

# **APPLICATION OF THE PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL (PRA) METHOD**

## **I PRA METHOD**

PRA stands for Participatory Rural Appraisal. Literally translated, PRA means to participatively understand a village/kelurahan. According to the terms PRA represents a group of approaches and methods that will encourage the community of a village to actively participate in raising and analyzing their knowledge of their life conditions in order to create the correct action plan. This means that by implementing PRA the community is facilitated by an outside party—such as researchers, donor or officials—to analyze their life conditions that consists of existing potentials and problems in their village/kelurahan. They are facilitated to develop a program based on those existing potentials—and also the potentials available outside of their village/kelurahan that are possible to be used by the village community—to solve the problems of that community.

The formulation of the PRA Method has a background of the long experience from an expert in, Robert Chambers (1983), in the field of community development working in various developing countries. Based on his experience, the community, especially the marginal class, such as the women, farmers, and children, must be involved in every development process. We must listen to their opinions, complaints, life experiences, hopes and their analysis ability, before we can facilitate

them to enable them to create a plan. They are not merely the object of development, we must also help to position them to be development actors.

According to Conyers (1984), positioning a community as the development actor is important because of three reasons. The *first reason* is: the community is the source for information on the conditions, needs and attitude of the local community. Without them development programs and projects will fail because of innaccuracy. The *second reason* is: the community will trust a development project or program if they know the twist and turns of it. The *third reason* is that it is the right of the community to be involved in the community development that targets themselves.

## **II DEVELOPMENT OF PREVIOUS METHODS**

The PRA is not purely a new method, but is an adoption and development of various other methods/approaches that were developed before it, such as:

### *1. Andragogy of Education*

A well-known expert in education from Brazil, Paulo Freire (1971), gave plenty of critics on the education system that was not participative and did not empower the students. He criticized the conventional education and counseling ways—by referring to it as domestication—as a form of imperialism in the education system. This philosophy of participative education in the system of education and counseling is adopted by the PRA method.

### *2. The Field of Research and Science*

According to Robert Chambers (1992) there are five main trends that decorate the principle method of PRA:

- a) **Participatory Action Research**, born from the suggestion of Paulo Freire, stating that the poor can and have the possibility to analyze their own facts and conditions. Recognition of the ability of the village community in analyzing their problems is adopted into PRA;
- b) **Agro-ecosystem Analysis**, is a combination between system analysis with ownership system by analyzing space, time and the cause-effect relation, relative values and decision making. The methods that were adopted into PRA from this method ini is the *transek* technique (locational trace), mapping, seasonal calendar, Venn diagram (inter-party relations) and ranking matrix;
- c) **Applied Anthropology**, created as an effect of the critics to the science of pure anthropology that emphasize more on the comprehension of the community. Applied Anthropology is intended to judge the ability and validity of village community knowledge and to differ between the soul-frame of the outsider with the insider. What PRA adopts from applied anthropology is that studying outside in the fields is a flexible are and not a science that is rigid, the difference between *emic* (community norms) and *ethic* (scientific norms), the validity of indigenous technical knowledge of the village community;
- d) **Field Research on Farming System**, the focus of attention is in field research participation, because the farmers as the main actors in agriculture are very experienced people that have their own ways to maintain the live of their agricultural system. This method contributes to PRA its yard/garden sketching technique;
- e) **Rapid Rural Appraisal/RRA**, developed because of a number of reasons. **The first** being the increase of disappointment against anti-poverty bias as

the result of "village development tourism". The bias referred to are: *spatial bias* (people only come to visit villages that are still close to the city, the main roads and village center, and ignore the borderline villages); *project bias* (only provide attention and support for villages that are in a project's area); *personnel bias* (favors men better than women, the elite than the poor, the service users than the non-users, etc.); *seasonal bias* (preference to visit the villages during the dry season or during harvest time compared to the wet season or time of famine); *diplomatic bias* (people from the outside do not wish to meet poor people or see appalling conditions that can touch their hearts). All those biases can combine to conceal the worst poverty of all. ***The second*** reason is the disappointment of conventional survey methods. For years and in many places, experience has shown that surveys using questionnaire tend to be over-rated, boring and confusing. The data received are often inaccurate. It also takes a long time to report, is boring and difficult to use, which in the end is often abandoned. ***The third*** reason is there has been efforts to find a new and better method that is more effective, by empowering the indigenous technical knowledge of the village community as a source of information to analyze and use for the experts from outside.

