.<sup>14</sup> The Hanunoo in the Philippines are said to have had, on average, a knowledge of 1,600 names for plants, 400 more than those in a botanical survey.<sup>15</sup> The !Kung San of Botswana have a knowledge of animal behavior often superior to that of scientists.<sup>16</sup> Examples could be multiplied. Knowledge of soils, seasons, plants, domestic and wild animals, farming practices, diet, cooking practices, and child care, not to mention social customs and relations, is often rich and in some or all respects superior to that of the outsider.

But techniques for eliciting, learning, and using such knowledge are still quite primitive. Promising innovations include adapting a local game to facilitate quantification and ranking, using different size squares of paper to enable farmers to estimate the relative sizes of their fields, only one of which was actually measured by the investigator, and using holes in the ground and placing camel pellets in them to enable pastoralists to rank and discuss the problems they face.<sup>17</sup> On the social side, there is underexploited scope for asking rural people themselves to identify their needs, the ways in which they can be helped, or who in the community is most vulnerable and most in need.

### *Identifying and Using Key Indicators*

Some indicators integrate several variables. Investigating, calibrating, observing, and counting such indicators may then provide a shortcut avoiding more expensive, direct, and time-consuming investigations. One cost-effective approach may often be to ask the rural people themselves to suggest the indicators—for example, for relative wealth or poverty—and to ask them to discuss their merits and weaknesses.

Indicators are usually thought of as visible. The most favored social indicator in the rural areas of developing countries is house type. In its crudest form the number of tin roofs is used as a measure of the relative affluence or poverty of families or villages, either at one time or over time. A slightly more elaborate approach is a simple house score, derived by multiplying the number of rooms by factors for quality of construction and dividing by the number of household members. This has been found a good proxy for levels of economic well-being in part of northern Nigeria.<sup>18</sup> Other much used visible indicators are anthropometric measures to assess nutritional status.

Indicators which are not visible may be at least as important as the visible ones, especially in assessing social stratification and in monitoring program or project performance. Social stratification can be identified in various ways: according to the resource base; or by occupation; or according to threshold values such as whether a household is self-sufficient in grain, whether the household head goes out to work on other people's farms, whether certain inputs are purchased, and so on. In appraising organizations, one proxy suggested (with qualifications) for organizational capability is the rate of transfer and turnover of personnel.<sup>19</sup>

Although these and other indicators require local validation, they may provide shortcuts to insights. Some may also provide simple measures for baselines if before-and-after evaluation is required without a massive data collection.

### *Adaptations of Hildebrand's "Sondeo"*

Peter Hildebrand, working with the Institut de Ciencia y Tecnologia Agricolas in Guatemala, developed an ingenious method for multi-disciplinary work in preparation for on-farm agricultural research.<sup>20</sup> A homogeneous cropping system among many farmers in an area was first identified. Hildebrand then took a team of five agricultural scientists and five social scientists to the area for a week. Pairs of one agricultural scientist and one social scientist went out each day and learned what they could from farmers and others, returning in the evening to share

experiences, take stock, and decide on further priorities. Each day the pairs changed so that each agricultural scientist worked for one day with each social scientist and vice versa. A report was written over the weekend. This was “not a benchmark study with quantifiable data that can be used in the future for project evaluation; rather it [was] a working document to orient the research programme.”<sup>21</sup>

Hildebrand’s so-called *sondeo* (exploratory) method has been used to familiarize staff with an area in which they were to work and to identify innovations which might be tried out directly with farmers. It could be adapted for other purposes. For project identification and appraisal, visiting teams might pair with themselves or with local officials. For monitoring and evaluation, they might identify what changes have taken place and their causality. In principle, the *sondeo* system could include rural people as team members and might be applied in many fields—to appraise natural resources, health and nutrition, and social and economic change. It might complement very nicely the Benor Training and Visit system of agricultural extension by helping to generate quickly the sort of recommendations farmers would appreciate and be able to adopt.<sup>22</sup> It provides a structure for mutual learning between disciplines, and its time-bound form and the mutual checking in the evening sessions encourage speed and accuracy.

