

## **Policy measures, limitations and opportunities of PRA**

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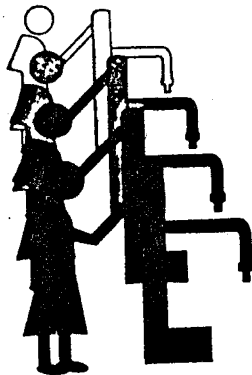


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## Learning Material



### Policy Measures, Limitations and Opportunities of PRA

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Book : Participatory Rural Appraisal Methodology and  
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perception of poverty and well-being in selected Indian villages clearly demonstrate that such tools can unfold villagers' perceptions in capturing the different dimensions of poverty and well-being and grouping of households on that basis. As a policy-tool, PRA can be effective in generating indicators of well-being and also in facilitating community participation for designing and implementation of suitable programmes for improvement of rural quality of life.

#### 4.2 Limitations of PRA as a Methodology

In this section, we discuss some of the weaknesses of PRA and the limitations posed to the use of PRA as a methodology. No methodology is all-perfect and PRA is no exception to this general rule. PRA, like other methodologies, has its own share of imperfections. The relevant issue in this context is first, what kind and how big are the imperfections and second, can they be overcome or minimised? Much depends on what the imperfections are and whether there are ways to bring the imperfections within reasonable limits in order to have better results from rural participation.

Each PRA exercise is unique in its own way. In each case, it starts in its own manner and proceeds in its own style based on the principles of PRA and there can be no 'blue-print' recommended for a PRA session. The amount of learning which takes place in a PRA exercise and the data generated can vary from situation to situation.

##### 4.2.1 *Changing Attitudes*

The problem starts from changing of attitudes towards rural people in order to be willing to learn from them and to appreciate the importance of their participation in decision-making. This, however, is not easily done. In many cases, attitudinal changes about rural people and their capabilities can be brought about through training and observing PRA sessions in field-oriented situations. Bringing about attitudinal changes for large bureaucracies is a mammoth task and requires training of numerous functionaries in government and non-government organisations. This itself is time-consuming and resource-intensive.

##### 4.2.2 *'Rapidity' and Cultural Dimensions*

Some anthropologists tend to believe that semi-structured interviews

are one-off attempts to capture 'real' life worlds at the local levels which need not be realistic. They hold the view that there are no short-cut ways for learning about a given culture. According to them an understanding of rural realities is time-consuming and involves learning of local language, culture and gradually making ones physical presence unobtrusive. Learning a culture – its subtleties, sensitivity and other details are against rapidity. At best, rapid appraisals can be polite conversations (Pottier:1991).

Only long-term fieldwork can make an anthropologist competent for assessing the circumstances under which interviews can take place. Long term residence and language familiarity can check the danger of significant bias creeping into interviews. To gain from an interview, a researcher must understand the participants' modes of thought, their socially constructed values, their attitudes towards interviews, their ways of manipulating interviews and others. Insights into all such areas can be gained only from long-term fieldwork (Pottier:1991).

In this context, it is worth arguing that to be realistic, there is a need for a method which is able to generate relevant data in comparatively less time than long-term anthropological studies and is also relatively quicker than sample surveys. And it is here that PRA fits well with such a requirement.

##### 4.2.3 *'Rapidity' and Reality*

This is a criticism associated with the feature of rapid data collection of methods like PRA. Some doubts have been raised whether methods involving 'rapid appraisal' are appropriate for understanding contemporary social change. Some have expressed concern that the practice of rapid appraisal can become popular because of its rapid results and can be frequently used so as to go out of control (Pottier: 1991).

It is thought that PRA can help in quick access to indigenous world (e.g., technical knowledge, rural perceptions, decision-making). The basic idea is that "the data are out there to be collected, objectively and quickly" (Pottier:1991) and this can be done by asking rural people and using some common sense. The presumption of PRA is that friendly interaction can bring out rural people's knowledge and perceptions. However, critics are of the opinion that the scope for discrepancy between response of informants and what they actually do or think may be quite different and this cannot be

comprehended by outsiders without entering into a discourse of a given culture, not rapid but a slow and painful approach (Pottier:1991).

There is some truth in the above argument but the context in which PRA is being emphasised is quite different. The 'rapid' feature of PRA needs to be appreciated in comparison to a method like that of a survey questionnaire which is an accepted method for official data collection. It is in this context, that the relatively 'quick' and participatory nature of PRA would yield better quality of information which is cost-effective as well. Sessions of PRA can extend over several days depending on the topic concerned and the emphasis in PRA is more on 'participation' rather than on 'rapidity'.

#### *4.2.4 Relevance of Visual Methods*

It is said that visual representations which are integral to PRA can be alien to many societies and hence the responses, comments and interpretations of the representations may not be the same which the researchers think they are getting. Apart from this issue it has been argued by a group of 'slow researchers and practitioners' in U.K. that some methods of PRA are of not of any practical use. For instance, the method of venn diagramming is not of any use to villagers since it is a descriptive way to show interactions or lack of the same between institutions/individuals. It does not help in analysing how institutional problems can be resolved.