### **III FROM RRA TO PRA**

The Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) approach is the largest contributor, for both principle and techniques developed by the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA is one of the models of RRA that is more participative. Discussions in the Internasional

Kohn Kaen Conference in 1985 produced a RRA typology, one of which is participatory RRA.

In 1988, participatory RRA was listed as one of the four methodology groups of RRA by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) Team. The other three were exploratory RRA, topical RRA and monitoring RRA.

In September 1988, the National Environment Secretariat in cooperation with the Clark University implemented RRA in Mbusanyi, a community in the district of Machakos, Kenya. In that program RRA was adopted in the management plan for, and was established as PRA. In India, between September and October 1988, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) was interested to develop Participatory RRA, by inviting IIED to assist, Jennifer Mc Cracken provided consultation for four weeks with the AKRSP in Gujarat, where the Participatory RRA was implemented.

After that there was a boom of innovations, especially in India, not only in both governmental and non-governmental organizations. In the beginning of 1992, Action Aid, AKRSP and MYRADA were hosts for the International Roving PRA Workshop in India, which were attended by 14 people from 11 southern countries. After that workshop PRA developed in many countries, including Indonesia.

In Indonesia PRA has started to be developed by a number of non-government and government organizations. A number of LSM had applied PRA in developing the village communities (especially) in the East Indonesia Region. Many government projects such as the River Network Management, IDT and Village Community Participative Development Planning (P3MD) also applied the PRA method.

## **IV BASIC PRINCIPLES OF PRA**

Based on the methods/approaches discussed in the previous section, we can conclude that PRA emphasize on the process of more participative study (instead of exploratory). The focus on more participative process is the paradigm of PRA. This paradigm will become obvious by understanding the following basic principles of PRA. There are at least 11 basic principles that must be referred to in the implementation of PRA, they are:

1. *Learn from the community.* The most fundamental principle in PRA is the idea that PRA is from, by and for the community. This means that PRA is built on the recognition and belief of the norms, relevance of the traditional community knowledge and the community's ability to solve their own problems. This principle is the reversal of the conventional method that 'teaches' the community.
2. *Outsiders (researchers, experts and officials) are facilitator, insiders (the community) are actors.* As the consequence of the first principle is that the outsiders need to realize that their roles are only as 'facilitators' and not 'actors, teachers, counselors or researchers'. This require modesty, the will to learn from the community and positioning the community members as the main source in understanding the conditions of the community. In the application of PRA, the community dominates the activities.
3. *Inter-learning and inter-sharing experiences with each other.* Even though there is recognition of the traditional experience and knowledge of the community, this does not mean that the community is always right and shall be left unchanged.

Likewise, 'modern' knowledge introduced by outsiders is not always able to solve their problems. Thus, both the experience and knowledge of the community, and the experience and knowledge of the outsiders, complement each other and are of equal importance. The Process of PRA is a dialog forum between the two systems of knowledge to yield something better.

4. *Relaxing and Informal.* The PRA activity should be conducted in a flexible atmosphere, without pressure, open, and informal. This relaxed situation will promote friendship, where the outsiders will merge as a member of a discussion group, not as a stranger.
5. *Involvement of all the community groups.* One mistake that is often made is the view that the leaders, community or group personage in the community can represent the whole community. This mistake will produce programs that will only satisfy the interests of certain groups only and will never be supported by the community in general. Thus, in order to prevent bias and gain support from the vast community, the PRA activity must involve every class, men and women, young and old, and rich, moderate to poor people, and representing many villages.
6. *Respect differences.* Because the participants of PRA come from a diverse community (various classes or types), many opinions or arguments shall arise. That is why it is important to promote respect between participants. The core of the activity is to try a variety of information and not give the average output.

Variation of information and problems will be organized and arranged by the community as the owner.

