

PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL

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In the era of development, we have to adopt new thinking, new technologies of mankind. We have to adopt ourselves to the changing scenario for the betterment and equip ourselves with the necessary tools to combat our problems. We often face problems and seek advice from our elders and from experienced persons. With the help of others the best suggestion is selected and we put it to practice. Thus with the participation of our well wishers, we often reach success easily.

The use of participatory approaches has recently opened a new chapter in the era of rural development. It is considered much more effective than individual analysis. In today's world we must realize that local people have a far greater capacity to conduct their own analysis and evaluate their own problems and priorities according to the demand of the situation. In India the use of participatory approaches has been use since ancient times. Elderly people of-ten discussed their problems among themselves by calling a meeting under a tree or near a religions institution. Ram had to leave Sita due to people's verdict. These incidents reveal that group discussion even affected personal matters. The beating of drum of tribals often used during religious, social occasions, marriage etc. It was mandatory for every person to join the occasion if they heard drums.

We are continuously learning form our ancient culture and heritage. We have to sharpen our skills and thoughts and apply the same thinking but with a modern touch for effective use of the methods. In 1979, the conference on "Agrarian Reform and Rural Development" acknowledged the importance of people's participation in the village development work. Small Farmers Development Programme (SEDP) in Nepal was implemented where local groups were formed, group promoters support to the local groups by providing a number of inputs.

Development of PRA : Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) evolved in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was one of the precursors of PRA. In fact the awarness of the value of local knowledge had become very evident. The need of timely information and insights were required as decades of development work did not solve problems. In accurate, costly questionnaire surveys did not recognize the importance of involvement of local people and under estimated the capacity of local communities.

The failure of these processes compelled experts to develop a method, which could bring forward the real picture. Experts realized very soon that local people and their knowledge was the basis of the solution. At the end of the 1980s, PRA began to evolve as a method in favour of practical research and planning approaches that could support decentralized planning and that used democracy as a tool for decision making, value social diversity, work towards sustainability and enhance community participation and empowerment. PRA provided, the power that enabled local people to share their knowledge, thoughts, skills etc. Local people had a voice of their own that had the capacity to frame their own action plan for the developmental aspect of their rural areas. These brought about a change in rural development approaches. Rural people took their own responsibilities to shape the future of their area, PRA drew

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marginalized people into better planning processes. The real utilization of these method was made by NGOs and some other innovative government agencies. Their interaction with villagers encouraged improvisations, adaptations and inventions.

Definition : Participatory Rural Appraisal is a methodology that enhances the development agents understanding of the rural reality in planning and development of projects and a greater degree of ownership and responsibility by farmers for achieving better results and social acceptance of the programme.

Principles of PRA :

- Offsetting biases—Projects, courtesy, seasonal, professional, spatial, person (gender elite)
- Rapid progressive learning—exploratory, flexible, interactive, inventive.
- Reversal of roles—learning from by with local people and appreciating their knowledge, eliciting and using their criteria and categories.
- Triangulation—using different sources, disciplines and methods and different informants, cross checking to reach closer to the truth.
- Facilitation—Facilitation, skills aims to enable local people to investigate, plan, draw maps diagram, models, rank, score to own the out come. The analysis can not be taken away with out their permission.
- Sharing—Sharing information, method, food, field experiences between NGOs, Government and villagers without adhering to the concept of owning ideas and information which can be utilized for development work.
- Behaviour and attitudes—The important attitudes required are critical self awareness, listening and learning, embracing errors, not lecturing but handing over the stick to the main analysis. Building confidence that 'they can do it', inventiveness and relaxed state.
- Optimal ignorance and appropriate imprecision—Finding out that is required and not.
- Measuring when comparing is enough. Principle investigator directly learn from local people.

Seeking diversity and differences.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was actually first known as Rapid Rural

Appraisal (RRA). Owing to the inability of villagers to provide information, it was renamed as "Relaxed Rural Appraisal" This did not solve problem as the aim did not change and the process continued to be a brisk one. Then it was named as "Participatory Rural Appraisal."

The use of PRA started in Kenya during the year 1988 and it started in India during the year 1989. Robert Chamber thought that the word 'Appraisal' to be back dated and felt that it be named 'Participatory Learning' or 'Participatory Enquiry'.

Opportunities : The positive aspect of PRA whiching is note worthy is methods utilized which are visual in nature. Six Main activities like mapping and modelling; sequencing, listing, sorting and ranking: using objects to count score and estimate.

Villagers in Senegal used the combination of activities to list the characteristics of their famine, scored them for intensity. Farmers in Kenya utilized seeds to draw linkage lines to show nutrient flow from their compost pit and marked the lines accordingly to the volume and importance of each flow. These type of activity generates interest and draws attention for discussion of problems. The talent of a person can be exposed and thus it urges others to appreciate the fact and challenge their own abilities.

