

The Participatory Tools Pocket Book

For Field Use Only

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The Background

The field guide contains participatory planning tools adapted from the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methodology. They are not a guide to PRA but rather tools which can be used stand alone or in combination without conducting a full fledged PRA. However a brief background on the PRA itself is necessary to put them into the right context.

Historical perspective

The PRA initially appeared as a social research methodology in the 1980's. The PRA emerged as an improvement of the Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) which was widely used during the 1970's. Data collection in the RRA was extractive in nature characterized by brief field visits by urban based experts. In the pre-RRA period, social research was mainly conducted using traditional questionnaire surveys. The information collected was determined by the urban based professionals without due consultation with the target group. Based on the analysis from the questionnaires, decisions were made on what poverty alleviation strategies were "good" for the community. These decisions were then passed to the local communities who were then expected to implement and thus enjoy development. In many cases, the projects were simply implemented by government officials without consulting the target beneficiary. This extractive planning processes are what later came to be known collectively as top down approach (see box).

The RRA tried to address some of these shortcomings by advocating more interaction with the communities and use of interactive methods including mapping and diagramming, sketching and transecting. The RRA also made use of semi-structured interviewing techniques. The RRA techniques were adapted and modified to enable more participation of target communities with more and more data collection and analysis being done by the target communities. The term participatory was applied to this more interactive RRA. Thus the PRA was the born. The first PRA was conducted in Kenya was conducted by the National Environment Secretariat (NES) around 1985 with significant borrowing from Indian experience.

Top Down

In many countries which were ruled by colonial masters, the approach was for the colonial governments (in consultation with local governors) to decide which inventions were to be undertaken. The decision was then passed to the local communities to implement sometimes under the threat of jail. Such directives had to be followed whether people liked it or not. This 'forced' labor approach, where the government decided "for the natives" what peoples' problems were and dictated what should be done to address those problems, is a classic example of "top down" approach. The obvious result was that "natives" did not own those projects. The projects were thus unsustainable. The same approach was adopted by the newly independent nations with the exception that "the natives" now became "the people"!

PRA EVOLUTION

Technology development era

In the period that followed immediately independence, it was soon *realized* that people could not "develop" without necessary technology and financing. Thus the technological development focus approach was borne. The approach, widely used in the early sixties to late seventies, emphasized on the provision of new and "advanced" ways of production. This included intense research to provide new technologies including hybrid seeds, chemicals etc. Many new technologies were developed which were actually quite useful and with great potential for improving livelihoods. Since the intended beneficiaries were not involved, many of the new technologies failed to improve livelihoods as expected. This was due to lack of information and even skills to use the new technologies.

Rapid Appraisal era

Due to the poor response to the above, planners realized that there was a need to get intended beneficiary's opinion in order to achieve meaningful change. Thus the rapid rural appraisal was born. The main thrust of the rapid appraisal was to make quick trips to the 'field' collect simple data, rush back to the office and design projects based on that data. These projects would then be implemented without any effort at further consultations. Decisions were made at top government offices and communicated in quickly convened community meetings. The result was that such efforts were not sustainable. In the 1980's the shortcoming of the above were realized. It was realized it was really not possible to "develop" people, it was only the people who could develop themselves. For people to develop proper ownership of projects, it was essential that they be fully involved throughout the planning and implementation period. That is, the people had to decide what their situation was, discuss what could be done about it, how it should be done and by whom. Thus the PRA was born.

PRA Defined

PRA means many things to different people under different circumstances. Since the PRA is a community's effort to learn and appreciate (bearing in mind that communities are different) their circumstances it would be difficult to come up with a standard definition for a PRA. For the purposes of this page PRA will be taken as a process of learning from the community and with the community to investigate, analyze and evaluate problems, constraints and opportunities and together make informed decisions (plan for Action) regarding development projects/activities. The PRA uses a multi-disciplinary approach with people from diverse professions. The essence of this is to provide diverse views for discussion. It is vital that while doing this, the facilitator ensures that the community become the owner of the development projects they have planned otherwise the success of the project will be compromised.

The PRA Steps

1. Site selection
2. Preliminary visit
3. Data collection
4. Data Analysis
5. Community Action Planning
6. Implementation of CAPs
7. Monitoring and Evaluation – including sharing of benefits/losses

The initial design of the PRA was meant to specifically tackle issues associated with rural communities. With changing circumstances of the rural folk and the realization that the PRA tools are not necessarily effective on urban situations, the concept of Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) was born. The PLA uses the PRA tools without the normal bias to rural situations. The PLA also takes into account that development is a process of learning and making decisions on specific action to be taken to improve livelihood of communities.