### *Ad Hoc Local Research*

Ad hoc investigations by national researchers or by local residents can be extremely valuable. The researchers may be university students, schoolteachers, or others. It may be important to avoid the tyranny of the pre-set questionnaire, unless it is very, very short, and to concentrate on qualitative insight (unless, of course, numbers are for some reason vital). In a matter of a few weeks, a Murundi refugee student in Zaire investigated fishing among Barundi refugees and produced an excellent and practical report. A student who has links with a rural area can be not only a key informant but also a key researcher, able to find out very quickly and efficiently what needs to be known. (Conversely, urban-based, urban-biased students can be worse than useless.)

### *Direct Observation*

One danger with RRA is being misled by myth. Rural people (like others) often have beliefs about their values and activities which do not correspond with the reality. It is common to be told about a custom, but probing reveals that it has either lapsed or perhaps was never practiced at all. Sean Conlin records that he worked as a social anthropologist in

an area in Peru where, according to a survey by another researcher, people invariably worked together on each other's individually held plots of land. That was what people answered to the survey questionnaire. The belief was important to their understanding of themselves as a certain sort of people. Yet in one year's residence in the village as a participant observer, Conlin noted the practice only once.<sup>23</sup>

Direct observation may often not be possible with RRA, however; in that case, multiple checks on information about customs and practices are desirable. The importance of walking, seeing, and asking questions is a commonplace. One of the most effective, though time-consuming, ways of learning is by doing. John Hatch hired himself out as a laborer to farmers and not only found the labor requirement of maize cultivation to be 50 percent higher than recorded in surveys but also learned much else from his farmer teachers.<sup>24</sup>

### *Key Informants*

Despite the well-known dangers that make cross-checking necessary, key informants are a major tool for RRA. Some of the most useful are social anthropologists in the field, who are often very knowledgeable but do not fully realize what they know. If questioned, they can provide useful insights and raise unexpected issues. Other key informants are local officials (such as the agricultural extension worker or the person in charge of the clinic), local leaders, and schoolteachers. They tend to be those who are better-off, better educated, and more powerful. The biases this introduces need to be consciously offset by seeking out those who tend to be left out and uncontacted—women and the poorer people, who are often much better informed and articulate than outsiders are conditioned to expect.

Special efforts to identify key informants can pay off. In organizational appraisal, George Honadle questioned staff by explaining that in all organizations there is at least one pain-in-the-neck—someone who disagrees with all decisions and promotes trouble—and asking them to tell the names of those people in their association.<sup>25</sup> Answers were immediate and enthusiastic; individual interviews with those named provided valuable cross-checks and revealed useful additional information. More generally, for any subject of interest, it is worth spending time asking which people or groups are most knowledgeable and then working with them.

### *Group Interviews*

Group interviews have several advantages, including access to a larger body of knowledge and mutual checking. They can also be seriously misleading when the group believes the questioner has power to control

benefits or sanctions. They are especially useful for acquiring information on natural resources, when a wider geographical area and subject matter can be covered than with one respondent. I have used this method for very rapid mapping of soil and vegetation associations in the northeast province of Kenya.

Group interviews may also be good for certain sensitive types of social information. To ask, for example, about land quality may arouse suspicion in an individual that his land may be subject to some penalty if he replies truthfully, whereas a group gathered together as people knowledgeable about farming will not feel so threatened.<sup>26</sup> Ladejinsky records of a landlord in Bihar: "He first informed us that he owned sixteen acres of land but corrected himself under the good humoured prodding of a crowd of farmers that he had failed to mention another 484 acres. The lapse of memory might have had something to do with the ceiling on land holdings."<sup>27</sup>