Benefits :

- Empowering the poor and weak :
- A group or a community is given the power to analyze conditions, assert their priorities, make demands and take necessary action. This leads to implementation of participatory programmes.
- Diversification :
- Local diversity is exploited with encouragement and enabling expression for standard programmes. In real situation the action then is often beneficial for few rather than for whole community.
- The community process :
- The process involves planning, appraisal, identification implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Every stage is done in a participatory mode. To carry out, efforts have to be made.
- Research priorities :
- A positive change has been felt as local knowledge have been accepted and the ability of farmers to carry out design based experiments have been accepted. This has initiated identification of priorities and participatory research.
- Organizational change :
- A cultural of open learning with each others and community members has been initiated in Universities, NGOs, Government staff etc. Official can learn directly enabling them to change their understanding of, and attitudes towards communities realities.
- Policy review :
- New changes in policies and adaptation of policies has been brought about due to timely and accurate insights being obtained from field based discussions and planning. These changes are taking place within organizations, and at different levels within government, locally, regionally and nationally.

LIST OF METHODS UTILIZED FOR PRA WORKS :

- Direct observation :
- This can be most effective combined with self critical awareness of personal biases that are a result of our own specialized education and back ground and trying to compensate these.
- Find review secondary data :
- They can mislead but are helpful in earlier stages, e.g. deciding how to start and where problem exist.

- Seek experts of specific fields :
- The person who solves problem or who advises people in distress. Often their existence is not realized.
- Key probes :
- Questions are asked directly enquiring about local people doing some thing which is based on some assumption. The key issues thus get focussed.
- Case studies and stories :
- Solution of a conflict, a crisis in a farm and how it is being dealt with, a household history and profile. :
- Group interview :
- They are often powerful and efficient, but relatively neglected, perhaps owing to constant focus on counting through individual questionnaire based interviews.
- Do-it-yourself :
- Roles are reversed with local people as experts and outsiders are novices. Local people share their knowledge.
- Local analysis of secondary data :
- Participatory analysis of aerial photograph to identify forest covering, soil types, land conditions, land tenure etc. also satellite imagery.
- Mapping and modelling :
- People draw maps on grounds, colour them or use sticks, seeds, powders etc. to make social map, indicating forests, water bodies etc. This method has been used with great resources and the combination of various techniques bring forth a good picture and a deeper insight to problems. Eventually linkage diagrams can be constructed from the information gathered.
- Transact :
- A key informant is taken along for a week which is systematically based. Asking, observing, listening, discussing and learning about the area approached. Seeking problems, earning about indigenous technologies, seeking solutions, opportunities and mapping resources. Transacts can be drawn or in a loop along a water course
- Timeliness and trend, change analysis.
- Major events are identified and a table is made which is called an ice breaking process before discussion sessions. People account of the past and how things have changed, local history of a crop, animal, tree, a weed etc. The causes of changes and trends often with estimation is made.
- Seasonal calendars:
- Rainfall distribution, amount of rain or soil moisture, crops, women's children and men's work both agriculture and non agriculture, labour, prices, migration, sickness, income etc. are made for better understanding of existing problems.
- Daily time analysis :
- It indicates relative amounts of time, degrees of drudgery etc activities sometimes indicating seasonal variation.

- Institutional or Venn diagramming :
- Institution and individuals are identified important for the community and their relationship.
- Linkage diagrams :
- Diagrams are made for showing the channel for marketing, nutrient flows on farms, social contact, migration, impacts on intervention and trends etc.
- Well being grouping :
- Grouping or ranking households in accordance with those considered poorest and worst off. We can obtain an entry point to understand the way people cope up with poverty.
- Matrix scoring and ranking :
- Using matrixes to compare through scoring. Varieties of a crop or animal, fields of a farm, fish, woods etc. their condition and preferences can be established.
- Team interaction :
- Contracts made for interaction with agreed norms of behaviour, mode of interaction within teams, including changing pairs, discussions, mutual criticism etc.
- Contrast comparison :
- One group analysis another group and vice versa. These analysis brings about.
- Realization of one group, the other and a misconception or misunderstanding is cleared.
- Drama and participatory video making on key issues :
- Solution are explored and together problems are analyzed. An interest is created due to more involvement of people.
- Shared presentation and analysis :
- Local people share their knowledge and present maps, models, diagrams at community meeting, analyzed, checked, corrected and discussed. Joint sessions are held with local people. The speaker is identified who dominates and express the groups view point.

LIMITATIONS :

1. The general people are under-estimated often, as they are told to supply information by symbols, indications or diagrams etc.
2. Dramatic representation may mislead people from the central theme of the subject.
3. The "chapati" diagram etc are very childish, villagers are not so childish at question answer session.
4. In writing a PRA report often different components are absent.
5. The information collected by participatory method is often used by outsiders for village development planning which is useless.
6. In reality lower class people are out of the process even though rural appraisal process requires participation from all classes of people irrespective of caste, creed or religion.
7. The higher class always dominates over others and influence documentation.
8. Sometimes details of a plan require knowledge on a subject. These are not familiar to villagers and so the technical aspect is often full of unscientific thinking.