The process of participatory development planning and the related social research tools has changed significantly over the past decade. In a number of developing countries the PRA/PLA is currently the most widely used approach. The actual practice varies considerably from place to place. To follow the development of social research methodologies over time would fill volumes and volumes of books but a brief glance (as given above) at the major changes is worth a glance.

The Resource Map

What?

The Village Resource Map is a model (on the ground or on paper) of the area (village) as perceived by the community members. This visualization is done by a mixed group of villagers including the elderly and the young community members. The area in question must be specific in order to create a focal point for the ensuing discussions. For example, a SRM of a village or two neighboring villages can be used.

Why?

This is one of the most PRA basic tools. It gives the community and outsiders a chance to appreciate, at a glance, the geographical aspects of the village, the resource base at the village and the spatial distribution of the resources. It creates a certain understanding within the community of what their spatial situation is and gives them an opportunity to discuss what could be done to improve any undesirable aspects. The information / discussion arising out of the tool can probably include: -

- the village area boundaries as perceived by the community
- the resources available at specific points within the village
- the opportunities/options available within specific geographic points in the village
- problems that are specific to certain areas in the village
- resources available outside the village but which are used by the community members
- what can be done to exploit existing opportunities or address existing problems from the community's point of view

How?

A natural starting point for developing the village resource map could be a question by the PRA facilitator: how big is this village? How far does the village extend.. could we make a rough sketch on the ground/paper to understand the extend. From the on suggestions could be made like: are there no roads in the village? are there no grazing lands e.t.c. until there is no more discussion.

Output..

As the map is being model a member of the community should be putting down all the discussions taking place including points of conflict in the discussion. At the end of the exercise, the resource map provides a most comprehensive database about the village from the villagers themselves. In addition it identifies areas of interest or options for development from the community.

The Village Vision

The What?

The Village Vision is a community's model of their hopes and dreams. It puts all the community's aspirations on a mapped model on the ground and on paper as an initial record of a community's priorities. The model once complete is a very useful tool for later evaluation of the community's efforts at getting a better life!

Why?

The village vision gives the community and outsiders a quick glimpse of what the villagers would like to undertake and for what purposes. It also gives a quick evaluation of what can be achieved with the resources available in the village and what external resources may be required. The information gathered during the exercise can include: -

- what villagers see as important to their lives
- where within the village a certain activity should be undertaken (geographically)
- suggestions on how the dreams and visions can be achieved including a record of the current perceived constraints (why it is not there yet)
- ways and modalities of exploiting the existing resources
- The village vision map represents a visual bench mark for continuous participatory evaluation of any plans to be undertaken.

How?

The village vision is build upon the [village resource map](#) modeled earlier. Since the map of the village is already on the ground, the best way to start the vision is to start by asking the natural question: -

...now we can see our village the way it is today, what would we wish to it look like 10 years from today??

...how can we get to do that??

...how come it has never been tried before ... and so on.

The village vision encourages people to put forward their wildest ideas on model and on paper. No opinion, suggestion or dream should be rejected by anyone at this stage.

Mobility Mapping

What?

The mobility map is representation of a community's movements in relation to the "outside world". It is developed using circles that represent the community and smaller circles representing important destinations of the village population. The circles may be cut out of manilla paper with different sizes for different destinations according to the importance of the destination in terms of numbers and regularity of movement. Arrows are then used to represent the direction of the movement.

Why?

A community is neither static and nor does it exist in isolation. It is there important to establish movements (contacts with the outside world) that occur within the community in relation to other areas. This movement could be in terms of resources or people. The way people move around is important in determining the economic activities of the community as a whole. This tool is especially important in analyzing the community wealth, incomes from outside, 'exports' from the village and other issues of economic and social importance.

How?

To develop a mobility map the community discusses the various place where people go once they leave the village. From this list, a few of the most important destinations are selected. The importance of each is discussed and a corresponding size of manila is cut and the name of the place written. This is the place on the bigger (community) circle with an arrow to indicate the direction of the movement.

The following question are important during the process

- ... where do people go when they leave the village?
- ... which people leave regularly: men, women, youth and why do they leave?
- ... what do they take with them once when leaving?
- ... who takes what when leaving?
- ... when they return, what do they bring back? Can it not be locally produced?

