

Role of Participatory Rural Appraisal Tools and Rapid Rural Appraisal Tools-A Review

Arthika B

Department of Civil Engineering

Vels Institute of Science Technology and Advanced Studies Chennai, Tamilnadu, India

Abstract-

Participatory rural appraisal has become the new development tool in every aspect of community development around the world. These techniques are now being used in almost every field where people are involved. Rapid Rural Appraisal is a structured activity requiring careful planning, clear objectives, the right balance of people involved and a good choice of tools and techniques for use in the field. At the same time, it is flexible enough to respond to local conditions and unexpected circumstances. Participatory rural appraisal is a participatory method to gather/ collect information by involvement of Rural/local communities for decision making and implementation of the development project, for the rural community, by the rural community and with the Rural Community. It is a process to involve the community in planning and decision making. Community develops their own skills needed to address issues, analyze options and carry out activities. In this paper the principles, methods and tools of Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory rural appraisal and the advantages over Participatory rural appraisal tools are reviewed.

Keywords – Participatory rural appraisal, Rapid Rural Appraisal

I INTRODUCTION

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is an exercise for communication and transfer of knowledge. It is a participatory method to gather/ collect information by involvement of Rural/local communities for decision making and implementation of the development project, “for the rural community, by the rural community and with the Rural Community”. It is a process to involve the community in planning and decision making. Community develops their own skills needed to address issues, analyze options and carry out activities. Participatory decision making reflects respect for human dignity and creating the opportunity for individuals to fulfill their responsibility to exercise the right. Rapid rural appraisal (RRA) consists of a set of guidelines which help people to work in a structured but flexible way in rural communities and a set of tools to aid communication and interaction with those communities.

Table- 1 Differences between RRA and PRA

RRA	PRA
Responding to needs of development workers and agencies	Responding to needs of communities and target groups
More emphasis on efficient use of time & achievement of objectives	More emphasis on flexibility to adapt to time frame of community
Communication and learning tools used to help outsiders analyse conditions and understand local people	Communication and learning tools used to help local people analyse their own conditions and communicate with outsiders
Focus of RRA decided by outsiders	Focus of PRA decided by communities
End product mainly used by development agencies and outsiders	End product mainly used by community
Enables development agencies and institutions to be more “participatory”	Enables (empowers) communities to make demands on development agencies and institutions
Can be used purely for “research” purposes without necessarily linking to subsequent action or intervention	Closely linked to action or intervention and requiring immediate availability of support for decisions and conclusions reached by communities as a result of the PRA

II PRINCIPLES OF RRA

2.1 Structured but flexible:

RRA is a structured activity requiring careful planning, clear objectives, the right balance of people involved and a good choice of tools and techniques for use in the field. At the same time, it is flexible enough to respond to local conditions and unexpected circumstances. Progress is reviewed constantly so that new information can be understood and the focus of the RRA redirected.

2.2 Integrated and interdisciplinary

RRA helps “outsiders” to learn about rural conditions by looking at them from many points of view. This means having people participating with a variety of different technical and scientific skills and a balance of different institutional outlooks. This requires an integrated development approach which cuts across institutional and disciplinary boundaries.

2.3 Awareness of bias

Researchers and development workers who are trying to understand rural conditions can be biased by their urban attitudes, their own professional and personal priorities, and the type of transport they use the language they speak. The people researchers talk to can be biased as well by their limited experience, their customs and beliefs and their own interests and those of their families. RRA seeks to avoid biases by being aware of them and by being systematic in taking into account different points of view and different sets of interests.

2.4 Accelerating the Process

RRA tries to shorten the time it takes to get from knowing nothing about an area or a situation to deciding what development interventions might be best for that area by using key informants, careful observation and by exploiting the knowledge and experience of local people. The information produced is analysed “on the spot” and presented in a form which is more easily used by planners and which can be discussed and understood by local people themselves.

2.5 Interaction with and learning from local people

Whatever the purpose of the RRA it must involve the people who are the intended “beneficiaries” of any eventual development activities. RRA should give them the opportunity to describe their lives and conditions. The people carrying out an RRA must be prepared to listen to local people and learn from them. Participation by local people can take many forms but any RRA will involve intense interaction between researchers, planners, traditional and formal authorities and local people.

2.6 Combination of different tools

The RRA approach uses a combination of communication and learning tools. These tools help outsiders to observe conditions in a concise but systematic way. They also allow local people to present their knowledge, concerns and priorities to outsiders. The combination of different tools and techniques builds up a more complete picture where different viewpoints can be compared and contrasted. The systematic cross-checking of information collected in different ways by different people from different sources can increase accuracy and comprehensiveness.

2.7 Iterative

During an RRA, what has been learnt is constantly reviewed and analysed in the field. This is usually done in workshops carried out at regular intervals. This means the focus of the RRA, the tools used and the people talked to can be adjusted constantly.

