**Pranotes06.doc available at** www.ids.ac/ids/particip

### Notes for Participants in Whose Reality Counts? very short (1-2 day) PRA/PLA-related Familiarisation Workshops in 2006

*DISCLAIMER AND WARNING* **for short workshops.** *This sort of workshop is NOT repeat NOT repeat NOT a PRA/PLA training. At best it may be just a taste.. There is no substitute for longer training and exposure which includes field experience.*

> *These notes are an updated foundation which has been revised every six months or so over the past 15 years. Headings later in this note indicate some of the range of the subject, including some of the many methods. These are more an a la carte menu than a syllabus! I hope these notes are of some use, if only as a source of checklists for occasional reference.* ***You won't want to read all of this****. Some of the more important points are repeated. You are welcome to reproduce, translate or bin anything that follows, but please remember that I have often been wrong in the past and will surely prove to be wrong about some of the things said here.*

*See also* Pathways to Participation: Critical Reflections on PRA, Inclusive Aid: power and relationships in international development, *and* Ideas for Development *in sources at the end, and* http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip *for other sources on participation and development. The postscript has a listing of changes over the past five or so years, issues remaining critical, and some opportunities and frontiers for 2006-2010.*

I think we are lucky, and that 2006 is a brilliantly exciting time to be alive and working as development professionals. So much is changing, and changing so fast, and new potentials are continually opening up. If we are to do well this means massive and radical learning and unlearning. It means personal, professional and institutional change *as a way of life*. For some this is a threat; for others a wonderful and exhilarating challenge continuously opening up new worlds of experience.

Participatory methodologies - approaches, methods *and attitudes, behaviours and relationships* [I have added *relationships* recently] - are one part of this. With those known as PRA and PLA things have been moving fast. Alas, a lot of activities labelled as PRA and PLA have been routinised and wooden, and exploit and disillusion poor people who participate. In contrast, good PRA/PLA activities empower. They are different each time. They improvise and innovate. They fit our world in which change is accelerating not only for "us" but for those who are poor and marginalised. It is not easy to keep up-to-date. I keep on having to revise these notes, and do it sometimes twice a year. If you see them and they are more than six months old, please remember that. Much may have changed. And anyway I am behind the game. It is reflective practitioners in the field who are making the running and from whom those of us not in the field have continuously to learn.

### What are RRA, PRA and PLA?

RRA originally stood for Rapid Rural Appraisal, but its approach and methods are also used in urban and other contexts. "Relaxed" is better than "Rapid".

PRA originally stood for Participatory Rural Appraisal, but its applications are in many, many contexts besides rural, and good practice is empowering and far more than just appraisal.

PLA stands for Participatory Learning and Action.  As a term it is often used interchangeably with PRA.

Perhaps each of us should give our own answers to what PRA or PLA is or should be. "Use your own best judgement at all times" is one part of the core of what PRA/PLA has become.  It continues to evolve and spread so fast that no definition can or should be final.  An older description could be updated to read that it is now:

> a growing family of approaches, methods, *attitudes,  behaviours and relationships* to enable and empower people to share, analyse and enhance their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor, evaluate ***and reflect***". (Emphasis for additions)

Many make a distinction between RRA and PRA/PLA. For them, RRA is about finding out.  It is data collecting, with the analysis done mainly by "us".  Good PRA/PLA, which evolved out of RRA, is in contrast empowering, a process of appraisal, analysis and action by local people themselves.  There are methods which are typically RRA methods (observation, semi-structured interviews, transects etc) and others which are typically PRA/PLA methods (participatory mapping, diagramming, using the ground in various ways, making comparisons etc, often in small groups).  PRA/PLA methods can be used in an RRA (data collecting or extractive) mode (but see cautions below), and RRA methods can be used in a PRA/PLA (empowering) mode.

Labels are a problem but we seem to be stuck with them.  For PRA "appraisal" is hopelessly inappropriate now.  ***Good PRA is a process***, ***not a one-off event***.  It involves much more than just appraisal. The main publication RRA Notes (numbers 1-21) (1988 onwards)  was renamed PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) Notes (numbers 22-49) and is now Participatory Learning and Action (numbers 50 – 53 continuing).  For information and copies try **www.earthprint.com** **or** **www.iied.org**]**.** Participatory learning and action is what many practitioners of PRA believe in and are doing, but PRA is still the label many use.  In Pakistan  PRA now stands for Participation-Reflection- Action. Garett Pratt's (January 2001) Practitioners' Critical Reflections on PRA and Participation in Nepal  (IDS Working Paper 122, on the IDS website) ends with a practitioner's suggestion "I believe that PRA gives a better meaning when we say participatory *reflection* and action…That is really what we have to do".  At its core many now see critical self-awareness, personal behaviour and attitudes, particpatory relationships, and engagement with action.