Convening specialized panels of local people who are experts on a subject can also be a revealing and efficient approach, besides being enjoyable and interesting for the experts themselves. For example, group interviews have been used to gather information rapidly on changes in infant feeding practices. Small clusters of five or six women of two or three generations were assembled, and past, present, and expected future patterns of infant feeding discussed. "There was a self-correcting mechanism within the group because if one person put across an over-favourable picture of her own or her group's behaviour, a peer would give a more realistic observation. In cross-checking with other groups a high degree of uniformity of information was found."<sup>28</sup>

### *The Informal Interview*

The informal interview, without a questionnaire schedule, is perhaps the most widespread method of RRA.<sup>29</sup> It is an art, needing a sensitive balance between open-endedness and directed inquiry, to identify questions the outsider does not know how to ask and yet cover the major concerns. Establishing rapport is not always easy, but is obviously crucial. Conviviality can help, and so can a relaxed, unhurried atmosphere.<sup>30</sup>

A variant is the guided interview where there is no formal questionnaire but a checklist of questions which the interviewer uses as a flexible guide. Anthony Ellman's two-page checklist devised for appraisal of a rural refugee situation in Africa and Ian Carruthers' critical review procedure are examples of approaches to interviews without pre-set questionnaires but with an agenda to be covered.<sup>31</sup> Michael Collinson has developed this method with guidelines for discussion with farmers, in which not all points are raised with each farmer, but through which a

composite picture is built up over a number of interviews so that a scenario can be written.<sup>32</sup> This is evidently an effective tool for diagnosing farming problems and opportunities in a matter of weeks, and it can be used by investigators who have professional training but lack extensive field experience.

### *Aerial Inspections and Surveys*

Jokes about airborne experts should not detract from the selective value of inspection and surveys from planes or, often better, helicopters. The utility of aerial surveys for counting animals and for certain types of natural resource surveys is well established.<sup>33</sup> Less well recognized is their value for purposes more closely related to people. They not only can give a general spatial perspective on an area, making possible in a matter of minutes broad overviews of land use, crop zoning, irrigation distribution, and the like; they also can offset the urban, tarmac, and roadside biases of rural development tourism by identifying where the poor live—on the outskirts of villages, in scattered hamlets, and in more remote places—and can be used to select such places to visit. One risk is that aerial inspection and surveys become substitutes for work on the ground and for learning from local people. An antidote is to fly with someone who is locally knowledgeable and who can interpret what is seen.

The earthbound appraiser's alternative of climbing a hill has more limited use but should not be neglected.

Other methods can be added to this repertoire: the use of small informal samples and very short lists of questions; transects (for example, walking off at right angles from a road); specialized investigations seeking a narrow band of information, such as rural innovators' surveys to find out about a new practice; one-day surveys of users of services;<sup>34</sup> "piggy-backing" on research in progress by asking social anthropologists in the field or those conducting longitudinal surveys to investigate a question, adding it, as it were, to their list; or monitoring a small panel of families who are understood in social anthropological depth, revisiting them at intervals to learn about changes and how and why they have come about.<sup>35</sup> Enough has been said to show that RRA has a range of techniques which can be used singly or in combinations and which for many purposes may be more cost-effective than either shorter or longer alternatives.

### The Potential of Rapid Rural Appraisal

Much good RRA is little more than organized commonsense, freed from the chains of inappropriate professionalism and informed by continuous doubt and self-criticism. It has perhaps more to gain from

the approaches of development social anthropology than from any other discipline. In its choice of method, it has to be eclectic, versatile, and inventive. Because it can so often be more cost-effective than either uncritical rural development tourism or the long approaches of traditional research, it deserves to be accorded more attention, more prestige, and more coverage in professional writing.

It has much to contribute to the project process. For identification, preparation, and appraisal it presents a battery of techniques which, if well used, should make the design more realistic and improve subsequent project performance, not least by providing relevant information and insight when it is needed. Less obvious, but at least as important, is the application of RRA to monitoring and evaluation. All too often, monitoring and evaluation are superficial, measuring indicators which do not reflect changes in well-being or failing to penetrate multiple causality. Longitudinal applications of RRA can be used to monitor trends in indicators such as real wages for agricultural laborers, in- and out-migration, women's command over resources, and the nutritional status of children. In the social anthropological mode, with the use of various techniques, it can explore the great and crucial gaps in knowledge which surround causality and also help in assessing the counterfactual—what would have happened without the project.