7. *Triangulation.* In order to get information that is reliable, we can use triangulation method, which is a form of check and recheck. Triangulation can be done by: (a) *utilizing a variety and combination of PRA techniques.* Each PRA techniques has their advantages dan disadvantages. Not all the information needed can be attained, discussed and used with one or two techniques. One PRA technique will complement another. (b) *Identify the various types and sources of information.* The validity of each information must be carefully studied with other sources and techniques. For example, the official statistic report on the area of various types of landuse in the village must be cross-checked with the village map made by the community. Problems suggested by village government officials and community personage, can be cross-checked with statements from the community during the discussion. Different views from team members with different education background will provide a more complete picture of the information and also provide deeper examination from various aspects.
8. *Optimizing the results.* The implementation of PRA activity will require time and energy from the source persons, exceptional implementation and the participation of community members, which will require funding. In order to effecively use the fund, the PRA activity should optimize its activities by focusing on things that are most important with a conclusion that is close to being correct completely, although never completely correct.

9. *Learn from mistakes.* Committing mistakes, often considered abnormal, is considered normal in PRA. The important thing is not the perfection in the implementation, which would be difficult to achieve, but the **best application** according to the capacity, and then to learn from the mistakes, to improve future activities.
10. *Practical orientation.* PRA orients to solving problems and program developing. This requires relevant (logically related to the program) and sufficient information. What it needs is optimum knowledge, not every information has to be collected and studied. The principle is, the right approximation will be better than an exact but wrong conclusion, or it is better to achieve an approximation that is almost wrong than almost right. The almost-right conclusion is almost a mistake. On the contrary, the almost-wrong conclusion approaches the correct one, in other words is mostly correct than wrong.
11. *Continuous.* PRA Activities are not 'activities packet' that is completed after the information gathered is considered sufficient. Community interests and problems are ever changing and shifting with time. PRA must therefore be completely comprehended by institutions and field executives.

## **GENERAL PROCESS OF PRA IMPLEMENTATION**

There are three main stages in implementing PRA, namely:

### **1. PREPARATION**

The preparation activities cover the following:

- a. *Training*, Training, implemented if the executive institution does not yet have experienced staff in implementing PRA. It would be preferable if the training involves community members of the village that will undergo PRA. This will improve the convenience and accelerate familiarization of the PRA team with the people during the implementation.
- b. *Establishing the PRA Team*, participants that had been trained are grouped in a PRA team consisting of people with various education background and experience, men and women, from various levels of social-economy, not only from the program-planning-organization, but also representatives of the insiders (from the community). This team will unite their perception in order to maintain unity of the team. This team will also have distributed works: some will become moderators, process observer, participant observer, documenter and translator. If the scope of the PRA activities is quite large, a PRA sub-team may be formed from the existing PRA team.
- c. *Determine the objective of the PRA*, the established team determines the objective of implementing PRA, whether it is a specific objective such as to identify the community needs, as a monitoring program, and evaluation program; or for strategic objective that is to apply the principles of PRA in everyday work by the field officers continuously with mission to educate and empower the people.
- d. *Establishing the PRA Activity Design*, after the objectives had been determined, the team continue by formulating the general plan of PRA implementation consisting of the formulation of “activity designs” consisting of determining

information needs, selecting and arranging the PRA techniques in order, determining the source of information, and creating a temporary schedule.

e. *Preliminary Visit*, after the creation of the PRA Activity Design, the PRA team made a preliminary visit to get permission to hold the activity, get acquainted with the people, explain the objectives, identifying the participants and collecting secondary data. The preliminary visit was held long before the implementation of PRA activities. During this preliminary visit the team also studied the secondary data. It would be even better if the secondary date were discussed with the community. These data are intended to create an early description of the implicated village. The data sources may be written documents from the village organizations, statistical data, village map, records from monitoring programs from other institutions and so on. Beside studying the secondary data, the team should also observe community members to determine the people that may help by becoming supporting committee that will help in organizing the consumption and accommodation, determining the time and venue, prepare the equipments and the materials, and so on.

## **2. IMPLEMENTATION OF PRA**

After all the PRA preparation activities have been completed, the team made a field trip to start the PRA activities. The activities conducted during the trip are:

a. *Discussion of the objective, target and process of PRA*. This activity will commence with the rediscussion of the objectives, purposes, targets, and process of implementing the PRA techniques.