Some of the best facilitators and practitioners have moved beyond any limited sense of PRA to embrace methodological pluralism.  They talk of and use "participatory methodologies".  There are many of these such as popular theatre, Reflect (Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques), Planning for Real, Stepping Stones, Appreciative Inquiry, Training for Transformation, and STAR. They can be combined and are evolving in innumerable ways.  Between them all there can be "sharing without boundaries".

So good PRA is about empowering. It is linked with distinctive behaviours, attitudes, approaches and relationships. "We" are not teachers or transferors of technology, but instead convenors, catalysts, and facilitators. We have to unlearn, and put our knowledge, ideas and categories in second place. Our role is to enable others to do their own appraisal, analysis, presentations, planning and action, to own the outcome, and to teach us, sharing their knowledge. The "others" may be local rural or urban people, women, men, children or old people, or members of an organisation or group. They are often those who are weak, marginalised, vulnerable and voiceless. They then do many of the things we tend to think only we can do. "They can do it" means that we have confidence in their capabilities. We "hand over the stick" and facilitate their mapping, diagramming, listing, sorting, sequencing, counting, estimating, scoring, ranking, linking, analysing, planning, monitoring and evaluating. Many practitioners and trainers consider the term PRA should only be used for processes which empower.

Three common elements found in a PRA approach are:

   * **critical self-aware responsibility**. Individual responsibility and judgement exercised by facilitators, with self-critical awareness, embracing error.

   * **equity and empowerment**. A commitment to equity. empowering those who are marginalised, excluded, and deprived, often especially women.

   * **diversity**. Recognition and celebration of diversity

You can add to this list, yourself using your own best judgement. PRA and PLA are not fixed things. Some who have been practising it for some time say that they experience it as a self-critical philosophy, a way of life, a way of being and of relating to others.

But this is getting a bit heavy. The best thing to do is to invent, evolve and experience this thing for yourself. If you wish. Making mistakes and learning and changing all the time.

**Origins**

Some of the methods come from social anthropology. Some, especially diagramming, were developed and spread in Southeast Asia, as part of agroecosystem analysis, originating in the University of Chiang Mai in 1978 with the work of Gordon Conway and his colleagues. For RRA, the University of Khon Kaen in Thailand was a major source of innovation and inspiration in the 1980s. Other methods, like matrix scoring, seem to have been new in the early 1990s. What is also new is the way they have all come together, and the way RRA, PRA and PLA seem to know no boundaries of discipline, geography or culture. The term PRA was used early on in Kenya and India around 1988 and 1989. Some of the early PRA in Kenya was linked with the production of Village Resource Management Plans, and some with Rapid Catchment Analysis. In India and Nepal from 1989 onwards there was an accelerated development and spread of PRA with many innovations and applications (see

especially <u>RRA Notes</u> 13).  Parallel developments took place in other countries around the world, with lateral sharing and an explosion of creativity and diversity.

**Spread**

Since around1990 PRA/PLA has expanded and spread:

- from appraisal and analysis to planning, action and M and E
- from rural to urban
- from field applications to applications in organisations
- from a few sectors and domains to many
- from "safe" to sensitive, difficult and dangerous topics
- from NGOs to Government Departments and Universities
- from a few countries to many
- from South to North
- from methods to professional and institutional change
- from behaviour and attitudes to personal change and relationships
- from action to policy influence
- from practice to theory (asking - why does it work?)

Learning experience workshops for PRA/PLA have been convened in many places and countries now. In the 1990s international South-South PRA Exchange Workshops were held in Guinea-Bissau, India (numerous), Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Nepal (several), Pakistan, the Philippines, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Zimbabwe. There were hundreds of cases of sharing where trainers went South-South from one country or continent to another to conduct PRA training.

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

In some countries and regions, the use of PRA/PLA has become normal: parts of Nepal and some Districts in Tanzania, for example. National networks have been established in all continents. The countries and regions where there is activity or where the Participation Group in IDS can give you contacts (those underlined are known or believed to have active PRA-related networks) used to, and may still, include

Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Belize, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cap Verde, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Finland, Fiji/South Pacific, the Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Palestine, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, South Africa, Sri Lanka,

Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tadjikistan, <u>Tanzania</u>, Thailand, Tibet, Turkey, <u>Uganda</u>, <u>UK,</u> Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela, Vietnam, Yemen, <u>Zambia</u> and <u>Zimbabwe</u> .
Elsewhere there must be much taking place which we do not know about.

The approaches, methods and behaviours have proved applicable in many types of organisations. People in NGOs were the first main pioneers of PRA but many Government field organisations, training institutes, and universities are now using and evolving variants of PRA/PLA. All or almost all major funding (donor and lender) organisations and INGOs have promoted, supported, and/or been challenged by, PRA. Applications are many including community- level (urban as well as rural) planning, women's programmes, client ("stakeholder") selection and deselection, health programmes, and adult empowerment and literacy (Reflect) [for others see below]. Policy applications through PPAs (participatory poverty assessments) have become common, and can be part of PRSPs (poverty reduction strategy papers, in heavily indebted countries). Training institutes have adopted and adapted PRA/PLA for the fieldwork and field experience of their probationers and students. Many university faculty were slow to learn, but pressure from students has been successful and PRA/PLA approaches are now being "taught" in universities. PRA/PLA methods are now widely used in research and have been used as alternatives to questionnaires to generate statistics.