Output

The output of the tool is normally a wealth of information concerning production, marketing, employment, expenditure patterns and incomes among many other things. After the tool is developed, it gives the community a chance to reflect on how to reduce "imports and increase "exports" from the village thus creating employment among members.

Seasonalities

Why?

A thorough understanding of resource/event use and availability within a common time frame is required if the community is to utilize this resources regular. Regular cycles that occur within a year are established. This gives outsiders and community a chance to discuss wide ranging themes at household and community level. At the same time it gives an insight into attitudes surrounding certain gender issues: roles and responsibilities, resource ownership and access, entry points for specific activities e.t.c. Since the tool revolves around the community's everyday occupation month for month, a large amount of very diverse information is collected, discussed and recorded affording the community an opportunity to reflect upon their practices.

What?

The seasonality, also called seasonal calendar is a model on the ground/paper detailing the communities occupation month by month for a span of time usually a year. The seasonal calendar is a highly adaptable model of movements in resource base through an entire year. Seasonalities, otherwise called seasonal calendars are based on specific subjects like farming, migrations, labour e.t.c.

How?

The issues/themes to be presented in the calendar should be identified through discussion with the community until a consensus is reached. To model the calendar, a *unique starting point* is identified, e.g. the start of the rain season, or the start of the year. Then the process is continued through asking of pertinent questions like:

...when do the rains start?

...when is the land prepared, who prepares it, what methods are used for the preparation?

...then what happens after land preparation?...

... and so on until there is no more discussion amongst the community!

Output

The output from the seasonal calendar should be a complete chronology of the community's practices within a particular year detailing events, the how's, and the who's of these practices. Vital information on community's attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities is generated and documented. In addition a model of the seasonal calendar is recorded which can at a glance provide vital information for developmental activities (especially concerning the timing of such activities).

Time-lines /Historical profiles

Why

As a community prepares for a more focused effort at achieving better livelihood for its members, it is important to take into account their collective history. This enables both the community and outsiders to learn where they are coming from and so that they are in a better position to decide where they are headed. It is especially important to get the lessons learned from the collective experience of the community as a whole and as individuals. In order to achieve this, a timeline is used in PRA's.

What?

The time line is a chronological list of events in the history of the community (famines, floods, dips, attacks, settlement pattern, introduction of new crops, rainfall pattern, forest activities etc.)

It helps identifying problems, and experiences (and especially lessons learned) over a longer period of time.

How?

The timeline is developed through focused group discussions (FGD), where a mixed group is told to recount the happenings in the area.

To start the discussion the question: who were the first people to settle here... may be used. The older members of the community will immediately get interested in telling the story... until the present!

Output

The output of a timeline should be a foot-noted list that shows events that have occurred over time, a list of events or resources that move in regular cycles over time and how the community has coped with each type peak/trough of the cycle.

Example of a timeline

A TIMELINE OF MARA VILLAGE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Invasion by locusts.
1963	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● 1st African D.O. comes to Taveta● Population increases in Kimorigo when the Msengoni land was given to the community by the government(society).
1968	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Heavy rains which caused floods and cut-off the area from Taveta.
1970	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Eldoro High School is established-elevated from a technical institution.
1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Measles outbreak (<i>Ugonjwa wa surua</i>)● The government constructs additional drains.
1978	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Heavy rains which cause floods and cut-off the area from Taveta.
1979	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Marodo primary school was shifted from Marodo to Ngutini and was called Lotina primary school.
1980	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Rambaramba famine.
1988	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Danida sinks 11 shallow wells● First murrum layer on Tut-Ngutini road.
1989	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The Lumi Water Project (Konoike) water pipeline is constructed.
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Water department constructs a drain around Kimorigo village to prevent floods.
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Army worm invasion.
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Heavy rains (Elnino) making the area inaccessible due to floods

Trend-lines

Why?

For a community to be able to utilize all available resources effectively, it is important to understand how these resources have been changing over time. This understanding will enable a community map map-out strategies for overcoming undesirable resource movements. In addition it also gives a community a chance to tap into its collective experience to cope with current undesirable situations based on previous coping strategies. The PRA uses trends lines as a tool for doing this.

What?

Trend lines are graphic representations of changes in resources activities over a long period of time. For good results, trends have to be resource specific although the discussion itself will raise wide ranging issues. The topics vary from place to place depending on the problems in the area. Commonly used topics are soil erosion, land productivity, tree cover, water availability, livestock and human population changes and rainfall pattern.

How?

