

## RELAXED AND PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL NOTES ON PRACTICAL APPROACHES AND METHODS

Notes for participants in the workshops to be held at the Harvard Center for Population and Development Studies on 25 May, and in Washington DC on 27 May 1993

These notes are an outline introduction to what has been called rapid (but is better relaxed!) and participatory rural appraisal (PRA). You may have seen an earlier version of these notes; and you may be familiar with their content. But I hope at least that they will be useful to anyone coming to this afresh, or as a reference.

The headings indicate some of the range of the subject, and especially some of the many methods now known. Please do not be put off by the length of the lists. They are a menu, not a syllabus!

Pointers are given to the history, rationale and methods of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) and of its further development now often known as participatory rural appraisal (PRA). The earlier RRA was more "extractive": "we" went to rural areas and obtained data from "them", brought it away, and processed it, sometimes to see what we thought would be good for "them". RRA remains valid and useful. But now in addition, more and more practitioners are adopting participatory approaches: "we" still go to rural areas, but more and more as learners, convenors, catalysts and facilitators. In a PRA mode, we enable rural people to do their own investigations, analysis, presentations, planning and action, to own the outcome, and to teach us, sharing their knowledge. PRA has been described as a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act.

Some of the methods come from social anthropology. Some, especially diagramming, were developed and spread in Southeast Asia, as part of agroecosystem analysis, originating in the University of Chiang Mai. For RRA, the University of Khon Kaen in Thailand has been a major source of innovation and inspiration. Other methods seem to be new, but may well be rediscoveries. What is new is the way they have all come together, and the way RRA/PRA seems (it is too early to know for sure) to know no boundaries either of discipline or of geography. Interestingly, RRA/PRA technology is now being transferred from South to North, with these methods being used in Canada, Switzerland, the UK, Norway and Australia, and probably elsewhere as well.

The term PRA was used early on in Kenya and India around 1988 and 1989. Some PRA in Kenya has been linked with the production of Village Resource Management Plans; some with Rapid Catchment Analysis; and some with other aspects of rural development there. In India and Nepal from 1989 onwards there has been a very rapid development and spread of PRA with many innovations and applications (see especially RRA Notes 13). Parallel developments have taken place in other countries around the world. Organisations which have given substantial support in promoting this spread include (alphabetically) ActionAid, the Aga Khan Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Intercooperation, the International Institute for Environment and Development, ODA, OXFAM, and SIDA.

Learning experience workshops for PRA have been convened in many places and countries now. For example, in February 1992, an 18-day roving workshop was hosted in India by three NGOs (ActionAid, AKRSP, and MYRADA), enabling 16 people from 13 countries (11 of them in the South) to stay in Indian villages and to experience PRA at first hand. In January 1993 workshops were held in Mirzapur, Bangladesh, hosted by PROSHIKA, and at the ICDDR, to introduce, support and reinforce PRA initiatives. And these are but three examples out of scores.

The spirit of inventiveness which has gone with this is spreading, and helping people in different parts of the world to feel liberated and able to develop their own varieties of approach and method. People (villagers and outsiders), once they have unfrozen and established rapport, enjoy improvising, varying and inventing methods.

The rate of innovation makes it impossible now to keep up to date. I have repeatedly had to revise these notes over the past two years. In India alone, probably hundreds of NGOs and at least a dozen Government organisations are using PRA, some on quite a large scale. In Kenya, there seems to be a rapidly growing volume of PRA-type activity. Other countries where PRA training has been conducted, and where there is substantial activity or where we can put you in touch with useful contacts include Bangladesh, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cap Verde, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Indonesia, Mali, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe (\*\*\*) If you would like contacts in any of these countries, please write, fax or phone Helen McLaren, IDS, University of Sussex, Brighton, BN1 9RE, England, tel: 44-273-678490, fax: 44-273-621202/691647). Creativity has been shown by fieldworkers, and by the rural people with whom they have been interacting. Much else has surely been taking place in parallel, but which I do not know about. There has been quite a bit of South-South sharing (Meera Shah in Ghana and Malaysia, Parmesh Shah in Uganda, Ethiopia and Zambia, Sam Chimbuya in Zambia, Jimmy Mascarenhas in the Philippines, Nepal and South Africa, Neela Mukherjee in Botswana, Bangladesh, and Ghana, Kamal Kar in Bangladesh, Sam Joseph in several countries, John Devavaram in Uganda and Tanzania, Elkanah Odembo in Uganda and Tanzania), but there is scope and need for much more, especially at a time of such rapid change.