**Concerns**

There has been a mass of bad practice (as well as a lot that is brilliant). Quality assurance has been a concern among practitioners and trainers throughout the 1990s and since. Dangers and abuses have included:
- using the label without the substance!
- failing to put behaviour and attitudes before methods!!
- rushing and dominating in the field!!!
- funding agencies' demands for training in a day or two, with lecturing, without fieldwork, and then implementation in communities as a one-off in a short time!!!!
- funding agencies and governments demanding instant PRA on a large scale!!!!!!

The labels "RRA", "PRA" and "PLA" have been used to justify and legitimate sloppy, biased, rushed and unself-critical work. Any approach or methods can be used badly, and RRA, PRA and PLA provide some excruciating examples of bad practice, usually driven by lender and donor agencies whose staff do not know what they are doing and do not know that they do not know.

Abuses have been many: employing consultant trainers who are prepared to "train" in a day or two; rigid, routinised applications; rushing and dominating in the field; community meetings dominated by big talkers, men and the local elite; taking local people's time without recompense; shopping lists of requests from communities; raising expectations which are not fulfilled; and rapid, disbursement-driven programmes seeking to spend fast, creating dependence, and undermining longer-term more sustainable efforts in other communities.

Part of the problem is that funding agencies and Governments tend to want to go instantly to scale, in hundreds, even thousands, of communities.  So far I do not think any way has been found to do this both quickly and well, though there are promising developments in Rwanda with a community-based PPA and in Bangladesh with Community-Led Total Sanitation (see Kar reference). Typically, demand for training exceeds the supply of good trainers. PRA trainers who have really "got it" number hundreds if not thousands worldwide now.  But all too often they have to sacrifice their livelihoods in order to resist the outrageous demands of some funding agencies.  PRA has also become a fashionable label, with "expert" consultants saying they can provide PRA and PRA in however short a time.  There used to be a  prejudice among some funding agencies that trainers had to be recruited in the North, but that is now pretty well a thing of the past. *PRA was developed in the South and most of the good trainers are in and from the South*.  *And they insist on training in the field, and on plenty of time for it. Any lender or donor who demands PRA and does not make provide for this has a lot to answer for.*

Funding agencies and Government Departments, and even NGOs, rarely recognise that they themselves need institutional changes - of cultures, procedures and rewards – if they are to promote and sustain good participation and good PRA.  We are learning what those necessary changes are.  It is no good preaching participation at the grass roots while maintaining an authoritarian hierarchy "above", with funding agency or department-driven targets, punitive management, control-oriented managers, and the like. When it comes to promoting participation, large bureaucracies with pressures to disburse are deeply disabled.  We need therapies for their rehabilitation.

The scale of good PRA is increasing. But there is far, far, still to go.

**Starting, and going where?**

Some people whose attitudes are truly participatory can, with a minimum of exposure, simply go ahead and learn as they go. The short paper "Start, stumble, self-correct, share" which I will hand out encourages such people to start, recognising that much depends on our personal behaviour and attitudes, and that we all make mistakes.  The behaviour and attitudes required of us as "uppers" (outsiders, professionals, people who tend to dominate) include:  critical self-awareness and embracing error; sitting down, listening and learning; not lecturing but "handing over the stick" to "lowers" (people who are local, less educated, younger, marginalised, usually dominated) who become the analysts and main teachers; having confidence that "they can do it"; and a relaxed and open-ended inventiveness.

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

Where does all this lead?  How crucial is it that "lowers" should conduct their own investigations and analysis?  Does PRA provide a strategy for local empowerment

and sustainable development?  What happens when it goes to scale?  Can self-critical awareness be part of the genes of PRA, so that it is self-improving as it spreads?  These are questions you may wish to reflect on for yourself.  For many now they are being answered by sharing experience.  To present background, and in search of understanding and answers, here are some headings and notes.  But write your own.....

**Why did Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) evolve for data collection (in the late 1970s and 1980s)?** [this section dates back to the early 1990s]

- 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
- The anti-poverty biases (spatial, project, person, seasonal...) of rural development tourism. 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 took long, misled, were wasteful, and were reported on, if at all, late
- The search for cost-effectiveness, recognising trade-offs between depth, breadth, accuracy, and timeliness, assessing actual beneficial use of information against costs of obtaining it

**What happened, leading to PRA for empowerment?**

- A confluence of approaches and methods - applied social anthropology, agroecosystem analyis, farming systems research, participatory action research, and RRA itself all coming together and evolving...
- A repertoire of new methods especially with visuals (mapping, matrices, diagramming.....) and of sequences of methods
- The discovery that "they can do it" (that "lowers" have far greater capabilities than most "uppers" recognise)
- 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 local people, eliciting and using their criteria and categories
- 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 measure things, 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