To develop a trend, enquire from the community which resources they think are currently a constraint. With that the community should discuss each in turn while modeling on the ground/paper. It is important to note here that quantities do not represent absolutes but relative amounts!

Output

The output from trends should constitute a thorough understanding of resource movement over a long time including the coping mechanisms in case of diminishing resources. In addition it should provide information that gives ways of utilizing the available resources efficiently based on previous experiences.

Institutional Mapping

Why?

Within a community setup, there are many institutional interactions, which have a direct bearing on a community's economic state. Institutions, in this particular case, is used on its broader sense to include all groups within the community. Most of community's efforts to improve their state (livelihood) are driven by institutions either within or from without the community. The institutions in this case should include any organized groups of community members for a specific purpose, religious and cultural groupings within the community, external organizations that interact in one way or another with the community e.t.c. The institutional interaction chart is a graphic representation of the community's networking efforts aimed at creating a better life

What?

The institutional interaction chart, otherwise referred to as Venn diagram (due to its likeness to its geometry counterpart), is a circular diagram modelled on the ground/paper, which shows the way the community works together with other groupings. It represents the community perception of impact, need and attitudes towards such groupings. The institutional interaction chart is in reality a map of a community's networking efforts.

How?

The various organizations are listed and through discussion with the community, ranked in order of importance according to the community's opinion. Based on this ranking circles of relative sizes are cut out of manilla paper or drawn on a chalkboard. Through further discussion with the community, these are placed near or far from a larger circle representing the community.

Notes

- The size of chapati indicates the impact of the organization as perceived by the community. The bigger the chapati, the greater the impact.
- Nearness to the center of the community circle indicates relative level of interaction (relationship) between the community and the particular organization.
- If the chapati is situated on the edge of the community circle the interaction is very limited.
- A large chapati outside the circle symbolizes a great impact but poor relationship between the community and the organization.
- Institutions have other inter-relations between themselves are indicated by overlaps between the chapatis.

Gender Profile

What?

Although gender analysis is an in-built part of all PRA tools, sometimes it is important to use a specific tool to excite the community into deeper analysis of their attitudes and behaviour. This provides a background for the community to start changing their attitudes, passively or actively. In PRA's gender profile is commonly used tool for achieving this.

A gender profile, otherwise called gender calendar is an daily activity profile of the various sexes during a particular time of the year e.g. dry season, rain season. It details the division of roles and responsibilities between male and female members of the community.

Why?

The tools major importance is its ability to make members of the community discuss issues which are not normally discussed. Details of who does what, when and how emerge giving the community a chance to reflect on their productivity. It also ensures that development activities are targeted at the right gender and are scheduled at the appropriate time.

How?

To develop a gender profile, the community should be divided along about Gender lines and each group encouraged to talk about what they do on a normal day. As the discussion proceeds it is important for the PRA team to take down information on how, what and where each task is done. At the end of the exercise, the two groups should be brought together to discuss the implications of each profile separating productive tasks from reproductive tasks.

Caution: there is a possibility that the tool will put men on the defensive and therefore a proper introduction of the objectives should be done before starting.

Output

The output is a chronological list of the role division and responsibilities of specific members of the community through a 24 hour period. It helps the user to design projects that do not un-intentionally increase workload and other inequities between men and women.

Transect

What?

In the process of conducting the PRA, it is important to understand the area under discussion. This provides the relational basis without which it would be impossible to plan properly. The transect is a walk through the village by a few community members and the PRA team. The walk is aimed at:-

- Understanding the spatial relationships between resources
- Gaining a deeper understanding of the community's problem through observation and discussion
- Cross-checking information that was gathered using the other tools like the village resource map
- Gathering specific information of technical nature like soils, topography, socio-economics etc.

How?

A transect is not a marathon dash but a leisurely walk through the village talking to people along the way, visiting a few villagers and most importantly observing. The walk should be mapped out in such a way that the most important resources and problem areas will be reached. The transect walk may turn out to be a major exercise and thus should be planned properly in advance.

Output

The output of a transect walk is a detailed record of all the observations made including resources, their state, problems and opportunities.

Farm Sketches

What?

Farm sketches, which are simple maps of typical farm holding, in the area, are drawn during the transect walk. They provide an insight into the farming systems predominant in the area. This provides an understanding of resource availability and utilization at household level. Sketch maps also provide further information on problems and opportunities at a family level.

How?