The dangers of RRA are as serious as its potential is large. Some superficiality and error are inevitable. The key to successful RRA is not to avoid superficiality and error completely, but to control them and achieve cost-effectiveness through optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision.

The most critical factors are time and the personal commitment of appraisers. RRA, by its sparing demands for information, should release time which can be spent checking, identifying unasked questions, and noting and pursuing the unexpected. Above all, it should release time for more contact with and learning from the poorer rural people. In most investigations, whether quick or long, they are the residual category, the last in line, the least consulted (although their needs are greatest), and their problems are the least well articulated (although they are the most acute). Shortage of time compounds the interlocking biases which shut them out. More time can be used to let them in. The danger is that RRA, by saving time, will merely mean that appraisers spend less time in the field, and the poor remain, as in the past, unseen and unheard.

To avoid that danger requires personal commitment. It requires planning to spend more time in particular places, with those who are worse-off and to visit remote areas. It requires that those who conduct rapid appraisals do not merely put people first in their thinking, actions, and priorities, but put the poorer people first of all.

If RRA can enable rural appraisers to spend more time more efficiently learning about and understanding the nature of rural poverty, then the choice, design, and implementation of rural projects and programs should improve. The poor should then lose less and gain more. That may appear the naive faith of an optimist, but big changes occur through many small actions which build up into larger trends and movements. By outlining the scope and dangers of RRA, I hope to encourage more project appraisers to use it intelligently and to reinforce the commitment of those who see in it one way of putting the poorer people first.

## Notes

This chapter is a substantially revised and updated version of a paper prepared for and presented to the World Bank Agricultural Sector Symposium, January 1980, subsequently published as "Rapid Rural Appraisal: Rationale and Repertoire," *Public Administration and Development*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1981), pp. 95–106.

1. Rapid rural appraisal was explored at a workshop, October 26–27, 1978 (referred to as RRA1), and a conference, December 4–7, 1979 (referred to as RRA2), both held at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, England. This gave rise to three main publications: Arnold Pacey, *Taking Soundings in Developing Communities: An Approach to the Information Needs of Rural Development Workers, District Officials, and Health Service Staff* (Geneva: World Health Organization [WHO], 1981); Richard Longhurst, ed., *Rapid Rural Appraisal: Social Structure and Rural Economy, IDS Bulletin*, vol. 12, no. 4 (1981); and Ian Carruthers and Robert Chambers, eds., *Special Issue on Rapid Rural Appraisal, Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981). For a good practical guide to informal agricultural appraisal, see Robert E. Rhoades, *The Art of the Informal Agricultural Survey* (Lima, Peru: International Potato Center, March 1982). There are also useful insights in some of the methodological appendixes to the published series of project evaluation studies of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

2. For a more detailed description of the pathology of rural development tourism, and its anti-poverty biases, see Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (Harlow, Eng.: Longman, 1983), pp. 10–26. See also Mick Moore, "Beyond the Tarmac Road: A Guide for Rural Poverty Watchers," in Longhurst, ed., *Rapid Rural Appraisal*, pp. 47–52.

3. Wolf Ladejinsky, "The Green Revolution in Punjab: A Field Trip," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 4, no. 26 (1969); Ladejinsky, "The Green Revolution in Bihar—the Kosi Area: A Field Trip," *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 4, no. 39 (1969).

4. Joseph Ssenyonga, "The Cultural Dimensions of Demographic Trends," *Populi*, vol. 3, no. 2 (1976), pp. 2–11. Moore ("Beyond the Tarmac Road," p. 47) describes one part of rural Sri Lanka: "The proportion of houses with earth floors ranged from 14% in one locality to 41% in another. The remarkable fact is that one could drive along all the motorable roads in these localities and see scarcely a single mud floored house."