III ELEMENTS OF PRA

Three common element found in a PRA approach are

- Self-aware responsibility: Individual responsibility and judgment 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

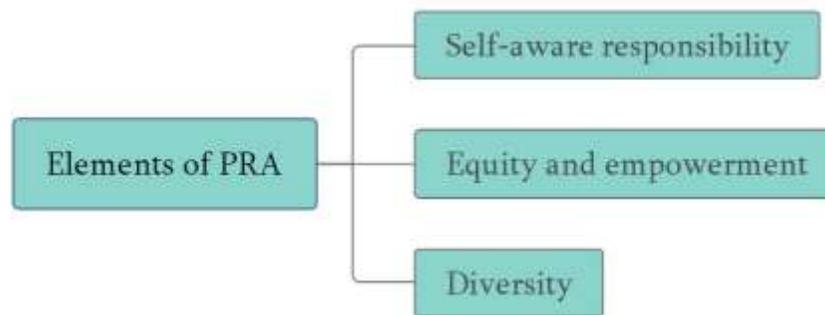


Figure 1. Elements of PRA

IV PRINCIPLES OF PRA

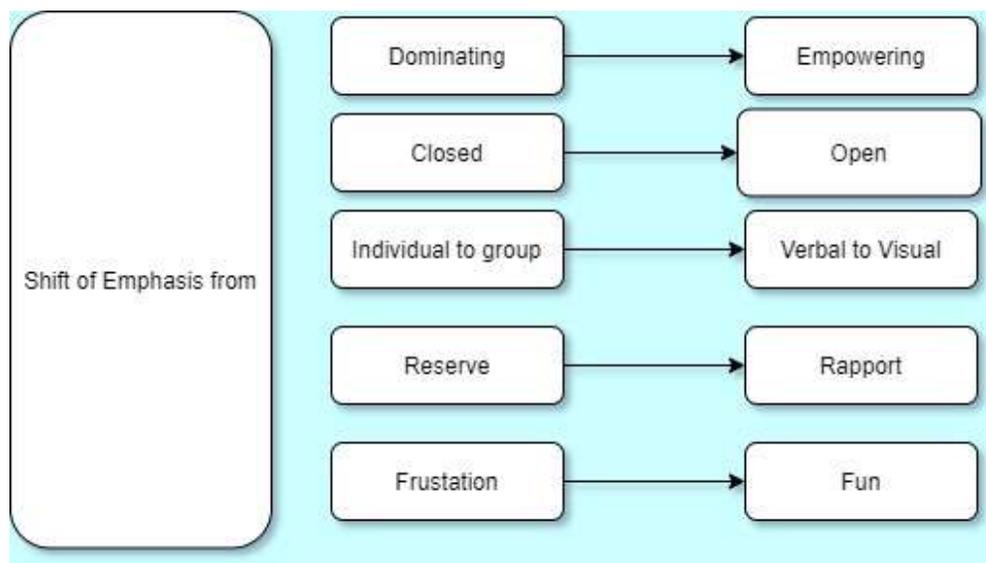
The principles of PRA include Offsetting biases (spatial, project, person-gender, elite etc, seasonal, professional, courtesy...), Rapid progressive learning- flexible, exploratory, interactive, inventive, Reversals- learning from, with and by local people eliciting and using their criteria and categories, Optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision- not finding out more than is needed, not measuring more than the needed, and not trying to measure what does not to be measured. 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 ,Critical self awareness about attitudes and behaviour; doubt; embracing and learning from error; continuously trying to do better; building learning and improvement into every experience ,Changing behaviour and attitudes, from dominating to facilitating, empowering and enabling them to conduct their own analysis, A culture of sharing- of information, of methods of food, of field experience and Commitment to equity

V PRA APPROACHES AND METHODS

PRA Approaches and Methods includes,

- From rural to urban
- From field application to application in organization
- From a few sectors and domains to many
- From a few countries to many
- From methods to professional and institutional change
- From behaviour and attitudes to personal change
- From action to policy influence
- From practice to theory
- From appraisal and analysis to planning, action and monitoring & evaluation