- b. *Information gathering discussion*, after the community understands, discussions are held to gather information. All the Information that will be recorded are certain/specific topics. Those topics are described, studied, analyzed, and concluded especially concerning the problems and potentials. If in the implementation the PRA team was divided into a number of sub-teams, there must be time to share/exchange the findings of each sub-team and formulate the subsequent plan for discussion.
- c. *Recording the discussion results*, the results of the PRA activities are documented by recording in detail all the oppinions from the people, not only on the related topic but also others that are considered important.
- d. *Presenting the discussion results*, the PRA results are exposed in a summary and then presented to the village to be discussed with the people.
- e. *Formulating the Program Plan*, all the existing problems are arranged based on their priorities and then the potentials are cataloged—both from in and outside of the village such as the possibility of a donor—that could be considered in developing the program alternative. The programs that were developed are expected to be able to solve the problems previously listed.

### **3. FOLLOW-UP ACTIONS**

The program plans that were made collectively with the community will be implemented. The PRA Facilitating Team returns to the field to assist the community and facilitate the implementation of those programs.

# PRA TECHNIQUES

PRA techniques are tools to condition the village/kelurahan/RW. These are *visual* (illustration or shapes that can be visually observed) techniques used as a media for community discussion on the conditions of themselves and their environment. These *visual* tools are collective ***learning media*** that can be used for the illiterate (farmers) or literate people. The PRA techniques are:

## A. Mapping

### 1. ***Definition***

Mapping is the making of maps for the village that depicts the conditions of the village area and its environment. By collectively making the map for their area, the community will further recognize their village conditions, area boundaries, forest areas, gardens, settlement areas, etc.

### 2. ***Objectives***

- a. To recognize the conditions of the village/kelurahan and its community through the map produced collectively by the community itself.
- b. As a means to further recognize the conditions of their area completely including the pattern of exploitation of the natural resources, relationship between various things and conditions existing in the area, and the various existing problems and potentials.

### **3. Types of information that can be collected**

- a. The making of the general area map to show the general conditions of the village and its environment, regarding natural resources and existing facilities & infrastructures in the village, the physical condition of the village environment such as the topography (land slope, farming fields, etc), the area and arrangement of gardens/farms, spread of residential areas, forest areas, critical land, water springs, rivers or water canals, markets, schools, Posyandu, Puskesmas, highway, and so on.
- b. The making of special (topical) maps to gather certain specific aspects in an area of agriculture, forestry, farm, houses, and so on
- c. The making of specific (sub-topical) maps to gather more specific information such as mapping to observe distribution of rice pests, classification of the community in a certain area, spread of a certain disease, distribution of small markets ('warung') etc.

### **4. Source of information**

- a. The community with direct relation with the purpose of mapping
- b. For mapping activity intended to gather general information: community members from various levels, young and old, men and women, rich and poor, land-owner or common people, and so on.
- c. For more specific information gathering, focus on discussion participants that are in fact able to provide the information.
- d. Other sources that may help such as secondary data from various maps or existing aerial photographs.



## **B. TRANSEK (LOCATION TRACE)**

### **1. *Definition***

Transek is intended to gather information via direct observation to the fields by walking through the village area following a pre-planned path. The result of such observation is presented in a table or a sliced figure of the earth surface (transek).

### **2. *Objectives***

- a. To gather more detailed informations on the problems and potentials of an area
- b. To complement other informations from the mapping activity
- c. Gather informations on a specific topic, such as the condition of critical land, vegetation conditions, management of resources, the agricultural system, conservation techniques already implemented by the community, the names of plant diseases, and so on

### **3. *Types of information that can be collected***

The types of informations that can be gathered will correspond with the objectives of the information observation/collection. In general the informations that can be collected through this activity are:

- a. *Physical conditions of the village environment*, such as: land slope, type of soil and the fertility rate, water springs, land use and so on
- b. *Agricultural pattern*, such as: important plant species, soil productivity level, agricultural behavior of the farmers, and so on.
- c. *Technologies (methods) already applied by the local community*, such as weathering prevention from rocks, wood, living plants, farming system, grass plantation, water restraint, weathering control, etc.

