

DRAFT

MODULE 4

PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL (PRA)

BISHNU B. BHANDARI

iGES

Institute for
Global Environmental
Strategies (IGES)

2003

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About the material

Welcome to this package of educational materials.

The package is prepared for promoting community awareness and action on the conservation and management of wetlands and wetland resources.

The package has four modules targeted for different groups of people in a community. These are,

Module 1: Let us keep our wetland healthy

Module 2: What is happening to our freshwater resources?

Module 3: Developing objective-oriented program

Module 4: Participatory rural appraisal (PRA)

This package and its modules are based on the two assumptions.

1. Environmental problems are a common concern, the solution of which requires the active and responsible involvement of the entire community.

Explanation: A community consists of diverse groups of people. They have different viewpoints on the community problem. Some know the problem fully while others may not know it at all, or know it only partially. Similarly, some may be highly vulnerable to the problem, while others may be only partially vulnerable, or not at all. In order to tackle this common problem, the concerns and needs of these groups should be addressed fully.

So, identify stakeholders of the community (students, parents, teachers, local leaders, NGO representatives, etc.).

2. The collective action is possible only when all stakeholders of a community develop a clear common understanding about the issue.

Explanation: Different groups should be brought together; they should be made aware of. Once they realize the situation,

they need to be taught in a way they develop the common understanding about the issue, particularly managing and tackling them jointly. For this, the following steps are proposed.

(1) Learn (L) about the issue thoroughly

(2) Experience and evaluate (E) the knowledge

(3) Adapt (A) the knowledge for your community

(4) Promote (P) the knowledge

This is what has been called the LEAP method, which represents the first letter of the sequence of the “**L**earn, **E**xperience and **E**valuate, **A**dapt and **P**romote” steps. A short description of each step is given below.

Step 1: Learn (L) about the issue thoroughly

Before putting them into action, participants should understand the issue and be fully aware of it, especially its nature, scope, context, responsible factors and its possible solution. But participants cannot do it without any guidance. Here lies the responsibility of a facilitator. Only an informed facilitator can pass the information effectively on to the participants.

Taking these things into consideration, materials on different topics have been put together in a simple way. The facilitator should read it carefully and understand the issue thoroughly. Then he/she should teach participants with the help of the teaching outline annexed.

Step 2: Experience and evaluate (E) the knowledge

Once the participants understand the matter thoroughly, they should be given the chance to apply their new knowledge in the real world of work. The direct and first hand experience facilitates them to integrate theory into practice. The hands-on experience enables them to evaluate the topic in terms of its practicality, replication and sustainability. In fact, this step is crucial to participants to make any decision on whether to take the issue seriously or drop it off completely. Participants gain the first-hand experience while applying the knowledge in the real life situation.

Step 3: Adapt (A) the knowledge for your community

The knowledge and skills will be in limbo if they are not used. They will be stagnant and become a dead wood. The knowledge should be lively and living by using it time and again. Participants should think of a site, where they can adapt it so that the acquisition becomes a regular practice.

Step 4: Promote (P) the knowledge

The knowledge should not be confined to the facilitator and the participants only. They should, in turn, share their knowledge with others until the idea becomes integrated into the practice. The knowledge should be disseminated as much as possible. Participants have to build up the capacity of the community to retain, use and promote the knowledge.

Tips for the facilitator

Who can be the facilitator? A teacher, NGO representative, social worker or researcher having an interest in the conservation of wetlands can be a facilitator. The main function of the facilitator is to impart knowledge and skills to the participant. Prior to the use of this material, the facilitator should read and understand the intention of this package.