PRA entails shift of emphasis from



VI PRA TOOLS

Participatory Rural Appraisal tools are used to collect the information,

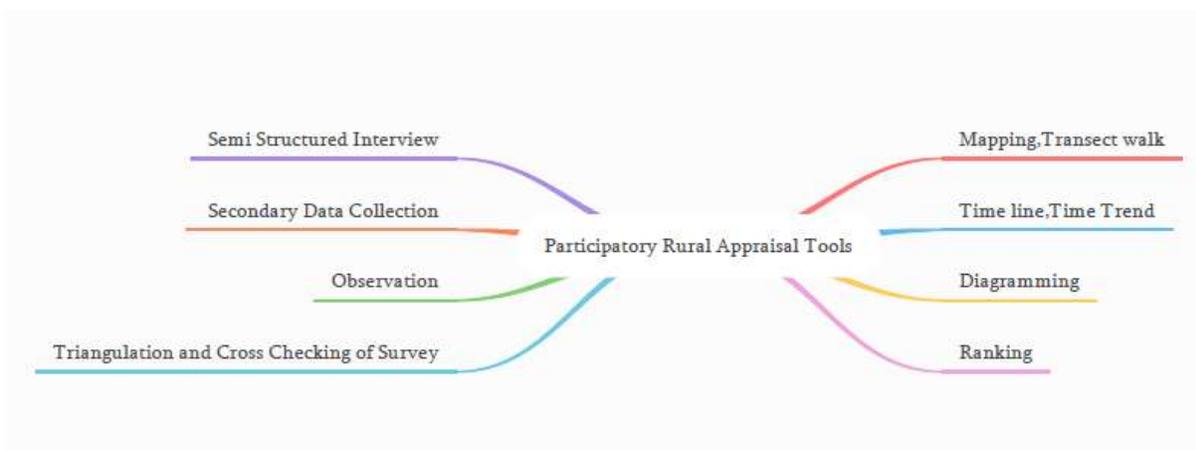


Figure 2. PRA Tools

- Time-line, Ethno-history and Seasonal Diagram for time related data;
- Mapping (social, enterprise, topography and hydrology) and Transects (historical and agro-ecological) for spatial data
- Diagramming (pie, Venn and trend) for quantitative data
- Preference or verbal ranking, matrix ranking and wealth ranking
- Use of secondary data
- Semi-structured interview
- Observation and
- Triangulation and cross-checking for reliability

VII APPLICATIONS AND USES OF PRA

Participatory rural appraisal has become the new development tool in every aspect of community development around the world. These techniques are now being used in almost every field where people are involved.

1. Natural resources and agriculture includes Watersheds and soil and water conservation, Forestry (especially joint forest management) and agro forestry, 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.
2. Programmes for equity includes Women's empowerment, gender awareness ,Children, Micro-finance, finding, selecting and deselecting people for poverty-oriented programmes ,identification and analysis of non-agricultural income- earning opportunities, Analysis by poor people of livelihoods and coping, leading to household plans and Participation by communities and their members in complex political emergencies.
3. Health and nutrition includes Health assessments and monitoring, Food security and nutrition assessment and monitoring, Water and sanitation, including Community-Led Total Sanitation, Emergency assessment and management, Sexual and reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS awareness and Adolescent sexual behavior.
4. Urban development includes Community planning and action, Slum improvement and urban violence
5. Policy Impact on poor people of structural adjustment and other policies, PPAs (participatory poverty assessments) and Land policy.
6. Institutional and personal change Organisational analysis, Participatory learning groups in organizations, Field experiential learning, Reflection and developing self-critical awareness.

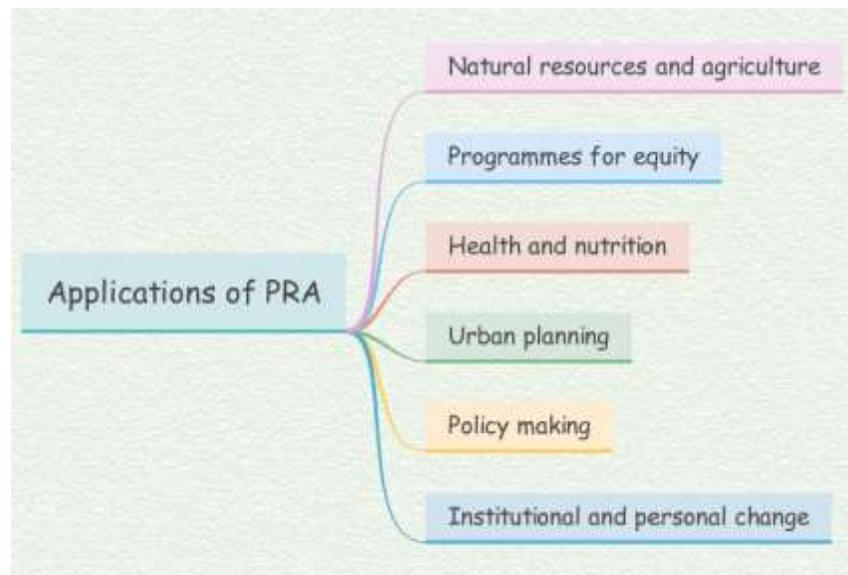


Figure 3. Applications of PRA

VIII.CONCLUSION

The RRA approach uses a combination of communication and learning tools. These tools help outsiders to observe conditions in a concise but systematic way. Through the PRA tools the Verbal ranking of problems and opportunities will be identified. Prioritization of problems and opportunities, which consists of a broad discussion and reshuffling of the listed problems and opportunities, Listing of activities, based on the prioritized problem and opportunity list; and Prioritization of activities, based on the listed activities and a broad discussion on actual possibilities to carry out such activities and the Delegation of responsibility will be achieved.

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