5. See Susan Schofield, "Seasonal Factors Affecting Nutrition in Different Age Groups and Especially Pre-School Children," *Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1 (1974), pp. 22–40; Robert Chambers, Richard Longhurst, and Arnold Pacey, eds., *Seasonal Dimensions to Rural Poverty* (London: Frances Pinter, 1981); and Robert Chambers, "Health, Agriculture and Rural Poverty: Why Seasons Matter," *Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1982), pp. 217–38.

6. Nick Abel and Michael Stocking, "Rapid Aerial Survey Techniques for Rural Areas," RRA2; Stocking and Abel, "Ecological and Environmental Indicators for the Rapid Appraisal of Natural Resources," *Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981), pp. 473–84; and Jeremy Swift, "Rapid Appraisal and Cost-Effective Participatory Research in Dry Pastoral Areas of West Africa," *Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981), pp. 484–92.

7. Lincoln C. Chen, Alauddin K. M. A. Chowdhury, and Sandi Huffman, "Classification of Energy-Protein Malnutrition by Anthropometry and Subsequent Risk of Mortality" (Bangladesh: International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, 1978); Gill Gordon, "Finding Out about Child (0–5 Years) Feeding Practices," RRA2; Philip Payne, "Assessment of Nutrition Problems: What Do We Look at and What Do We Measure," RRA2; Godfrey Walker, "Notes on Rapid Appraisal of the Utilization of Rural Health Services," RRA2; and Arnold Pacey, *Taking Soundings in Developing Communities* (Geneva: WHO, 1981).

8. Stephen Biggs, "Timely Analysis in Programmes to Generate Agricultural Technologies," RRA2; Derek Byerlee and others, "On-farm Research to Develop Technologies Appropriate to Farmers," paper presented at the Conference of the International Association of Agricultural Economists, Banff, Canada, 1979; Ian Carruthers, "A Mental Construct for Unstructured On-farm Interviews," RRA2; Michael Collinson, "A Low-cost Approach to Understanding Small Farmers," *Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981), pp. 433–50; Peter Hildebrand, "Combining Disciplines in Rapid Appraisal: The Sondeo Approach," *Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981), pp. 423–32; and Rhoades, *The Art of the Informal Agricultural Survey*.

9. See articles in Longhurst, ed., *Rapid Rural Appraisal*, especially Deryke Belshaw, "A Theoretical Framework for Data-economising Appraisal Procedures to Rural Development Planning"; Mick Howes, "Confessions of a Fieldworker—How I Stratified a Rural Population"; Richard Longhurst, "Research Methodology and Rural Economy in Northern Nigeria"; Mick Moore, "Beyond the Tarmac Road: A Guide for Rural Poverty Watchers"; Ingrid Palmer, "Women's Issues and Project Appraisal"; and Geoffrey D. Wood, "The Social and Scientific Context of Rapid Rural Appraisal."

10. George Honadle, "Rapid Reconnaissance for Development Administration: Mapping and Moulding Organizational Landscapes," *World Development*, vol. 10, no. 8 (1982), pp. 633–49.

11. Rosalind Eyben, "Rapid Appraisal in Non-formal Education: An Account of an On-going Research Experience with a United Nations Project," RRA2.

12. See Mick Moore, "Denounce the Gang of Statisticians, Struggle against the Sample Line, Unite the Researching Masses against Professional Hegemony," RRA2; Ian Carruthers and Robert Chambers, "Rapid Appraisal for Rural Development," *Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981), pp. 415–17; and Anthony Ellman, "Rapid Appraisal for Rural Project Preparation," *Agricultural Administration*, vol. 8, no. 6 (1981), p. 465.

13. *Rural Hausa: A Village and a Setting* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1972). Longhurst ("Research Methodology and Rural Economy in Northern Nigeria," pp. 28–29) emphasizes the difficulties of project design in such a complicated rural economy and concludes that the appraisers may have lacked time in the field or been biased initially in favor of a particular type of project.