1. Read the material and understand the basic concept of the issue thoroughly.
2. Understand the expectations and experiences of each participant at the beginning of the session. This will enable you to plan your activities for the session.
3. Conduct the session at or near the site as far as possible so that you will be able to deal with the real world. Use local examples, resources and hands-on experiences. Let them use their all six senses.
4. Use the teaching outline included in the booklet. This has been provided to help the facilitator concentrate on how to present the materials to participants.
5. Try to use the problem-solving methods of teaching such as demonstration, field visit, issue-based discussion, etc. in a way participants get a maximum opportunity in hands-on activities.
6. Guide participants to develop a plan of action on the application as well as dissemination of the knowledge in the community.

Should you have any comments or suggestions on this booklet, please send them to the following address.

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Participatory Rural Appraisal

Why this model: There is a general impression that getting data is a complicated process such as formal survey, questionnaire, analysis, etc. Although there is some truth in this statement, data can also be collected from simple methods such as talking to the people, walking through the community, observation, etc. There are many ways of gathering data. This module has been included in the package to make the point that informal methods are as good as and sometime better than formal methods.

Issue

Collecting data quickly and accurately

Target

Teachers, NGO representatives, researchers and practitioners

Objective

To acquaint the participants with concepts and methods of the participatory rapid appraisal.

Demonstrated ability

At the end of the instruction the participant should be able to discuss, describe and explain major concepts of the participatory rural appraisal and its uses in data collection.

Step I: Learn (L) about the issue thoroughly

The topic is organized into six parts; (1) evolution of PRA, (2) principles of PRA, (3) good features of PRA, (4) the menu of methods, (5) analysis and preparing reports, (6) some tips for doing PRA.

Part I: The evolution of PRA

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a short-cut method of data collection. It is a methodology for action research and utilizes a range of techniques. It involves local people and outsiders from different sectors and disciplines. Outsiders facilitates local people in analyzing information, practicing critical self-awareness, taking responsibility and sharing their knowledge of life and conditions to plan and to act.

PRA grew out of biases of rural development tourism- the phenomenon of the brief rural visit by the urban-based professionals – of the costs, inaccuracies and delays of large scale questionnaire surveys.

PRA provides the middle path of greater cost effectiveness between rural development tourism research (quick-and-dirty) and the tradition of academic research (lengthy-and-boring).

Part 2: Principles of PRA

Different practitioners would find different principles but most would agree to include the following.

- 1. Using optimal ignorance:** this refers to the importance of knowing what it is not worth knowing. It avoids unnecessary details and irrelevant data. It does not measure more precisely than is needed. It optimizes trade off between quality, relevance, accuracy and timeliness.
- 2. Offsetting biases:** especially those of rural development tourism, by being relaxed and not rushing, listening not lecturing, probing instead of passing on to the next topic, being unimposing instead of important, and seeking out the poorer people and their concerns.
- 3. Triangulation:** using more than one, and often three, sources of information to cross-check answers.
- 4. Learning from and with rural people:** directly, on the site, and face-to-face, gaining from indigenous physical, technical and social knowledge.
- 5. Learning rapidly and progressively:** with conscious exploration, flexible use of methods, opportunism, improvisation, iteration, and cross-checking, not following a blueprint program but adapting through a learning process.

Part 3: Good features of PRA

PRA has the following unique features.

- 1. Iterative:** goals and objectives are modified as the team realizes what is or is not relevant. The newly generated information helps to set the agenda for the later stages of the analysis. This involves the “learning-as-you-go” principle.
- 2. Innovative:** techniques are developed for particular situations depending on the skills and knowledge available.
- 3. Interactive:** the team and disciplines combine together in a way that fosters innovation and interdisciplinarity. A system perspective helps make communication easy.
- 4. Informal:** focuses on partly structured and informal interviews and discussions.
- 5. In the community:** learning takes place largely in the field, or immediately after, or in the intensive workshops. Community’s perspectives are used to help define difference in field conditions.

RRA and **PRA:** These two words are often used in the literature. One should know the difference.