- direct contact, face to face, in the field
- seeking diversity and differences

## Additional Principles of PRA (but develop and discover your own)

PRA, as it has evolved, is all this and more.  Some of the "more" is:
- critical self-awareness about attitudes, behaviour and relationships; doubt; embracing and learning from error; continuously trying to do better; building learning and improvement into every experience; and taking personal responsibility.
- changing behaviour and attitudes, from dominating to facilitating,  gaining rapport, asking  people, often "lowers", to teach us, respecting them, having confidence that they can do it, handing over the stick, empowering and enabling them to conduct their own analysis
- a culture of sharing - of information, of methods, of food, of field experiences (between NGOs, Government and local people)....
- commitment to equity, empowering those who are marginalized, deprived, excluded and regarded as not capable, often especially women, children and those who are poorer.

## The Primacy of Behaviour and Attitudes

**Behaviour and attitudes are more important than methods.**

In facilitating PRA there are many traps:

- rushing (rapid and wrong again)
- lecturing instead of listening, watching and learning.  Is this problem worse with men than women, worse with older men than younger, and worst of all with those who have retired?  Who holds the stick?  Who wags the finger?  Who teaches?  Who listens?  Who learns? (The ERR, which I will explain, is relevant here)
- interrupting and interviewing people, and suggesting things to them, when they are trying to concentrate on mapping, ranking, scoring,  or diagramming...Learning *not* to interview is not easy
- imposing "our" ideas, categories, values, without realising we are doing it, making it difficult to learn from "them", and making "them" appear ignorant when they are not
- gender biases with male teams and neglect of women (again and again and again and again and again and...).  What are the proportions of women and men among us here?
- rushing, lecturing and interrupting instead of listening, watching and learning.  Forgive me, but it needs repeating.  This can be a personal problem which we do not recognise in ourselves.  (It is a problem for me, as you will discover).  It is best treated as a joke, and pointed out to each other when we err.  Which we all do.

Other recurrent problems are:

- people reluctant to spend time in the field or to stay overnight in villages
- consultants who claim expertise but do not give primacy to behaviour and attitudes
- large-scale implementation of "PRA" in a blueprint mode, demanded by funding agencies and Governments, routinised, top-down, with no changes in behaviour and attitudes. Instructions to all in an organisation that they will immediately "use PRA".  Rapid unself-critical adoption leading to poor outcomes, and discrediting PRA.

(See also "Participatory Methods and Approaches: sharing our concerns and looking to the future" in PLA Notes 22; the Bangalore Statement - "Sharing Our Experience: An appeal to governments and donors" (July 1996); and the Calcutta Statement "Going to Scale with PRA: Reflections and Recommendations" (May 1997).  A good source on behaviour and attitudes is: Somesh Kumar ed. ABC (Attitude and Behaviour Change of PRA), available on request from Jane Stevens,  IDS Sussex (or from PRAXIS, 12 Patliputra Colony, Patna 800 013, Bihar, India)

## Approaches and Methods

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

PRA entails shifts of emphasis from:

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

and of experience (when things go well) from

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| reserve | to | rapport |
| frustration | to | fun |

Don't be put off by the length of the list that follows.  The purpose is to show that the menu is varied.  There is much to try out and explore, and much to invent for yourself and to encourage local people to invent.

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

**Some  Approaches and Methods more Typical of RRA (but relevant for
    PRA/PLA too)**

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

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

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

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

♦    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

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

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

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

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

**Some Approaches and Methods more typical of PRA (but relevant for RRA too)**

♦   groups (casual or random encounter; focus or specialist; representative or
    structured for diversity; community/neighbourhood; or formal).  Group
    interactions and analysis are often powerful and efficient, especially with mapping
    and diagramming when group-visual synergy occurs with cross-checking,

reminding, adding details, mutual reinforcement and visible enthusiasm to "get it right".

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

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

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

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

♦ local analysis of secondary sources: For example, participatory analysis of aerial photographs (a good scale is 1:5000) to identify, share knowledge of, and analyse soil types, land conditions, land tenure etc; also satellite imagery and GIS.

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

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

♦ daily time use analysis: indicating relative amounts of time, degrees of drudgery etc of activities, sometimes indicating seasonal variations

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

♦ linkage diagrams: of flows, connections and causality. This has been used for marketing, nutrient flows on farms, migration, social contacts, impacts of interventions and trends, causes of poverty, hunger, violence etc

♦   <u>wellbeing grouping (or wealth ranking)</u> - grouping or ranking households according to wellbeing, including those considered poorest or worst off.  A good lead into discussions of the livelihoods of the poor and how they cope, and widely used for the selection of poor and deprived households with whom to work

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

♦   <u>local indicators</u>, e.g. poor people's criteria of wellbeing and illbeing, and how they differ from those we assume for them.  Local indicators can be a start or baseline for participatory M and E.

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

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

♦   <u>contrast comparisons</u> - asking group A to analyse group B, and vice versa, as for gender awareness, asking men to analyse how women spend their time.