In answer to the points raised above, it may be said that visual representations make points simple to understand and provide a tangible base for discussion. The PRA team members can take care of the discrepancies in rural perceptions and their interpretations through relevant discussions, use of different methods and other sources of rural knowledge. As for venn diagrams the presentations of interactions and relationships of individuals/institutions are themselves important in understanding of rural realities. They project the state of the relationships and unless one knows such a state one is unable to learn further in this direction. Analysis of such relationships and bringing about changes in them constitute separate issues.

#### *4.2.5 Not Always Easy to Conduct*

There are many variables influencing a participatory process and attempts at conducting a PRA need not result in having an effective

PRA session. Sometimes a PRA may not even happen or it may take unduly long to happen. It may not be possible to initiate a PRA exercise for reasons more than one. One reason of such a situation may be due to problems in the behaviour of outsiders while another reason may be that the people are not willing to participate for lack of time or some other factor. On many occasions, they may not wish to participate and share their perceptions. In such cases, one need not be unnecessarily pessimistic and should not give up easily. On such occasions, it is important to remember that there can be different experiences and large variations in attempts at initiating villagers to PRA. There are no clear-cut ways which can help in ensuring participation. Each PRA exercise is a process of learning for the 'outsider'. We have shown earlier, with an illustration in chapter 1, that even with friendly behaviour the villagers can feel withdrawn and inhibited. The poor villagers tend to be elusive which makes a PRA exercise all the more challenging.

#### *4.2.6 People's Expectations*

A PRA can be conducted in such a manner that it raises expectations of positive things to happen. If expectations are unnecessarily raised and not followed up in due course the situation can turn to be problematic. Hence, it is essential, that at all times, the objective of a PRA exercise should be explained to the rural people and on that basis their voluntary participation can be solicited. For instance, if a PRA exercise is for the sake of training of outsiders or for the purpose of research then the same is to be explained to the rural community, whose participation is being sought.

Development agencies, conducting PRA, should exercise caution in not raising expectations which they would find difficult to fulfil. People can easily get frustrated when they spend their time, do their own analysis but no change takes place and status quo is maintained (Action Aid-Ethiopia/IIED :1989). In case expectations are raised then genuine attempts at fulfilling such expectations would help rural people to have faith in development strategy and process.

#### *4.2.7 More Precision in Assigning Responsibilities*

In a village planning process through PRA, experience (Ford & Lelo:1991) shows that precision is required in assigning responsibilities for different kinds of work to be done including finding of

those people who will be responsible for finding external inputs such as funds, building materials etc. Ways to find external resources by rural people for project implementation through PRA is also not easy. This may mean approaching the government, NGOs or donor agencies by rural communities for external inputs. It is pointed out that the community leaders often lack the skills to use PRA data for formulating project proposals and procuring external funds (Ford & Lelo:1991). Hence even when villagers do their own PRA they face difficulties in implementing their own plans and programmes. This indicates that support by development agencies in implementation of village plans through PRA is a critical input in the process of development.

#### *4.2.8 PRA and Sensitive Issues*

Sensitive issues need to be handled carefully in a PRA exercise. Surfacing of such issues through PRA can, at times, increase tensions and lead to difficult situations. The opinions expressed by one group may clash with those expressed by another group in heterogeneous communities with large socio-economic and political differences. One example of sensitive issues can be communal feelings in stratified societies which need to be handled carefully for they can create problems for PRA sessions.

On many occasions, a PRA exercise can be used in a constructive manner for conflict resolution of different problems facing rural communities. An important determinant of which is the team which conducts the PRA and the key informants associated with a PRA exercise. Their ability to handle an issue in a positive manner can resolve conflicts and diffuse explosive situations. At all stages, however, the cooperation and participation of rural communities are essential requirements.

#### *4.2.9 Enthusiasm can Die Easily*

After conducting an initial PRA, sustaining the enthusiasm of local people for implementation of their own plans can sometimes pose to be problematic. It has been experienced that initial enthusiasm is high as a result of PRA but easily withers off after some months. PRA teams can attend to long-term mobilisation of community (Ford & Lelo:1991). Hence, good facilitators are important for sustaining the interest of local people.

#### *4.2.10 People's Empowerment and Participation-friendly Environment*

PRA does not go well with every institutional framework. PRA is people's empowerment which need not fit with the socio-political parameters existing in institutions of many countries and regions. PRA may not be meaningful in repressive conditions. In such conditions, people may not be willing to reveal their perceptions or tell the truth. This, however, is not a weakness which is inherent in PRA. It calls for greater democratization of development. An ideal institutional setting for PRA is one which is congenial to participation, a setting which is not only open but one in which there is provision for decision-making to start from the bottom.