- d. Information on existing potentials and problems of the area
- e. Social and cultural information, such as the habits, healthm religion, economy, and so on

#### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. Anything directly observed during the trace
- b. Members of the local community included in the transek team and those that were encountered along the way of the trace.

### **C. GARDEN SKETCH**

#### **1. *Definition***

Sketching is intended to gather information through the sketch of garden conditions at certain locations and covering various aspects of land usage activities, plant varieties and cropping pattern. This technique can encourage discussion between farmers to analyze the flood conditions to assist in developing a plan for garden management.

#### **2. *Objectives***

- a. To get a better picture (more detailed) on the condition of the flood based on physical and non-physical informations on land conditions and usage, which were observed during the activity in the location
- b. To gather information on various aspects of the flood location in an area. For example the various aspects of a flat area can be compared to those of a sloped area
- c. As a means to share knowledge and experience between one community with another and between community and the experts from the 'outside'

### **3. *Types of information that can be collected***

- a. *Physical informations*, such as: cropping pattern, area of land, variety of plants, conservation efforts, land allocation for rice and palawija
- b. Non-physical information such as informations on the income from farms, counseling and fertilization required, future plans to exploit the land by its owner, traditional agriculture methods/technologies and the community expectations to manage a garden

### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. Farmers whose garden will be sketched
- b. Other farmers (not owner of sketched gardens)

## **D. HISTORY PLOT**

### **1. *Definition***

History plot is designed to reveal the history of the community in a certain location by reexposing important events that occurred in the past. Those occurrences can be studied and considered in devising future programs.

### **2. *Benefits***

- a. To identify and know the important topics in the community in the past
- b. To understand the condition of the community in the present by acknowledging their history
- c. Take lessons from past occurrences

### **3. *Types of Information that can be collected***

- a. History on the establishment of the residential area
- b. Availability and management of natural resources

- c. Development of village facilities and infrastructures
- d. Change in ownership status, land ownership and usage
- e. Past projects and their success rate
- f. Other topics relevant to the requirement of the program/objective of the application of PRA

#### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. Old members of the community, community personages such as tradition leaders, ulama (religious leaders), ajengan or other community members
- b. Folk stories, fables, songs, and rhymes
- c. Secondary data such as books, reports and village archives

## **E. SEASONAL CALENDAR**

#### **1. *Definition***

Seasonal Calendar is used to gather information on the condition and problem that repeats in a certain period of time. This technique is useful to identify and study community life pattern, time utilization pattern, activities, problems and repetitious occurrences within a certain period of time, and identifying the focus of the community activities

#### **2. *Objectives***

- a. To learn of the time utilization within a certain period (one year)
- b. To understand the condition of the village/kelurahan and find the focus of the community activities in a year

#### **3. *Types of Information that can be collected***

- a. Precipitation, water availability

- b. Crop pattern, level of production
- c. Availability of food
- d. Problems relating to pest and pet/plant diseases
- e. Workforce availability
- f. Other informations relevant to the program

#### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. The local people, farmers, women, old people and so on, representing different places with different regional conditions
- b. Related institutions (BPP, Puskesmas, etc.)

### **F. DAILY ROUTINES**

#### **1. *Description***

Discussion between the community on time utilization for each day for various groups of the community (rich, moderate, poor)

#### **2. *Objectives***

The profile of time utilization must be able to identify:

- a. Who does what, the work distribution in each house;
- b. When the job should be done and how long will it take;
- c. The difference in work load between various groups (rich, moderate, poor),  
and;
- d. Use of spare time in the community (for developing counseling activity).

#### **3. *Types of information that can be collected***

- a. Daily activities of the community
- b. Time of execution
- c. Work distribution in a family of each community group

#### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. The people in general, from various social-economy levels
- b. Community personage



## **G. OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS**

### **1. *Definition***

Analysis of the occupation is a PRA activity consisting of discussion activities to recognize and analyze the conditions of the community life from the aspect of their occupation. Using this technique we can determine the types of occupations, work distribution, level of income and expenses of the community and the role of the men and women in the occupation sector. Those informations can provide a description of the problems and needs of a community and the existing potentials and opportunities—which are important feedback for developing the next program.