♦   <u>role plays, theatre and participatory video</u> on key issues, to express realities and problems, and to explore solutions.  Powerful and popular approaches.

♦   <u>alternatives to questionnaires</u>.   A new repertoire of participatory alternatives to the use of questionnaires, which generate shared numerical information. This has developed in an extraordinary way, but is still even in 2004 little recognised.

♦   <u>listing and card-sorting</u>. A super way of enabling many people to express their knowledge, views and preferences, and then sort them into categories or priorities, often using "the democracy of the ground".

PRA visualisations frequently combine some of the following:

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

When any three of these are combined, complex analysis tends to result, often accurate through analysis, crosschecking and presentation by groups.

## <u>Practical Personal Tips</u>

(These are tips, not a code of ethics)

* Look, listen and learn.  Facilitate.  Don't dominate.  Don't interrupt.  When people are mapping, modelling or diagramming, 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. Is it precisely those who are the most clever, important and articulate among us who are also most disabled, finding it hardest to keep our mouths shut?)

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

* spend nights in villages and slums. Be around in the evening, at night and in the early morning.

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

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

* relax (RRA = *relaxed* rural appraisal).  Don't rush.  Allow unplanned time to walk and wander around.

* 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. *Ask them*!  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.

* probe.  Interview the map or the diagram.

* ask about what you see.  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

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

* be nice to people

* enjoy!  It is often interesting, and often fun

## Applications and Uses of RRA and PRA/PLA

These are now innumerable.  Applications often have these functions:

- learning about things
- empowering lowers, local people and others
- orientation and attitude and behaviour change for uppers and outsiders

Some of the more important and common applications include:

*natural resources and agriculture*
- watersheds, and soil and water conservation
- forestry (especially joint forest management) and agroforestry
- fisheries and aquaculture

- biodiversity and wildlife reserve management
- village resource management planning and action
- integrated pest management
- crops and animal husbandry, including farmer participatory research/ farming systems research and problem identification by farmers
- irrigation
- marketing

*programmes for equity*
- women's empowerment, gender awareness etc
- children
- micro-finance
- selection:  finding, selecting and deselecting people for poverty-oriented programmes
- income-earning:  identification and analysis of non-agricultural income-earning opportunities.
- analysis by poor people of livelihoods and coping, leading to household plans
- participation by communities and their members in complex political emergencies

*health and nutrition*
- health assessments and monitoring
- food security and nutrition assessment and monitoring
- water and sanitation, including Community-Led Total Sanitation (Kar 2003, 2005)
- emergency assessment and management
- sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS awareness and action
- adolescent sexual behaviour

*urban*
- community planning and action
- slum improvement
- urban violence

*policy*
- impact on poor people of structural adjustment and other policies
- PPAs (participatory poverty assessments) (three generations of these!)
- Consultations with the Poor, in 23 countries, as a preliminary for WDR 2000/01 on poverty and development (Narayan et al 2001)
- land policy

and now crucially

*institutional and personal change*
- organisational analysis
- participatory learning groups in organisations
- field experiential learning (e.g.immersions for senior managers)
- reflection and developing self-critical awareness

The many other applications include adult empowerment and literacy (the Reflect approach), education (girls' and boys' activities and time use, teachers' behaviour in school, appraisal and planning by parents, etc), violence, conflict management and resolution, selection of job applicants, and use with and by refugees and displaced persons, children, old people, drug probationers, and people in prisons.

A new frontier is the introduction of PRA visual methods of presentation and analysis of complexity into primary and secondary education, both non-formal and formal, and empowering students in school council meetings with teachers (in the UK).

Some of the <u>benefits</u> of applications like these have been:

➤ <u>empowering</u> the poor and weak - enabling a group (e.g. labourers, women, poor women, small farmers, street children etc) or a community themselves to analyse conditions, giving them confidence to work out their priorities, resent proposals, make demands and take action, leading to sustainable and effective participatory programmes
➤ <u>insights</u> which would otherwise not have emerged
➤ <u>improving the project process</u> including identification, appraisal, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, all in a participatory mode
➤ <u>direct learning</u>, getting in touch and up-to-date, for distant, insulated senior professionals and officials, trapped in headquarters and capital cities
➤ <u>orientation</u> of students, NGO workers, Government staff, and university and training institute staff towards a culture of open learning in organisations
➤ <u>diversification</u>: encouraging and enabling the expression and exploitation of local diversity in otherwise standardised programmes
➤ <u>policy review and change</u>- changing and adapting policies through relatively timely, accurate and relevant insights
➤ <u>research</u>: identifying research priorities and participatory research itself
➤ <u>learning</u>: developing and spreading participatory modes and methods, with training
   and teaching becoming helping people learn (see PLA Notes 48, December 2003)

              and you may have others to add.