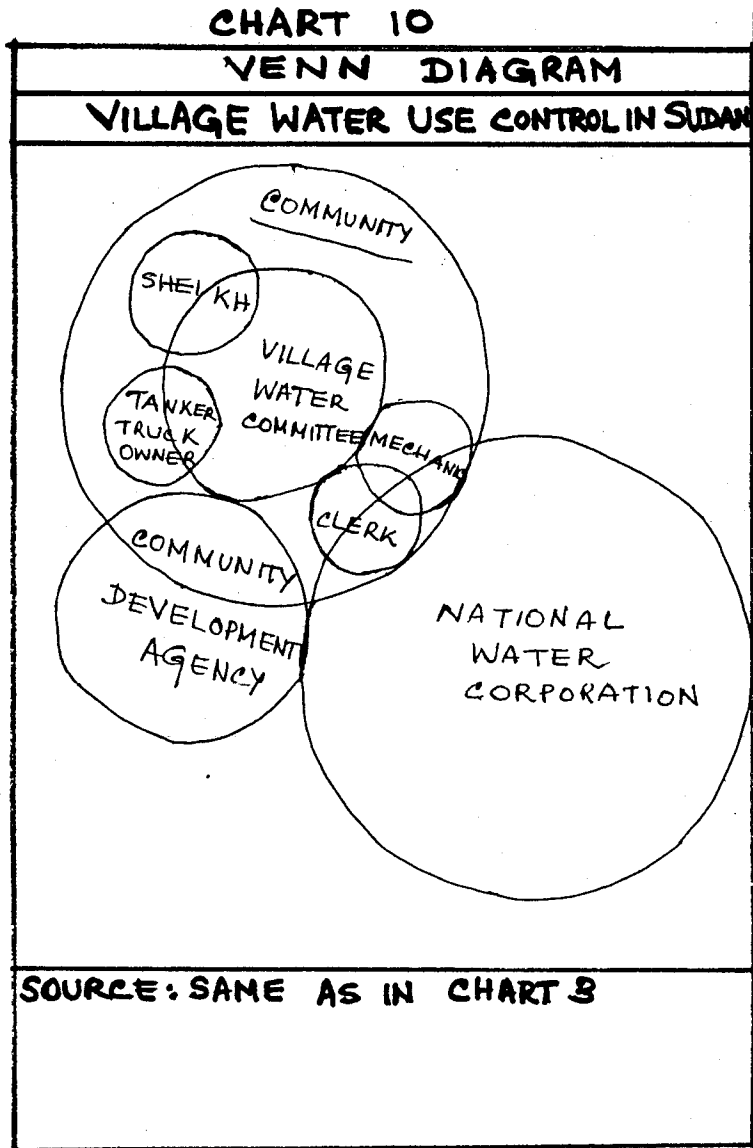
#### *4.2.11 No final answer*

No method can promise to guarantee a final answer. The same is with PRA which is not expected to provide final solutions to rural problems. It should be looked upon as an approach towards better understanding of rural problems, rural views and preferences rather than providing final answers. Some rural problems are too complex to be dealt with at the local level and resolving of such problems may become difficult even with a PRA focusing on them. However, such a PRA exercise can also make an useful contribution towards problem-solving.

PRA induces participation and brings forth indigenous knowledge and involvement of local people. These are considered to be essential inputs in search for improved solutions. The views and opinions of the rural people can give indications of their possible involvement, the limitations of their indigenous solutions and the extent to which they would participate in approaching a problem. These are far more important as initial steps to approaching rural problems rather than having rural communities sitting as passive onlookers of development programmes.

#### *4.2.12 Training and its Scale*

PRA can fail to give its best results if the team members are not trained properly. They may be inexperienced or unskilled with difficult attitudes and may have a tendency to rush the process (Messerschmidt:1991) and hence, proper training is an essential component of PRA. PRA team members need training in the right



resolving problems through their knowledge and management capabilities.

- (vi) Village analysts or key informants can be found amongst the more knowledgeable persons in a village who can help in analysis of information and in raising issues for further probing. The current issues and problem-areas can be summarised by a village analyst and his or her views can be sought from time to time. However, the reliability and validity of such views can be cross-checked with those of others. There can also exist village organisations of different kinds which can be approached for gaining further insights into the issues concerned.

## **2.2 The PRA Methods**

There is perhaps no end to discovery of participatory methods. With each problem there tends to be an appropriate form of expression, appropriate to explain a particular issue concerned. It also depends on the user who uses a particular method or methods to express himself or herself. PRA methods can be broadly sub-divided into (i) methods (indirectly or directly) supportive of PRA and (ii) methods which involve direct participation of the villagers. In category (i), normally the outsider is active in data generation and collection with little or no involvement of the villager concerned. While in category (ii) the villagers are involved right from the beginning and it is they who perform their own analysis and generate data.

The use of different methods mainly depends on the ways of expression which the villagers wish to adopt. The methods aid in participation and expression of views. Much depends on the relevance of the issue and the way in which the villagers wish to present it, their convenience of expression as well as their skills. The methods that can be used on different occasions will be different. Several methods can be combined in different ways in order to analyse issues at hand and conduct an appraisal of the subject under consideration. Some major methods have been described below along with illustrations taken from field situations.

### **2.2.1 Methods Supportive of PRA**

PRA looks for support from different kinds of methods and uses both primary and secondary data review for gaining knowledge of rural situations apart from learning through direct participation. The

method of direct observation can also be supportive of the learning process in a PRA exercise.

#### (a) Primary and Secondary Data Review

Before conducting a PRA exercise it is often possible to get some background information on the area to be covered. Such information can help in describing broad features and trends of the area concerned, covering different aspects at different points of time. Sources of such data can be both primary and secondary. The primary source constitutes materials gathered first hand and have a direct relationship with people, situations or events that are being studied such as court records, letters, minutes, memoranda, notes and diaries. They cannot be viewed uncritically which means one has to combine other materials and sources along with the primary sources (Burgess:1990).