A current question is what potential the approaches and methods have for different types of institutions. So far, NGOs have been the main pioneers and users of PRA. Now increasingly, Government field organisations, training institutes, and universities are requesting training and are using and evolving variants of PRA. In South Asia, and also increasingly in parts of East Africa, there have been many requests for training for government organisations. So far most of this has been concerned with village-level planning, watershed development and management, social forestry, tank rehabilitation, women's programmes, credit, client ("beneficiary") selection and deselection, health, animal husbandry, agricultural research, and agricultural extension. Training institutes are interested in adopting and adapting the approach and methods for the fieldwork and field experience of their probationers and students. The Indian National Academy of Administration teaches PRA methods to its 300-odd probationers each year, for use during their field detachments in villages. Universities were at first slow to show interest, but this too is changing fast: four South Indian universities are becoming involved; in October 1992 in Canada, some faculty and students at three universities - Carleton, Guelph and McMaster - wanted to use PRA methods

for research; in November 1992, over 100 people, mainly from the University of Chiang Mai, took part in a two-day PRA workshop; and faculty in some British universities are now actively interested.

Quality assurance has become a concern. There have been cases where the label "RRA" has been used to justify and legitimate sloppy, biased, rushed and unself-critical work. Any approach or methods can be used badly, and RRA and PRA are no exceptions. Part of the problem is that demand for training exceeds supply. Competent PRA trainers remain few, but now number over 50 worldwide, with the largest group in India. There is a danger of trying to go too far too fast. PRA is becoming a fashionable label, with "expert" consultants saying they can provide it when they do not know one end of a stick from the other. Already a case has been reported where a group in Europe claimed to be PRA trainers, were invited to a West African country, went, and wasted everyone's time because they were not experienced. Another danger is that people will try methods without having first established good rapport with villagers, and will then say that the methods do not work, when in the circumstances they could not have been expected to work.

On the other hand, some people whose attitudes are truly participatory can, with a minimum of exposure, simply go ahead and learn as they go. Marcy Vigoda and her colleagues in CARE, Bangladesh, is an example. I shall hand out a paper entitled "Start, stumble, self-correct, share" encouraging people to have a go. The key is personal behaviour and attitudes. This includes critical self awareness and embracing error; sitting down, listening and learning; not lecturing but "handing over the stick" to villagers, who become the main teachers and analysts; having confidence that "they can do it"; and an open-ended inventiveness.

In the meantime, the methods have been spreading on their own. For example, one voluntary agency, having heard about participatory mapping and "handing over the stick", adopted and adapted these without more ado as part of the process of forming new cooperatives. More and more people are trying out the methods and inventing their own variations. Part of the reason seems to be that when done well, with good rapport, these methods work, involving villagers in their own analysis and planning, and giving outsiders good insights. The experience is also often enjoyable for all concerned. Some observers are talking of a coming revolution in rural research methods. Let us not claim too much too soon. We can wait and see how things develop and each of us can make a personal judgement.

Whatever that judgement is, you may agree that professional change is in the wind. Some of the more obvious changes are offsetting the biases of rural development tourism and liberation from survey slavery (meaning heavy and long questionnaire surveys). Less obvious, and more of a frontier, is developing better ways of enabling rural people themselves to be investigators, analysts and consultants, themselves setting priorities, planning, implementing and owning the process.

Much PRA is enjoyed, both by rural participants and by outsiders who initiate it. The word "fun" is entering the vocabulary and describes some of the experience. "Relaxed" rural appraisal is a better description than "rapid". And the word "appraisal" is a bit out of date now. Participatory learning or participatory inquiry are closer. "We" learn from "them". They also learn through their presentation and sharing of information, through their analysis, and through their teaching us. Much of our knowledge is still useful, but unless we start by unlearning and putting our knowledge, ideas and categories in second place, we cannot effectively learn from and with them.