## Some Frontiers and Challenges for PRA  (see also postscript)

These are many.  Some which stand out are:

• **behaviour and attitudes**: the development and dissemination of more and better approaches and methods for enabling "us"- "uppers" to change
• **quality**: how to prevent rapid spread bringing low quality - how to make self-critical awareness and improvement part of the genes of PRA
•  **institutional**: how to establish and maintain participation in and through large organisations (government departments, large NGOs, universities.....) with the flexibility, diversity and behaviour and attitudes required by good PRA.
• **funding agencies, central Governments and some INGOs:**  how to help funding agency, government and INGO staff  exercise restraint, and change their norms, rewards and procedures to permit and promote PRA, not demanding too much too fast, not setting targets for disbursements, and assuring good training

- **participatory poverty assessments**: how further to innovate and spread good practice with PPAs,  moving from a second to a third generation, improving analysis of  findings and good impact on policy and implementation
- **governance**: how to link PRA more with governance, especially introducing it in local level government administration (a lot is going on here scattered in many countries)
-  **sharing and networking**:  how to sustain and enhance sharing, between outsiders and villagers, between different organisations - NGOs, government departments, universities and training institutes. Sharing and learning laterally, as when local people themselves become facilitators of PRA. And how to develop and spread networks for sharing and mutual support between practitioners.
- **participatory Monitoring and Evaluation**: how to further develop and spread M and E in which poorer people and communities do their own M and E.
- **empowerment and conflict resolution**: how to enable women, and the poorer, to take part more and more, and to gain more and more, and how to identify, help the resolution of conflicts between groups and between communities
- **inventiveness, creativity and pluralism**: how to sustain and enhance inventiveness and creativity, learning from and with other participatory traditions, and evolving new approaches, methods, combinations and sequences, and restraining routine repetition
- **trainer/facilitators**:  how to help more people become good trainer/facilitators, and to have the freedom to provide PRA learning experiences for others.

And you will have your own list.

**<u>Use your own best  judgement</u>**   This heading has the final word.  It looks as though participatory approaches, methods, behaviours and relationships have come to stay. Are the continuous and creative invention and applications of participatory methodologies a great, wonderful and ever-moving frontier for us and for the 21st century?

I hope our workshop will help you to make your own judgement and decide for yourself whether PRA/PLA approaches, methods, behaviours and relationships if they are new to you, can help you and others.

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**Postscript.** This note tries to review aspects of the status and future of Participation and PRA/PLA

## Developments and Issues with Participation and PRA

1.  **what has changed in the past decade includes**

- Scale. PRA/PLA-labelled activities in 2006 will probably be several times more than those of five years ago. Participatory methodologies more generally have gained widespread acceptance, at least at the level of rhetoric and formal requirements
- Participatory language has become obligatory donor- and lender-speak. The World Bank mainstreamed participation in the late 1990s, and others e.g. the ADB have moved in the same direction, but with so far rather disappointing results. Boundaries between participatory methodologies have increasingly dissolved ("sharing without boundaries"). PRA-type mapping is very widespread indeed. Maps made by local people probably number millions.
- PRA has become required by many funding agencies, projects and programmes. The issue increasingly is not whether it will be used, but how badly or well it will be used. Lots of bad practice (UNICEF, World Bank…..)
- PRA fatigue in some communities (e.g. Malawi parts of which someone told me had been "carpet-bombed" with PRA)
- Applications have multiplied and diversified. REFLECT has spread and gone in different directions, as one example. Also sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, sanitation, institutional analysis….
- PRA/PLA and related approaches have spread extensively in the North (e.g.in the UK)
- Networks have multiplied and on the whole strengthened
- Relationships have changed between N and S, to become more equal
- Gender and participation has been opened up
- PPAs have evolved and spread. Participation is now linked with PRSPs
- PM and E has spread with huge potentials, e.g. in participatory human rights assessments (e.g. with women's visual diaries in Tamil Nadu)
- Children have come into their own (see the Stepping Forward book)
- Universities and university staff now more often take PRA seriously and adopt PRA methods (including some enthusiastic and creative social anthropologists)
- Some academic critics, some without practical experience of PRA or participation in the field, have described participation as a new orthodoxy or even tyranny. At the level of rhetoric they have a point about orthodoxy.. Much of the reality falls short of the words. But critics miss some weaknesses of which practitioners are widely aware (e.g. the built-in bias against participation by busy women) and miss some strengths (e.g. democracy of the ground, group-visual synergy, representations and analysis of complexity, people's capabilities when well facilitated etc). It would be brilliant if more of these critics could engage, gain experience, and contribute to better practice. A recent book Samuel Hickey and Giles Mohan eds 2004 Participation: from Tyranny to Transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development, Zed Books, London/New York can be recommended for a more balanced, usefully critical and forward-looking view of practices and potentials

2.  **Issues remaining critical include**

- quality with spread (routinisation, rigidity, manuals etc etc)
- ethics (taking people's time, raising expectations, endangering e.g. children etc)
- funding agencies and governments demanding instant training and instant PRA
- experiential learning to replace conventional top-down "training"
- personal attitudes, behaviours and change
- institutional change (against top-down drives to spend, etc)
- professional change