14. See Robert Chambers, ed., "Rural Development: Whose Knowledge Counts?" *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1979); David Brokensha, D. M. Warren, and Oswald Werner, eds., *Indigenous Systems of Knowledge and Development* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1980); and Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First*, pp. 75–101.

15. H. C. Conklin, *Hanunoo Agriculture: A Report on an Integral System of Shifting Cultivation in the Philippines*, FAO Forestry Development Paper no. 12 (Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 1957).

16. Nicholas Blurton Jones and Melvin J. Konner, "IKung Knowledge of Animal Behaviour (or: The Proper Study of Mankind Is Animals)," in Richard B. Lee and Irven Devore, eds., *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung San and Their Neighbors* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976).

17. David Barker, "Appropriate Methodology: An Example Using a Traditional African Board Game to Measure Farmers' Attitudes and Environmental Images," *IDS Bulletin*, vol. 10, no. 2 (1979), pp. 37–40; Longhurst, "Research Methodology and Rural Economy in Northern Nigeria," citing the work of Peter Matlon; and Jeremy Swift, personal communication.

18. See Longhurst, "Research Methodology and Rural Economy in Northern Nigeria," for this point and for a useful discussion of different cost-effective methods for stratifying a rural population. Howes, "Confessions of a Fieldworker—How I Stratified a Rural Population," discusses some of the pitfalls and difficulties of stratification.

19. Honadle, "Rapid Reconnaissance for Development Administration," pp. 636–37.

20. Hildebrand, "Motivating Small Farmers to Accept Change," paper for the conference on Integrated Crop and Animal Production to Optimize Resource Utilization on Small Farms in Developing Countries, Bellagio, October 18–23, 1978; and "Combining Disciplines in Rapid Appraisal: The Sondeo Approach," pp. 423–32.

21. Hildebrand, "Combining Disciplines in Rapid Appraisal," p. 429.

22. See Daniel Benor and Michael Baxter, *Training and Visit Extension* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1984).

23. Conlin, "Baseline Surveys: An Escape from Thinking about Research Problems and, Even More, a Refuge from Actually Doing Anything," RRA2.

24. John K. Hatch, *The Corn Farmers of Motupe: A Study of Traditional Farming Practices in Northern Coastal Peru*, Land Tenure Center Monographs no. 1 (Madison, Wis.: Land Tenure Center, University of Wisconsin, 1976).

25. Honadle, "Rapid Reconnaissance for Development Administration," p. 643.

26. Cecile Jackson, Sattar Mandal, and Ian Carruthers, "Notes on Rapid Land Ownership and Management Studies," RRA1.

27. Wolf Ladejinsky, "The Green Revolution in Bihar," p. 9.

28. Gill Gordon, "Finding Out about Child (0–5 Years) Feeding Practices," RRA2, p. 11.

29. See especially Rhoades, *The Art of the Informal Agricultural Survey*.

30. Thus Paul Richards, on failing to identify unasked questions: "Luck, persistence, a sixth sense and palm wine are potential antidotes, but palm wine is probably the best" ("Geography is a bottle of Heineken lager beer—How to be the most boring person in development planning and still get your facts wrong," RRA1, p. 8); and Marie Thérèse Feuerstein on rapport: "Good informal rapport can be established by moderate drinking, smoking, singing and particularly dancing or the playing of a musical instrument" ("Establishing Rapport," RRA2).

31. Ellman, "Rapid Appraisal for Rural Project Preparation," pp. 469–71; and Carruthers, "A Mental Construct for Unstructured On-farm Interviews," RRA2.

32. Collinson, "A Low-cost approach to Understanding Small Farmers," pp. 444–50.

33. Abel and Stocking, "Rapid Aerial Survey Techniques for Rural Areas," RRA2.

34. Walker, "Notes on Rapid Appraisal of the Utilization of Rural Health Services," RRA2.

35. As used in a Save the Children Fund project in Nepal. The approach was thought of by David Nabarro and developed by him and Nigel Roberts. Roberts has described it in an unpublished paper, "Monitoring Field Programmes (A New Role for a Project Visitor)," (June 1980).

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