Secondary sources of data can be found in published materials which may include transcript or summaries of primary source materials. Some secondary sources are surveys, books, reports, plans, official records, census records, project reports, maps, aerial photographs, journalistic articles, newspaper cuttings, research papers and data files from computers. The organizations and individuals who are usually associated with collecting such data are government, researchers, statistical agencies, local level educational and technical institutions, non-government organizations, donor agencies, remote-sensing agencies etc. These are generally data collected through the conventional methods and one needs to keep in mind the limitations of such sources, the ways in which materials have been selected, analysed and presented. For use of all kinds of documentary evidence it is important to guard against problems concerning authenticity, availability, sampling, interpretation and presentation. Documentary evidence provides data link up with other data obtained through field research (Burgess:1990).

One of the important secondary sources is aerial photography which can help to know more about the physical features of a certain area. They provide a visual medium to farmers to locate their land and other resources on the ground and explain them (Sandford:1989). They reduce spatial biases which most field workers tend to encounter on the ground. Experience shows that farmers are quite comfortable with interpreting aerial photographs (Deweese:1989). Two main field uses of aerial photographs are as aids for mapping boundaries of land and as a focus point for discussion in

interviews (Mearns:1989).

It is worthwhile to mention in this context, that the conventional methods support PRA and can also help in evaluation of PRA.

#### (b) Direct Observation

An outsider as a facilitator can directly observe an activity in a village and also observe the effort, skill or knowledge involved in it and can have a first hand appreciation of the activity in question. This helps in forming preliminary ideas about activities or processes observed from close quarters. It is better than guess-work or forming such ideas from a distance or from a remote official headquarters. However, direct observation by itself is generally not enough. It has to be supplemented by other methods of PRA to make it participatory and in the process to enrich the information generated.

#### 2.2.2 Methods with Direct Participation

There are different PRA methods involving direct participation, many of which include diagrams as an integral part. The importance of diagrams is explained below:

*Importance of Diagramming:* Diagrams help in building consensus and can form a base for resolving conflicts and difference of opinions. They help in cross-checking of information and building up of knowledge on that basis (RRA Notes:1991). Any discussion is enriched by visual diagrams. They present greater details than what verbal discussions usually are capable of. They help in discussion of related issues important to different villagers, both literate and illiterate. They make the villagers feel interested and involved in discussing different aspects of their own village. They can be more objective than verbal group discussions since any changes to be incorporated in them can take place immediately and any error made can be rectified at once.

It also facilitates exchange of views on the basis of information presented in maps and diagrams. The maps are open for group discussions especially for those who do not have an opportunity to mention their points for discussion and be able to present their views in case of verbal discussions. In case of diagrams, people have the entire set for discussion in front of them and can go into finer details without missing any important point.

Maps can be made with great ease anywhere and they help the

outsider to have a visual impression of the issue under discussion. On many occasions, maps help in rapport-building exercises and in comparison of different views, cultural perceptions and changes over time. They reveal perceptions and preferences which are otherwise hidden and obscure. They form bases for data generation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The use of diagrams, however, have some limitations. Some diagrams drawn are too complicated to be widely understood. This can be avoided through appropriate notes taken as and when diagrams are being explained by the villagers. Sometimes it may become difficult to explain all parts of a diagram due to lack of space. The scope of diagram is limited in case of large gatherings (McCracken:1989). Diagrams drawn on the ground using local materials, unless translated into paper or photographed, can be easily damaged and destroyed.

The major PRA methods involving direct participation are explained below.

#### (a) Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are partly structured and mostly unstructured depending on the responses of the person or group with whom the interview takes place. It is conducted in an informal manner in a relaxed setting where queries emerge according to the responses received. It is a combination of the outsiders initiating interviews followed by discussions of rural people on the topic concerned. The villagers bring in different aspects related to the question. The interviewer being free to probe, frames subsequent questions according to the aspect concerned. The questions are required to be open-ended. Hence the interview can start with a few pre-set questions and further questioning would depend on the answers received. The interviewer generally has a mental checklist. This helps in maintaining a broad framework for the enquiry and for the flow of queries to be an orderly exercise with the progress of the semi-structured interview. Some important aspects of semi-structured interviews are discussed below.

There can be sequencing and a chain of semi-structured interviews. Different methods of PRA can be combined and sequenced such that information on the problems at hand, their causes and the required policy actions can emerge from a PRA exercise. Semi-structured interviews can be repeated as and when required. After

presentation of visual diagrams verbal interactions become necessary for explaining the diagrams. Sequencing of semi-structured interviews with other PRA methods (which is discussed in a later section) help in filling gaps, refreshing memories and communicating one's point of view.

Semi-structured interviews can be conducted with different groups in a village or a community. This is one of the forms of group interviews. Apart from meeting casual groups in villages there are permanent groups based on common interests and activities. Permanent groups can be community groups such as those of small farmers or landless labourers, groups of specialist individuals such as rural artisans or silk weavers; and structured groups, involving a mix of individuals according to ages, wealth, caste and religion (McCracken, Pretty and Conway:1988). Outsiders can meet different groups separately or together to know of their problems and opportunities through semi-structured interviews and other methods.