**3.        Some Frontier opportunities and challenges 2005-2010**

- Re-energising PRA/PLA practitioner/facilitators with enthusiasm, releasing creativity and innovation
- Reformulating the whole PRA/PLA thing, in a participatory way, perhaps defining it as having evolved into participation, reflection, and action, with a consensual statement of basic values which would include diversity, process and change.
- Meshing  community-level participatory planning and action with local government and limited resources
- PRA/PLA and participation in complex political emergencies and dangerous conditions (the tsunami presents special challenges)
- Visuals by children, including presentation and analysis of complex realities by children in NFE and mainstream primary curricula
- Better understanding of diagramming cf verbal analysis
- Practical, analytical and ethical aspect of generating numbers through participatory methods and approaches, and developing and spreading  these as alternatives to questionnaires
- Empowerment through participatory video, theatre etc
- Changing the cultures and practices of teaching and training institutes, colleges and universities, and of teachers, trainers and lecturers, including basics like seating arrangements, not lecturing etc, to reduce the embedding of  top-down relationships.
- Transforming funding agencies' procedures, incentives and cultures
- Replacing  logframe-type approaches with agreements on principles (non-negotiables) and process, and with participatory M and E
- Downward accountability
- Linking PPAs effectively with policy and practice – lots of process and ownership issues (watch the ongoing  Rwanda PPA)
- The spread of PRA in countries with few NGOs (Iran, China, Russia, Myanmar….)
- More recognition and opportunities  for the new generation of younger PRA trainers and practitioners
- Cost-effective networking using electronic wizardry
- Internalising relationships of partnership (N-S, NGO-local people, NGO-Government, donor- and lender- "recipient" etc) including exchanges
- Diversity of concepts of illbeing and wellbeing
- ABC (Attitude and Behaviour Change), by whatever name, especially in Governments, funding agencies, large NGOs, and universities and training institutions, including modules, exercises, field experiences etc, and learning what is feasible and what is not, and what works and what does not.  Much more self-critical reflection in training and practice.
- Immersion learning experiences for top and middle people (from funding agencies, government, NGOs and other organisations)
- Putting personal, professional and institutional change and relationships in the centre of development policy and action.  Isn't it obvious?  To the point of embarrassment

**Further Information**

The IDS Participation Resource Centre provides a database and information service on participation and development. It contains over 6,000 books, journals, documents and videos which includes the recently acquired collection of the IIED Resource Centre. Most is grey literature and all is detailed on our website at www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/ - go to Resource Centre and then Search. Details include a short abstract and many include a source to go to for copies. We do offer a limited document delivery service to those in the South or where finding documents at source proves difficult. The Resource Centre is located in the Octagon at IDS and you are welcome to visit. Photocopying facilities are available – we do not loan documents, but work on a principle of trust that people will copy and return, not take away.

If you lack access to the site, email participation@ids.ac.uk giving us details of the information you require and we will search for you.

For sources of information on PRA/PLA, and for network contacts in many countries, see "Sources and Contacts", available updated periodically from Jas Vaghadia at IDS - fax (44) 1273 621202, telephone (44) 1273 877263), and email j.vaghadia@ids.ac.uk

The best recurrent source is **Participatory Learning and Action**, the world's leading journal on participatory approaches and methods. Published three time a year. Free of charge to non-OECD organisations and individuals based in non-OECD countries. OECD individuals £25 or $40 for one year, £45 or $72 for two years (OECD institutions £75 or $120, and £140or $224 respectively). A 2-year subscription brings a free copy of PLA Notes on CD-ROM while stocks last. Recent issues (have to be paid for) include 40 Deliberative democracy and citizen empowerment; 42 Children's participation – evaluating effectiveness; 43 Advocacy and citizen participation; 44 Local government and participation; 45 Community-based animal health care; 46 Participatory processes for policy change; 48 Learning and teaching participation, and a double issue 50 Critical Reflections, Future Directions. Visit www.planotes.org or write to PLA Notes Subscriptions, Earthprint Ltd, Orders Department, PO Box 119, Stevenage SG1 4TP, UK. email iied@earthprint.com

- For an annotated list of 21 **sources** for participatory workshops and PRA go to Participatory Workshops: 21 sets of activities and ideas, Earthscan, London 2002, which is on our website
- For a good review see Pathways to Participation: Critical Reflections on PRA (12 pages) available from the Participation Group, IDS.
- Perhaps the best single source for PRA/PLA is Meera Kaul Shah, Sarah Degnan Kambou and Barbara Monahan eds Embracing Participation in Development: Wisdom from the field, CARE, 151 Ellis Street, Atlanta, GA 30303 USA, 1999. Tel 1 404 681 2552 Fax 1 404 589 2624. Jim Rugh' s introduction is an insightful statement of issues with RRA, PRA and PLA. Part 1 (47 pages) "CARE's experience with participatory approaches" and Part 2 (38 pages) "Some conceptual reflections" are full of interest. Part 3 (77 pages) by Meera Kaul Shah is a good field guide to 17 PLA tools and techniques illustrated with examples and photographs, and with a section on documentation, analysis, synthesis and report-writing.