RRA	PRA
<p>1. In Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA), information is elicited and extracted by outsiders. In other words, people go to rural areas, obtain information, and then bring it away to process and analyze.</p>	<p>1. In Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) information is owned and shared by local people. Outsiders (professionals) go to rural areas, but they facilitate rural people in collection, presentation and analysis of information by themselves.</p>
<p>2. The information is owned by outsiders and often not shared with rural people</p>	<p>2. The information is owned by rural people but usually shared with outsiders.</p>

Part 4: The menu of methods

There are seven major techniques used in PRA.

- 1. Secondary data reviews:** books, files, reports, news articles, maps, etc.
- 2. Observation:** direct and participant observation, wandering, DIY (do-it-yourself) activities.
- 3. Semi-structured interviews:** this is an informal, guided interview session, where only some of the questions are pre-determined and new questions arise during the interview, in response to answers from those interviewed. The interviewees may be (1) individual farmers or households, (2) key informants, (3) group interview, (4) community meeting, (5) chains (sequences) of interviews. The interview is conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of 2-4 persons and the discussion is lead by different people in different occasions.
- 4. Analytical game:** this is a quick game to find out a group's list of priorities, performances, ranking, scoring, or stratification.
- 5. Stories and portraits:** colorful description of situation, local history, trend analysis, etc.
- 6. Diagrams:** maps, aerial photos, transects, seasonal calendars, Venn diagram, flow diagram, historical profiles, ethno-history, time lines, etc.
- 7. Workshop:** Locals and outsiders are brought together to discuss the information and ideas intensively.

Part 5: Analysis and preparing the report

i. Analyzing data

1. It is difficult to suggest a technique of analyzing the data and information in PRA as qualitative as well as quantitative methods, are employed. Each technique has its own method of analysis.
2. The analysis should be kept simple; it should be related to the purpose and scope of the study. If complex data are to be used, then every effort should be made to present the findings in non-technical language.
3. Data and information should be arranged according to category, issue, topic, sub-topic or question.

For qualitative method

Categorization (grouping) of data should be done. And data should be analyzed according to category. The category should be inclusive and mutually exclusive. Data could be coded according to inductive category (for open-ended questions) and deductive category (such as farmer, farm worker, non-farmer, etc.).

For quantitative method

Simple statistical techniques such as mean, mode and median (measures of central tendency) range, variance and standard deviation (measures of dispersion), frequencies and percentage can be used. Also, Pearson's coefficient of correlation, chi square, multivariate regression and t-test can be employed.

ii. Presenting the report

1. Include some products of field activities such as output of analytical game, box for good examples, pictures or graphs when necessary.
2. Follow the sequence of **Field Note** → **Fine Note** → **Final Note**.
3. At the end of the day, all team members sit together and consolidate the field notes into a fine note (detailed, clearly written and consolidated field note). The fine note should be the basis for further discussion, analysis and report preparation.

4. The fine note could be structured in the *chronological order* (if detail is needed), or according to the *topic* (if time constraints) or according to the *question*.
5. The report should consist of the following.
 - The problem statement (including the conceptual framework)
 - Purpose and scope
 - Methodology
 - Data and findings
 - Implications of findings
 - Summary
 - Reference and appendices

Part 6: Some tips for doing PRA

It is easier to give advice than to take it. So one has to be cautious. Here is a personal list of some practical tips

1. Do not lecture. Look, listen and learn.
2. Facilitate; do not dominate; do not interrupt or interfere; once a task is initiated, let people get on with it; give them time to think or discuss among themselves.
3. Embrace error. We all make mistakes, and do things badly sometimes. Never mind. Do not hide it. Share it.
4. Try to obtain opinions from all groups.
5. Relax, do not rush.
6. Meet people when it suits them.
7. Use six helpers – what, why, who, how where, and when.

Step 2: Experience and evaluate (E) the knowledge

Activities

Activities that allow the participants not only doing but also thinking and evaluating what they have learnt, should be carried out in this step.