There can be key probes through semi-structured interviews. Probing is continuing to investigate areas perceived as key issues in a PRA exercise. A semi-structured interview can be followed by probing into areas which the villagers perceive as important. Such probing can be through a combination of both visual and verbal methods.

Semi-structured interviews conducted for an evaluation-exercise of Integrated Rural Development Programme, a poverty alleviation programme brought to fore a critical point in loan repayment by beneficiaries. This evaluation was conducted in a few villages in the districts of Hooghly, Midnapore and Purulia in the State of West Bengal, India, for households owning income generating assets through an official credit-subsidy programme. Many of these households had a poor track record on loan repayment, amongst other problems.

The beneficiaries while discussing their problems expressed their views on problems of loan repayment. They pointed out that most of their assets were such that these generated daily income such as bullock/camel carts, rickshaws, selling vegetables, eggs and other commodities whereas there was no official provision for repayment of loans on a daily/weekly basis, in bits and pieces. Hence, even when they were willing to pay off their loans in tiny amounts they were unable to do so at the end of the day due to lack of arrangements for daily repayments. They were unable to save enough money for future repayments for various reasons. The beneficiaries preferred arrangements for loan repayments which would suit their repaying ability

and time. This was an 'eye opener' for the outsiders who were under the impression that either beneficiaries' loan repaying abilities were poor or they were defaulters out of choice. The semi-structured interviews showed the individual problems of loan repayments which the beneficiaries were facing in an organizational set up which could hardly perceive the capabilities and problems of a poor person.

Concurrent surveys conducted to evaluate the programme indicated the number of loan defaulters, the average period after which they defaulted and the different reasons for default (such as loss of income-generating asset, sale of assets and others). The survey results, however, did not reflect the mismatch between the beneficiaries' convenience and ability to repay as indicated above and the official payment arrangements made by the banks.

#### (b) Do-It-Yourself (DIY)

The activities of rural people can be appreciated better if an outsider who wishes to understand rural realities does them himself or herself. Generally, it appears that such activities involve simple skills of rural people but can be difficult in actual practice. Do-it-yourself gives practical ideas of the complexities involved in rural activities. This can also help in rapport-building with the villagers. For instance, one can plough a field and have a first hand experience of the activities of a farmer or accompany a rural woman to collect fuelwood or fodder and appreciate the difficulties involved in such jobs. Such participation of outsiders in rural activities can often constitute a first step in rapport-building.

#### (c) Maps and Models

Participatory mapping is crucial to PRA and can be on different aspects of rural life such as social issues, resource, health, wealth, literacy, census, livestock, economic activity, social stratification, forms of livelihood etc. Such maps can portray the image of dwellings in a village, of farms and fields, water collections, forests, soils and of many other aspects depending on the topic under consideration. In participatory mapping and modelling, villagers prepare the map/model of their village with chalks, colours and other materials either on ground or on paper.

It is a rich tool and is commonly used in PRA. It has enormous potential. Maps by villagers provide a basis for knowing different