During the transect, the PRA team should visit a 'typical' farm and together with the farmer sketch that particular farm indicating: -

- Homestead and the resources available at the homestead
- Cropped areas and the crops normally grown on each section of the farm
- Livestock grazing areas
- Environmental conservation practices

Through discussion with the farmer, information on various practices and resource use methods is gathered and recorded.

Output

The output is simple map with accompanying information on all the above aspects.

Data Sythensis and Analysis

Data sythensis and analysis is done after the data collection using the other PRA tools is completed. This involves the community and the outsiders (change agents) scrutinizing the information collected and re-arranging it so it clear inter-relations come out. The aim of doing this is to enable the community and the outsider to prepare a plan of action that will be used to change any undesirable situations. In many PRA's this involves extracting the problems identified using various tools, their causes, effects and possible ways of acting to solve them (opportunities).

Output

The output of data sythensis is a systematic record of the community's problems, their causes, their effects and potential ways of acting (opportunities) to reduce those problems. It also identifies which problems are core (root) and which problems are not real but are in fact effects of other things.

Example of data sythensis and analysis output

Water problem analysis for Kimara area

Problem	Causes	Coping Strategies	Opportunities
Shortage of clean drinking water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long distance to existing water points (Lumi river and Lumi Water Project) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use of alternative sources such as drainage's and canals. · Sinking shallow wells (individual and community). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Extension of existing Lumi Water Project to cover villages now uncovered. These are Marodo, Ngutini and Lambo/Marighasa
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor management of existing water points (no committees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use of the well managed points – especially in schools and those of groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Water points already existing and needing only election of committees to be trained for better management.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unavaila bility of spare parts for hand pumps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Direct extraction from the wells by use of containers. · Use of alternative sources of water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Spares to be obtained elsewhere to repair pumps in non-saline wells. · Community is willing to finance the cost.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pollution in uncovered shallow wells. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use of alternative sources of water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Community mobilization and training on resource use and management.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salinity in well water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use of alternative sources of water. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · None
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High incidences of water borne diseases from Lumi river, canals and shallow wells e.g. bilharzia, typhoid, dysentery, cholera, amoeba. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Go to the hospital when they fall sick. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Community sensitization and training on boiling and filtration of water.

Mapping opportunities

The opportunities for development can now be determined based on the data analysis in the previous table. For example the same village mapped its opportunities for development of water resources as summarised below:

Potential for development of water resources in Kimara area

Structure	Potential for development
Lumi Water Project	1. Extend the existing pipeline from Kitoghoto to Ngutini, Marodo (a distance of approx. 3 km).
	· Extend pipeline from kimorigho to Lambo/Marigasa (a distance of approx. 2 km).
	· Construction of one kiosk in each village (a total of 4) and establish/train management committees.
	Revival of the non-operating water kiosks through mobilisation of the community and election of water management committees and their training.
Shallow wells	1. Obtain spares to repair hand pumps in non-saline wells.
	· Establish management committees through community mobilisation.
	· Registration of water user groups as associations.
All structures	· Training and sensitisation on water hygiene.

Prioritization

Once the data is synthesized and analyzed the problem and opportunities are prioritized according to the community's perception. This is easily achieved through matrix ranking and scoring. In some cases, PRA practitioners have found it important to do the prioritization in several stages. For example it is possible to separate men and women to do the prioritization separately thus generating vital gender related information. The two ranking can then be combined to form one 'community' ranking. Note: It might be important to represent the problems using letters as these reduces congestion in the matrix as in the example below: -

Example of problem Ranking for Kimala area

Problem	A	B	C	D	E	L	M	SCORE	RANK
A. Shortage of clean drinking water		A	A	A	A	A	A	6	1
B. Poor storage of farm produce			C	B	B	L	M	2	3
C. High incidences of livestock disease				C	C	L	M	3	2
D. Environmental degradation					E	L	M	0	5
E. Poor livestock markets							M	1	4

The same process is repeated for the opportunities identified. This will now form the basis of making an acceptable plan of action for solving the identified problems. The plan of action is called the CAP and is discussed in the next section.

Opportunity Ranking For Kimara Area for water

Opportunity	A	B	C	SCORE	RANK
A. Extension of Lumi water project		A	A	2	1
B. Development of shallow wells			C	0	3
C. Additional water Kiosks				1	2

This ranking indicates that the community's highest priority to reduce water problems is through the extension of the existing pipeline to cover new areas. The information can now be put in the community development plan and be used to solicit funding from government or other organizations. Sharing with stakeholders will be the next step.