Some people with a strong disciplinary training find this reversal of teaching and learning difficult. It is not their fault. We can help one another firmly but sympathetically. And we can amiably tease one another when we slip into "holding the stick"; as of course I shall do!

That is enough prose.

But where does all this lead? How crucial is it that rural people should themselves conduct investigations and analysis? Does PRA provide a strategy for local empowerment and sustainable development? Is it feasible on a large scale? The questions are open. To present background, and in search of understanding and answers, here are some headings and notes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### Why also PRA now?

A confluence of approaches and methods - applied social anthropology, RRA, agroecosystem analysis, farming systems research, participatory action research

The discovery that "they can do it" (mapping, diagramming, analysis..)

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

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

#### Principles shared by RRA and PRA

- \* offsetting biases (spatial, project, person - gender, elite etc, seasonal, professional, courtesy..)
- \* rapid progressive learning - flexible, exploratory, interactive, inventive

- \* reversals - learning from, with and by rural people, eliciting and using their criteria and categories, and finding, understanding and appreciating RPK (rural people's knowledge)
- \* optimal ignorance, and appropriate imprecision - not finding out more than is needed, not measuring more accurately than needed, and not trying to measure what does not need to be measured. We are trained to make absolute measurements, but often trends, scores or ranking are all that are required
- \* triangulation - using different methods, sources and disciplines, and a range of informants in a range of places, and cross-checking to get closer to the truth through successive approximations
- \* principal investigators' direct contact, face to face, in the field
- \* seeking diversity and differences

#### The Core of PRA

PRA, as it is evolving, is all this and more. Some of the "more" is:

- \* facilitating - they do it: empowering and enabling villagers to do more or all of the investigation, mapping, modelling, diagramming, ranking, scoring, quantification, analysis, presentation, planning... themselves, and to share and own the outcome. Analysis by them, shared with us.
- \* our behaviour and attitudes: for this, the primacy of our behaviour and attitudes, and of rapport, more important than methods, - asking villagers to teach us, respect for them, confidence that they can do it, handing over the stick...
- \* a culture of sharing - of information, of methods, of food, of field experiences (between NGOs, Government and villagers)
- \* critical self-awareness about our attitudes and behaviour; doubt; embracing and learning from error; continuously trying to do better; building learning and improvement into every experience

#### Some Problems and Dangers

- \* how to find the poorer, and learn from and with them
- \* LECTURING INSTEAD OF LISTENING AND LEARNING. Is this problem worse with men than women, worse with older men than younger, and worst of all with those who have retired? Who holds the stick? Who wags the finger? Who teaches? Who listens? Who learns?

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

- \* senior people (and also younger ones) who do not want to spend time in the field let alone camp or nighthalt in a village
- \* rushing (rapid and wrong again)
- \* interrupting people, interviewing them, suggesting things to them, when they are trying to concentrate on mapping, ranking, scoring, diagramming...

- \* imposing "our" ideas, categories, values, without realising we are doing it, making it difficult to learn from "them", and making "them" appear ignorant when they are not
- \* normal professional pressures, including the tyranny of (bad, not good) statisticians, the desire for formal statistical respectability, and the compulsion to measure things rather than just compare, rank, score, identify trends...
- \* wanting to be snug and safe in the warm womb of a preset programme and method
- \* finding the questions to ask! (We assume we know what to ask. The beginning of wisdom is to realise how often we do not know, and to recognise that we need "their" help)
- \* male teams and neglect of women (again and again and again and again and again and...). What are the proportions of men and women among us here?
- \* LECTURING INSTEAD OF LISTENING AND LEARNING. Yes, it has to be repeated. This can be a personal problem which we do not recognise in ourselves. (It is a problem for me, as you will discover). It is best treated as a joke, and pointed out to each other when we err. Which we all do.