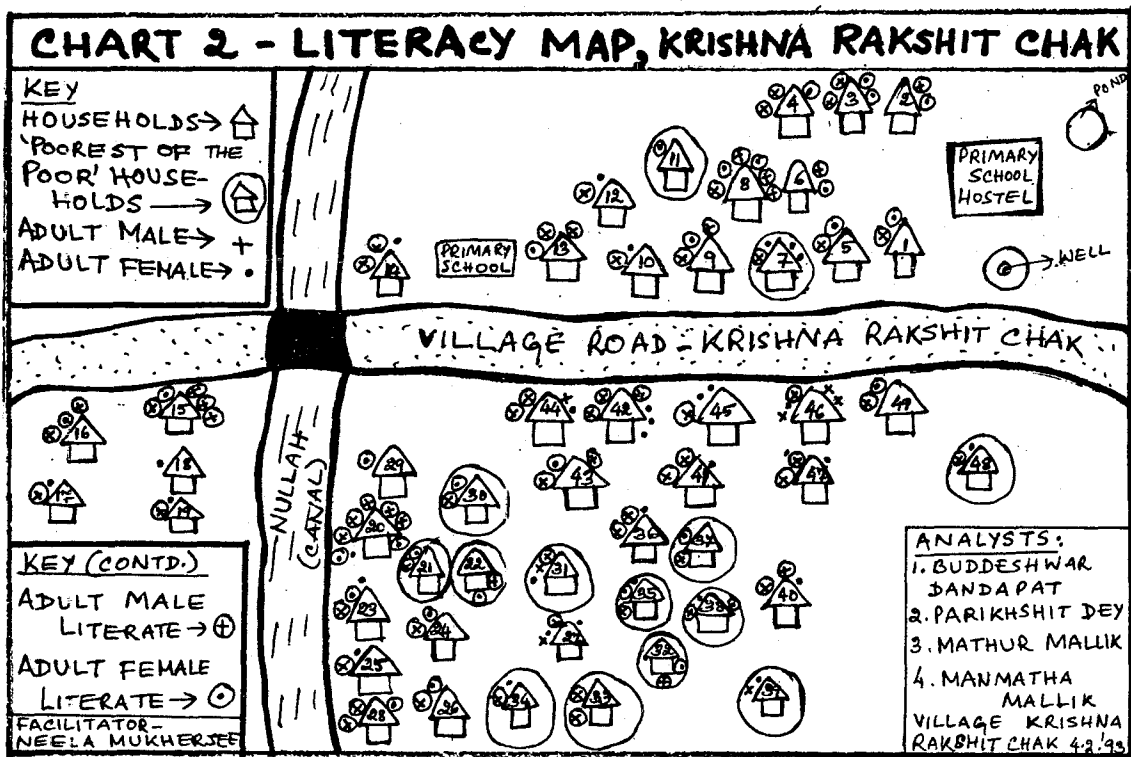
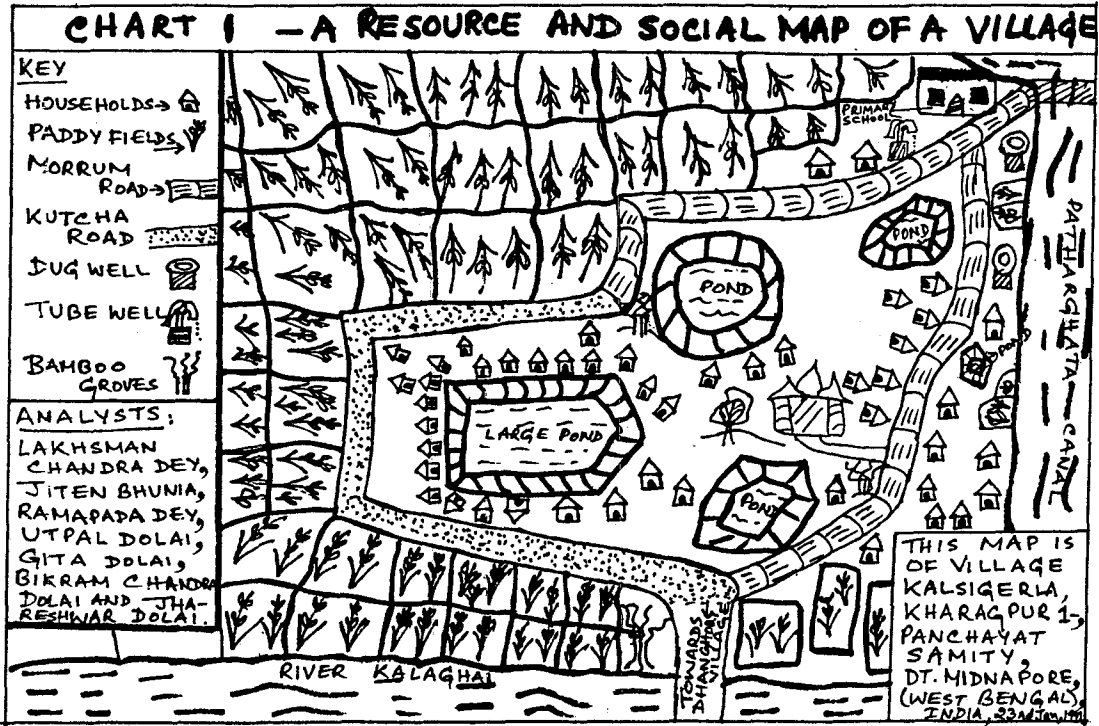
aspects of a village, for instance, the location of dwellings and buildings and land-use patterns as indicated by a social map showing the position of households in a village and their socio-economic characteristics. A village resource map can also show different kinds of natural resources and micro environments. In a resource map, the villagers draw the resource profile of the village depicting different kinds of soils, rivers, ponds, trees, crops and micro environments. The problems can be described and discussed on the basis of a resource map along with the opportunities and the constraints. This can also form a basis for a transect walk to be undertaken from a selected point in the village to another or a walk in selected areas of the village. A resource map combined with a social map is shown in Chart 1.

Once a social map is made by the villagers it becomes easy for them to describe locations within the village in terms of roads and rivers, the characteristics and conditions of the households, the ownership of dwellings and buildings and land-use patterns. In terms of poor and non-poor households in the villages, social maps visually present the location of such households and their key features. In addition, there is also scope for presenting other kinds of information regarding households such as the heads of households whether a female or a male, the dependency ratios, ownership of assets, cattle, beneficiaries under state programmes, health characteristics and so on.

The social map in Chart 2 shows literacy for each household of village Krishna Rakshit Chak of Midnapore district, West Bengal, India. The map illustrates the position of households regarding literacy and shows that some of them have a combination of both literates and illiterates. Such maps can have a direct bearing on adult literacy programmes.

In any village, social maps form an useful basis for identifying problems in different households, their strengths and characteristics. For example, a social map can form an excellent base for a health map indicating the health problems in different households. Maps can be followed by semi-structured interviews.

Models are an advancement over mapping and represent three-dimensional figures, therefore adding height differences in the landscape. They can be made with local materials. Models are useful for land-use planning and watershed planning, for which the problems, treatment and opportunities can be shown on the model itself. A model or a map can also be historical (representing past shape



or form), current or futuristic (showing future shape of a village or area)(Mascarenhas and Kumar:1991).