1. Ask the participants to collect data using different techniques of PRA.
2. Demonstrate how to analyze data and information.
3. Conduct observation to study the social and economic values of local forest.
4. Brainstorm on the ways to conduct the bottom-up approach of planning process.
5. Undertake a semi-interview on the effectiveness of this material.

Method (s)

1. Split the group into smaller ones and ask them to explore on a certain topic.
2. Work on one technique.
3. Let them write down their experiences about PRA techniques.
4. Ask them to report to the group.

Output

A practical report of what the participant observed and learnt.

Step 3: Adapt (A) the knowledge for your community

Activities

Participants should develop a plan of action for their own community under the guidance of the facilitator. They should discuss it thoroughly and look at how the concept, idea and knowledge are modified.

Method (s)

1. Split the participants into 3-4 small groups.
2. Discuss about the type of wetlands they have in their community, at least one site for each group.
3. Discuss the ways they want to tackle the problem and issues.
4. Develop a tentative guideline for adapting plan.
5. Regroup them for discussion and sharing experiences.

Output

A general framework for adapting a plan



Community at action in Cambodia (Photo: M. Takahashi)

Step 4: Promote (P) the knowledge

Activities

Participants should be divided into smaller groups to discuss their individual plans on disseminating the idea and information. They should be clear about the target. The plan should be realistic and simple; it should focus on publicity, dissemination, capacity building, advocacy, empowering and others.

Output

A plan of action for dissemination

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Annex: Teaching outline (for the use of the facilitator)

Participatory Rural Appraisal

Assumptions

- The environmental problem is a common concern, the solution of which requires the active and responsible involvement of the entire community.
- The collective action is possible only when all stakeholders of a community develop a clear common understanding about the issue.

Target & objective

- **Target:** Teachers, NG & researchers
- **Objective:** To acquaint the participant with the basic concept and methods of the participatory rural appraisal techniques.

Step 1: Learn about the issue thoroughly

- The evolution of PRA
- Principles of PRA
- Good features of PRA
- The menu of methods
- Analysis and preparing the report
- Some tips for the facilitator

The evolution of PRA

- Short-cut method of data collection
- Rural development tourism
- Academic research
- Middle path

Difference between RRA & PRA

RRA

- Extractive in nature
- Elicited
- Information owned by outsiders

PRA

- Learning with local people
- Information owned by rural people but shared with outsiders.

Principles of PRA

- Using optimal ignorance
- Offsetting biases
- Triangulation
- Learning from and with rural people
- Learning rapidly and progressively

Good features of PRA

- Iterative
- Innovative
- Interactive
- Informal
- In the community

The menu of PRA

- Secondary data review
- Semi-structured interviews
- Analytical games
- Stories and portraits
- Diagrams
- Workshop

Analysis & report writing

- Categorization for qualitative data
- Simple statistical tools for quantitative data
 - Report preparation
 - The problem statement
 - Purpose and scope
 - Methodology
 - Data and findings
 - Implications
 - Summary
 - References & appendices

Some tips for doing PRA

- Look, listen and learn
- Give people to think
- Embrace error
- Get opinions from all groups
- Relax and do not rush
- Meet the people when it suits them
- Use six helpers (what, why, who, how, where & when)

Step 2: Experience/Evaluate

- Self-evaluation of the topic, knowledge and relevancy
- First-hand experiences or application
- First-hand exposures
- Integrating theory and practice
- Let them use their six senses

Step 3: Adapt

- Identify a site for exercise
- Modify information to suit the site and the community
- Make it compatible to your needs
- Think locally and act locally

Step 4: Promote

- Enhance values of freshwater
- Publicity and dissemination
- Demonstration
- Sharing knowledge with others
- Advocacy
- Capacity building
- Empowering

Your comments are welcome

- Our assumptions
- The LEAP format
- About the material presented
 - Is it simple and easy to understand?
 - Will it be useful to raise awareness?
 - Does it make a sense?
 - How and where can it be improved?

