

Participatory approaches

~ Sharing concepts of participatory approaches ~

Participatory Approaches

Genesis of PRA/PLA

- Activist participatory research
- Agro-ecosystem analysis
- Applied anthropology
- Field research on farming systems
- Rapid rural appraisal (RRA)

RRA toward Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Mid-1980s: RRA with Participation

	RRA	PRA
Period	Mid-1970s,1980s	Mid-1980, 1990s
Reformer	University	NGO
Users	Donor, Universities	NGO, Non-govt institutes
Previous defects	Indigenous knowledge	People's capacity
Improvement	Tools	Behavior and Attitude
Dominant mode	Extraction/Exploitation	Cooperation/Participation
Objective	Learning by outsiders	Empowering local people
Outcome	Planning, projects, reports	Continuous activities and organization by people

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Principles shared by RRA and PRA

- Offsetting biases
- Rapid progressive learning
- Reversals
- Optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision
- Triangulation
- Direct contact, face to face, in the field
- Seeking diversity and differences

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Additional Principles of PRA(1/2)

- **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; 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

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Additional Principles of PRA(2/2)

- **A culture of sharing** – of information, methods, food, field experiences (between NGOs, Govt., 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.

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Priority of Behaviour and Attitudes(1/2)

- Behaviour and attitudes are more important than methods

- In facilitating PRA/PLA, there are many traps:
 - Rushing (rapid and wrong again)
 - Lecturing instead of listening, watching and learning.
 - Interrupting and interviewing people, and suggesting things to them, when they are trying to concentrate on mapping, ranking, scoring, or diagramming

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Priority of Behaviour and Attitudes(2/2)

- In facilitating PRA/PLA, there are many traps:
 - Imposing “our” ideas, categories, values, without realizing 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

 - Rushing, lecturing and interrupting instead of listening, waiting and learning. This can be a personal problem with we do not recognize in ourselves. It is best treated as a joke, and pointed out to each other when we err, which we all do.

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RRA, PRA and PLA

- RRA originally stood for Rapid Rural Appraisal, but its approach and methods are 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 far more than just appraisal.
- PLA stands for Participatory Learning Action. PLA is a more accurate title for what many practitioners of PRA believe in and are doing As a term it is often used interchangeably with PRA.

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Current issues of PRA/PLA

- 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 Govt., routinised, top-down, with no changes in behaviour and attitudes.

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