#### Approaches and Methods

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

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

You will already have used some of these methods. Some are plain commonsense and common practice. Others are ingenious and not obvious. Some are quite simple to do. Others less so. You can anyway invent your own variants. Appropriate attitudes and behaviour are often the key. Here are some of the approaches and methods:

- \* offset the anti-poverty biases of rural development tourism (spatial, project, person, seasonal, courtesy...)
- \* find and review secondary data. They can mislead. They can also help a lot. At present, for the sake of a new balance, and of "our" reorientation and "their" participation, secondary data are not heavily stressed; but they can be very useful, especially in the earlier stages of e.g. deciding where to go
- \* observe directly (see for yourself) (It has been striking for me to begin to realise how much I do not see, or do not think to ask about. Does education deskill us? Am I alone, or do many of us have this problem?)
- \* do-it-yourself, supervised and taught by them (levelling a field, transplanting, weeding, lopping tree fodder, collecting common property resources, herding, fishing, cutting and carrying fodder grass, milking

animals, fetching water, fetching firewood, cooking, digging compost, sweeping and cleaning, washing clothes, lifting water, plastering a house, thatching, collecting refuse (MP15)...). Roles are reversed. They are the experts. We are the clumsy novices. They teach us. We learn from them. And learn their problems.

- \* find key informants. Ask: who are the experts? So obvious, and so often overlooked. Changes in fuels? Medicinal plants? Seasonal rainfall? Whose is pregnant? Who uses the clinic? Treatments for diseases? Goats? Edible berries? Water supplies? Ecological history? Fodder grasses? Markets and prices? Factionalism and conflict? Changing values and customs? The priorities of poor people?....
- \* semi-structured interviewing. The Khon Kaen school of RRA has regarded this as the "core" of good RRA. Have a mental or written checklist, but be open to new aspects and to following up on the new and unexpected
- \* groups (casual/encounter; focus/specialist; deliberately structured; community/neighbourhood). Group interviews are often powerful and efficient, but relatively neglected. Because of our obsession with counting through individual questionnaire-based interviews?
- \* sequences or chains of interviews - from group to key informant, to other informants; or with a series of key informants, each expert on a different stage of a process (e.g. men on ploughing, women on weeding... etc)
- \* they do it. Villagers and village residents as investigators and researchers - women, school teachers, volunteers, students, farmers, village specialists, poor people. They do transects, observe, interview other villagers. Beyond this, their own analysis, priorities, futures desired, choices etc. A frontier where much remains to be learnt and shared about approaches and methods.
- \* participatory mapping and modelling - aerial photographs and overlays; people's mapping, drawing and colouring on the ground or on paper to make social, health or demographic maps (of the residential village), resource maps of village lands or of forests, maps of fields, farms, home gardens, topic maps (for water, soils, trees etc etc), service and opportunity maps, etc; making 3-D models of watersheds etc. These methods have been one of the most popular "discoveries" of the past three and a half years, and can be combined with or lead into wealth or wellbeing ranking, watershed planning, health action planning etc. Now census mapping, using seeds for people, cards for households... has been developed...
- \* transect walks - systematically walking with key informants through an area, observing, asking, listening, discussing, identifying different zones, local technologies, introduced technologies, seeking problems, solutions, opportunities, and mapping and/or diagramming resources and findings. Transects now take many forms - vertical, loop, watercourse, combing...
- \* time line: a history of major remembered events in a village or community with approximate dates. A good icebreaker, and a good lead into:

- \* local histories: people's accounts of the past, of how things close to them have changed, ecological histories, histories of cropping patterns, changes in customs and practices, changes and trends in population, migration, fuels used, education, health... and causes and effects of these
- \* seasonal calendars - distribution of days of rain, amount of rain or soil moisture, crops, agricultural labour, non-agricultural labour, diet, food consumption, milk, diseases and sicknesses, prices, animal fodder, fuel, migration, income, expenditure, debt etc etc
- \* livelihood analysis - seasonality, crises and coping, relative income, expenditure, credit and debt, multiple activities...
- \* participatory diagramming, estimating and analysis - bar diagrams, visible estimating using seeds, pellets, fruits, stones etc, pie diagrams, Venn diagrams, etc, causal and flow diagramming and analysis...
- \* wellbeing grouping (or wealth ranking) - grouping or ranking households according to wellbeing or wealth, including those considered poorest or worst off. A good lead into discussions of the livelihoods of the poor and how they cope
- \* scoring and ranking, especially using matrices and seeds to compare through scoring, for example different trees, or soils, or methods of soil and water conservation, or varieties of a crop
- \* local indicators, e.g. what are poor people's criteria of wellbeing, and how do they differ from those we assume for them?
- \* key probes: questions which can lead direct to key issues such as - "What do you talk about when you are together?" "What new practices have you or others in this village experimented with in recent years?" "What do you do when someone falls sick?" "What happens when someone's hut burns down?" "What (vegetable, tree, crop, crop variety, type of animal, tool, equipment...) would you like to obtain to try out?"...
- \* case studies and stories - a household history and profile, a farm, coping with a crisis, how a conflict was or was not resolved...
- \* team contracts and interactions - contracts drawn up by teams with agreed norms of behaviour; modes of interaction within teams, including changing pairs, evening discussions, mutual criticism and help, etc where the team may be just outsiders, or a joint team with villagers
- \* shared presentations and analysis, where maps, models, diagrams, and findings are presented by villagers and outsiders. Brainstorming, especially joint sessions with villagers. But who talks? Who talks how much? Who interrupts whom? Whose ideas dominate? Who lectures?
- \* contrast comparisons - asking group A to analyse group B, and vice versa. This has been used for gender awareness, asking men to analyse how women spend their time (Do ask for Meena Bilgi's note on this if you are interested)
- \* short questionnaires. If you have to use questionnaires, let them be late, light and tight, tied to dummy tables. NOT long questionnaires, and NOT early in the process, unless for a sharp and narrow purpose. (Participatory

alternatives are being explored, as by ActionAid in Nepal, and by the late Selina Adjebeng-Asem in Nigeria)

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

### Practical Tips

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

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

- \* spend nights in villages
- \* embrace error. We all make mistakes, and do things badly sometimes. Never mind. Don't hide it. Share it. When things go wrong, it is a chance to learn. Say "Aha. That was a mess. Good. Now what can we learn from it?".
- \* ask yourself - who is being met and heard, and what is being seen, where and why; and who is not being met and heard, and what is not being seen, and where and why?
- \* relax (RRA = relaxed rural appraisal). Don't rush.
- \* meet people when it suits them, and when they can be at ease, not when it suits us. This applies even more strongly to women than to men. PRA methods often take time, and women tend to have many obligations demanding their attention. Sometimes the best times for them are the worse times for us - a couple of hours after dark, or sometimes early in the morning. Compromises are often needed, but it is a good discipline, and good for rapport, to try to meet at their best times rather than ours; and don't force discussions to go on for too long. Stop before people are too tired.
- \* be around in the evening, at night and in the early morning.
- \* allow unplanned time, walk and wander around.
- \* ask about what is seen.
- \* probe. This sounds easy, but is one of the most neglected skills, often driven out by actual or supposed lack of time. All too often we accept the first reply to a question as being all that is needed, when there is much, much more to be learnt, and people know more, much more, than we supposed
- \* notice, seize on and investigate diversity, whatever is different, the unexpected.

- \* use the six helpers - who, what, where, when, why and how
- \* ask open-ended questions
- \* show interest and enthusiasm in learning from people
- \* have second and third meetings and interviews with the same people
- \* allow more time than expected for team interaction (I have never yet got this right) and for changing the agenda
- \* enjoy it! It is often interesting, and often fun
- \* remember Raul's three rules (remind me to explain)

#### Examples and Applications of RRA and PRA

These are almost endless. You will have your own needs and ideas. But some are:

- \* exploratory learning about rural conditions generally
- \* projects and programmes: identification, planning and action by and with villagers, enabling them to appraise, analyse, plan, act, manage - monitoring, evaluation, reappraisal, ad hoc problem investigation...
- \* selection of clients ("beneficiaries") for poverty-oriented programmes
- \* direct learning and updating for senior professionals and officials, especially those trapped in headquarters
- \* natural resource assessment - agroecosystem analysis, appraisal for watershed development, social forestry, agricultural research and extension, livestock...
- \* health and nutrition investigations and assessments (rapidly being developed and explored in India, among other places)
- \* emergencies - assessing and managing
- \* empowering the poor and weak - enabling a group (e.g. labourers, women, poor women, small farmers etc) themselves to analyse conditions, giving them confidence to state and assert their priorities and to take action
- \* topics and problems: investigating a topic or understanding the reasons for a problem: deterioration of common property resources; women's time use; women's and men's different priorities; why poor farmers do and don't take loans; why they do and don't plant trees; how poor people spend lump sums of money; the spread of animal diseases; traditional herding, fishing or tree management skills; sequences and preferences in using different treatments for diseases; local practices of soil, water and nutrient conservation and concentration; historical changes in child-rearing practices; the non-adoption of an innovation; why some children do not go to school, or drop out; historical changes in diet; seasonal deprivation; migration; impact of a road; the reality of what happens in a Government programme...

- \* research: identifying research priorities and initiating participatory research; academic research, preliminary investigations for questionnaire surveys
- \* substituting for questionnaires: an escape from survey slavery and self-deception through participatory mapping, local estimating and analysis
- \* orientation of students, NGO workers, Government staff, and university and training institute staff towards a culture of open learning in organisations
- \* diversification: encouraging and enabling the expression and exploitation of local diversity in otherwise standardised programmes
- \* timely information for government decision-making
- \* policy review, as in 1991 with land tenure policy in Tanzania (see Johansson and Hoben in the FTP Newsletter No 14/15, February 1992), with officials and others learning directly about rural conditions, and then meeting to review policy

and you will have others to add.

#### Some Frontiers of PRA

Here are some current questions:

- \* How to prevent RRA/PRA (or whatever anything like them is called) becoming a fad seen as a panacea, a fashion that catches on too fast and then falls on its face
- \* How, rapidly and effectively, to enable outsiders to change their behaviour and attitudes
- \* How to sustain and enhance sharing, between outsiders and villagers, between NGOs, between NGOs and government, and to avoid possessive territoriality
- \* How to enable women, and the poorer, to take part more and more, and to gain more and more
- \* How to identify, handle and resolve conflicts between groups in villages
- \* How to avoid arousing undue expectations and dependence among villagers
- \* How to sustain and enhance inventiveness and creativity with new methods, and with combinations and sequences of methods, and how to develop and spread better alternatives to questionnaire surveys
- \* How to assure quality when approaches and methods spread on their own
- \* How to find and support more people able and willing to facilitate experience and training for others
- \* How to test, validate and legitimate PRA in the face to conservative professionalism

- \* How to liberate those trapped in universities and conservative training institutions, overcoming or by-passing institutional inertia, escaping from the classroom prison, reassuring senior professionals who feel threatened, and nurturing play, innovation, creativity and learning.

And you will have your own list.

### The Future of PRA

How much potential has PRA really, realistically, for changing professionals' behaviour and attitudes, for empowering poor people and communities, and for promoting sustainable development?

How can PRA be used in research? Can "our" research become "their" research, where they share their findings with us?

How big is the need and opportunity the use of PRA in Government field organisations? For new roles and new relationships between officials and people; for planning and action by villagers; for decentralisation, differentiation, and reversals for diversity?

Who will be the best facilitators and trainers? People in NGOs? People in Government training institutes? Government field staff themselves? Or who? How can they be supported, and released from other obligations, to devote more of their time and energy to training? How important are personal openness, commitment, enthusiasm or other saintly characteristics?

Are PRA-type approaches and methods as they evolve mere fringe phenomena and passing fads, or are they the vanguard of a permanent shift, something that will come to stay, grow and spread, in NGOs, Government organisations, training institutes, and universities?

Do they present points of entry for change? Part of an agenda for the 1990s and the 21st century?

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

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PS To learn more about PRA, and to keep up with developments, you can write to The Sustainable Agriculture Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, London, and ask to be sent RRA Notes. This is free, but there is a charge for more than two back copies. I suggest you ask for number 13 (a bumper issue on Indian experience). 15 is on wellbeing and wealth ranking, and 16 on health. 17 has recently come out.

pra.doc