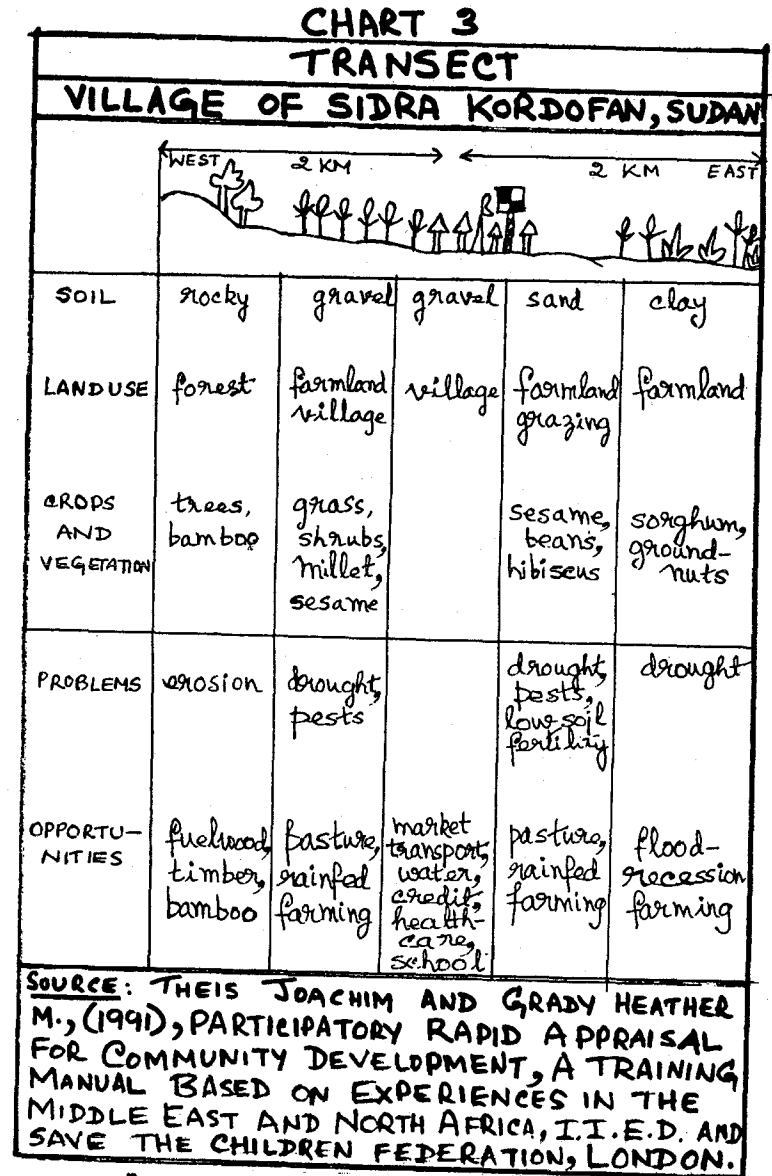
#### (d) Transect Walk

Participatory transect walks systematically involve walking with the villagers through an area and discussing about different aspects of land-use and agro-ecological zones in the village observed during the walk. A transect walk is a useful method for knowing rural ecological conditions. A walk from one point of the village to another enables the outsider to observe different aspects of rural ecology and to discuss with rural people about soil conditions, land-use patterns, crops, livestock, micro environments, agro-ecological zones etc.

The importance of a transect lies not only in knowing the agro-ecological zones in rural areas but also in getting an in-depth account from the participating villagers of such zones in the village, their uses, problems and opportunities. One transect walk can be supplemented by other walks so as to enable the outsider to learn more about any village and clarify doubts.

As far as the rural agro-ecosystem of poor people is concerned, the physical variations in the village, the micro-environments and their use can be appreciated better through transect walks which provide visual exposition of the physical features of a village along with local people's interpretations. They help to overcome the 'roadside' bias associated with field visits (McCracken, Pretty and Conway:1988). Transects help a team to carry out a detailed participatory appraisal of the agroecosystem of a village or an area under consideration. It can reveal villagers' perceptions about their natural resources in terms of either a resource-rich or a resource-poor village and the intra-variations in physical resources and agro-ecological conditions existing in the village. However, if a village is large and has considerable variations then it may be difficult to have a full grasp of the village through a single or multiple transect walk/walks. Transect walks across major agro-ecological zones can nevertheless be undertaken which can prove effective in conjunction with drawing of a resource map by the villagers.

The transect shown in Chart 3 is a village of Sidra Kordofan in Sudan. It describes different features of the area covered such as the soil conditions, the landuse, the crops and vegetation grown, the problems and the opportunities. A set of problems have been stated for each agro-ecological zone as described in the transect. The opportunities identified are also in accordance with the zones and



different policy actions have been suggested which can be undertaken for the area concerned.

#### (e) Seasonal Diagramming

Rural livelihoods are integrally connected with seasonality. Each season has its own problems and the rural people have different strategies for their livelihoods. The seasons bear heavily on the physical conditions which in turn influence their lives. Seasons bring about differences in climatic conditions, in crops grown, in availability of water, food, fuel and fodder which in turn influence the living conditions in rural areas. Seasonal diagramming can lead to comparisons of related aspects of rural livelihoods such as seasonal variations and their linkages with food, employment, work load, disease etc.

Different aspects of rural life can be reflected through seasonal diagramming. A method which reflects the 'seasonality' aspect of rural livelihood is a much better method than a picture presented by some other method such as a questionnaire survey taken at two different points of a year. In the latter case, the 'seasonality' factor can either be neutralised through 'averaging' or conclusions can be drawn on the basis of a partial picture for one season.