Some recent related **books** and **monographs** (all prices are paperback)

- Robert Chambers 2005  Ideas for Development, Earthscan, London and Sterling VA £8.95
- Critical Reflections, Future Directions, Participatory Learning and Action (former PLA Notes) No 50, October, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H ODD,  try **www.earthprint.com, www.iied.org** and email pla.notes@iied.org
- Grazia Borrini-Feyerabend, Michel Pimbert, M. Taghi Farvar, Ashish Kothari and Yves Renard, with others 2004  Sharing Power: Learning-by-doing in Co-management of Natural Resources throughout the World, IIED and IUCN/CMWG, Cenesta, Tehran, 456p price not known
- Renwick Irvine, Robert Chambers and Rosalind Eyben 2004  Learning from Poor People's Experience: Immersions, Lessons for Change in Policy and Organisations No 13, Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK (also earlier papers in this series) www.ids.ac.uk/bookshop/index.html
- Leslie Groves and Rachel Hinton eds 2004 Inclusive Aid: Power and Relationships in International Development, Earthscan, London  237p  £16.95
- Peter Taylor 2003  How to Design a Training Course: a guide to participatory curriculum development, Continuum in association with Voluntary Service Overseas, 170p £10.99
- Kamal Kar 2003  Subsidy or Self-respect?  Participatory total Community Sanitation  in Bangladesh, IDS working Paper 184, September 2003
- Laura Roper, Jethro Pettit and Deborah Eade eds 2003 Development and the Learning Organisation: Essays from *Development in Practice*, OXFAM in association with IDS £13.95
- Andrea Cornwall and Garett Pratt eds 2003  Pathways to Participation: Reflections on PRA, Intermediate Technology Publications, London 224p  £9.95
- Andrea Cornwall and Tilly Sellers, eds  2002  Realising Rights:  transforming approaches to sexual and reproductive wellbeing, ZED Books, £15.95
- Karen Brock and Rosemary McGee eds 2002  Knowing Poverty: Critical reflections on participatory research and policy, Earthscan Publications, London £15.95
- Lisa VeneKlasen with Valerie Miller 2002 A New Weave of Power, People and Politics: the Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation, World Neighbors, 346p
- Robert Chambers 2002  Participatory Workshops: a sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities, Earthscan, London  £8.95
- Deepa Narayan and Patti Petesch eds  2002  [Voices of the Poor]  From Many Lands,  Oxford University Press/ World Bank [available from Participation Group, IDS]
- John Gaventa and Michael Edwards eds  2001 Global Citizen Action, Lynne Reinner Publishers. Inc, (published in the UK by Earthscan, London). 336p. £14.95
- ActionAid  2001 Transforming Power, report of a workshop  www.reflect-action.org
- Andy Norton with Bella Bird, Karen Brock, Margaret Kakande and Carrie Turk 2001   A Rough Guide to PPAs: an introduction to theory and practice, Overseas Development Institute, London  85pp

- Marisol Estrella with others eds 2000 <u>Learning from Change: Issues and experiences in participatory monitoring and evaluation</u>, IT Publications, London 288p  £8.95 (CA$25 published in North America by IDRC)
- Andrea Cornwall 2000  <u>Beneficiary, Consumer, Citizen: Perspectives on Participation for Poverty Reduction</u>, Sidastudies no 2  (weblink: <u>www.sida.se/Sida/jsp/Crosslink.jsp/d,588</u>)
- Deepa Narayan, Robert Chambers, Meera Shah and Patti Petesch  2000 [Voices of the Poor] <u>Crying Out for Change</u>, Oxford University Press for the World Bank US$25 (weblink: <u>www.worldbank.org/poverty/voices/reports.htm#crying</u>)
- Vanessa Bainbridge et al 2000  <u>Transforming Bureaucracies: Institutionalising participation and people-centred processes in natural resource management – an annotated bibliography</u>, International Institute for Environment and Development, London and IDS,  £30
- Victoria Johnson, Edda Ivan-Smith, Gill Gordon, Pat Pridmore and Patta Scott eds 1998  <u>Stepping Forward: Children and young people's participation in the development process</u>,  IT Publications, London, November  £7.95
- Jeremy Holland with James Blackburn eds <u>Whose Voice? Participatory Research and Policy Change</u>,  IT Publications, London 1998   £5.75
- James Blackburn with Jeremy Holland eds  <u>Who Changes? Institutionalizing Participation in Development</u>, IT Publications, London 1998  £5.25
- Irene Guijt and Meera Shah eds  <u>The Myth of Community: Gender issues in Participatory Development</u>, IT Publications, London 1998  £8.95
- Robert Chambers  <u>Whose Reality Counts?  Putting the First Last</u>, IT Publications, London 1997 (£5.50)

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