### **2. *Objectives***

- a. To identify the types of occupation in the community
- b. To identify the potentials and problems from several community occupations
- c. As a means to reflect for the community of the previous efforts
- d. To determine what type of activity is feasible to be developed in the future

### **3. *Types of information that can be collected***

- a. Occupations in the agriculture field such as dry crop plantation, farming, rice fields, garden and fishery
- b. Non-agricultural occupation such as food industry, hand crafts, sewing, and so on
- c. Occupation in the field of services such as rice field labor, barber, transportation and so on

### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. Community members, especially the people with related occupations
- b. Secondary data from the village office and other institutions



## **H. THE VENN DIAGRAM**

### ***1. Definition***

The Venn Diagram is used to study the relation between institutions, whether between the community and the institutions or with other certain parties that influence the life of the community. The result of this information gathering will show how big is the influence and closeness of the relation of a certain institution with the community and the influence of benefits and roles of various organizations in the village (local or central government org.), based on the view and judgement of the community itself

### ***2. Objectives***

- a. To learn more of the existence, benefit and role of various organizations in the village, local, central-governmental or even non-governmental organizations
- b. Study the interaction between those organizations and create a diagram that shows how big is the influence and closeness of the relation between the organization with the community

### ***3. Types of information that can be collected***

- a. Information on various organizations already recognized by the community
- b. Information on the roles of those organizations to the community

### ***4. Sources of information***

- a. The people, especially those with experience, that have had relation to those organizations/institutions
- b. Secondary data (for instance, from the village office)

## **I. MATRIX RANKING**

### **1. *Definition***

Creating a ranking matrix is to analyze a number of topics that were already identified. The objective is to find the priority between problems and select the most feasible alternative solution suitable with the local conditions. This technique can encourage and promote the intellectual capacity of the community in order to select their solutions and gather definitions of them.

### **2. *Types of information that can be collected***

Perception, assessments, considerations or criterias believed to be important by the community.

### **3. *Sources of information***

- a. Data from the implementation of previous PRA techniques
- b. Other external data. These data class need to be reexamined with the people

## **J. ORGANIZING THE PROBLEMS AND POTENTIALS**

### **1. *Definition***

This is one of the stages in PRA that organize various problems that occurred previously identified by other techniques. These problems are arranged and organized based on the priority of their resolution. With a clear problems priority, future activity planning will be more directed

### **2. *Objectives***

- a. Arrange all the information (problems and potentials) into one efficient arrangement
- b. Gather cause-effect relations between various problems
- c. Determine the priority problems that need to be resolved first

d. As a means to raise community awareness of the problems they face

### **3. *Types of information that can be collected***

Organization of problems and potentials with emphasis on the process of existing-information gathering from previous PRA techniques.

### **4. *Sources of information***

- a. Information collected previously by the PRA team
- b. Community personages, field officials, other village community members (if any)

## **K. FORMULATION OF THE ACTION PLAN**

### **1. *Definition***

This activity is the effort to devise a concrete action that will be implemented within a certain period of time, if possible in the group level, RT or dusun. The action plan is used in the consideration process of the program planning and donor organizations to determine the assistance in various aspects of development, based on priorities determined by the community.

### **2. *Objectives***

- a. To produce a concrete and clear action plan as a guidance for follow up actions that can in fact be implemented
- b. To summarize the results of analysis and identification of alternative solutions to the problems, based on the available resources (potential)

### **3. *Types of information that can be collected***

The organization of problems and potentials, emphasizing in the process of examination of all existing information from the previous implementation of PRA techniques

#### **4. Sources of information**

- a. Previous information collected by the PRA team
- b. Community personages, field officials, other village community members (if any)

## **V REFERENCES**

Driyamedia. 1996. "Act Together Participate Equally". Application Reference for Participatory Rural Appraisal, for the Nusa Tenggara Plateau Development Consortium. Driya Media Studio, Bandung.

The Institution for Prosperous Village Development (LBDS). 1996. PRA Training Module for Field Personnel at the Subdistrict Level and Community Personage. Conservation and Management Project of Upstream Cimanuk River Network. The Institution for Prosperous Village Development, Garut.