In seasonal diagramming, the villagers prepare diagrams and charts (either with chalks or other materials) either on ground or on paper, of various socio-economic and physical phenomena such as seasonal wages received, food consumed, prices, crops grown, rainfall patterns, sickness and others. In such diagramming, the villagers can make diagrams for seasons/months/days showing the rainfall pattern, employment, labour activity, labour availability, food availability, food intake, disease, fodder, fuelwood availability, live-stock disease, need for credit, credit availability and many other aspects.

Chart 4 presents a seasonal calendar of peasants in North Kordofan, Sudan which starts from the month of May. It shows the days of rainfall, crops growing on sand and clay, seasonal labour demand, allied activities like gum tapping, water sources, labour migration and seasonal variations in price of sorghum (Theis and Grady: 1991).

Chart 5 is a seasonal analysis of nine diseases in Udaanampatti village in India. It shows seasonal frequency of diseases of which for e.g., headache is a frequently occurring disease while the frequency of diarrhoea is largely concentrated in the months of April, October and November. The chart can be directly linked to policy measures in terms of strengthening of primary health care depending on the frequency of a disease and its period concerned.

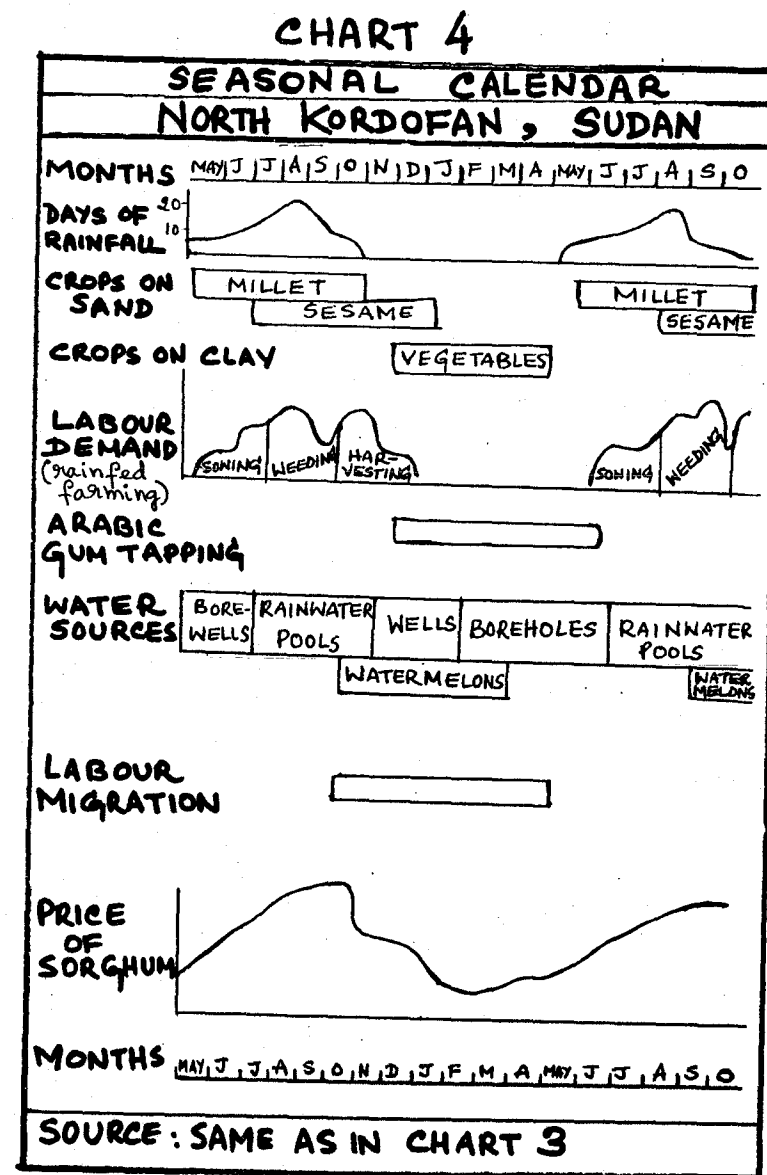


CHART 5

SEASONAL HEALTH CALENDAR												
SEASONALITY WITH SCORING												
DISEASES MONTHS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
FEVER				••	•	•					••••	••
COLD AND WHOOPING COUGH	••										••••	••••
HEADACHE	••••			••••		•	•••	•••	•••	••••	••••	••••
DIARRHOEA				••••	•••		••		•	••••	••••	
MEASLES				••••	••••	••						
JAUNDICE	•••	•••		••••								
VOMITING	•	•••		•	••••				••••	••••		
SCABIES		••	•••	••••	••••		••	••	••••	••••		
TETANUS									•	••••	••••	••••
MONTHS	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

**NOTE: SEASONAL HEALTH CALENDAR OF NINE DISEASES, UDAYANAMPATTI VILLAGE; VILLAGERS USED STICKERS TO DEPICT FREQUENCY OF DISEASE.**

**SOURCE: DEVAVARAM JOHN et. al (1991), 'PRA FOR RURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT', RRA NOTES, NUMBER 13, AUGUST, IIED, LONDON**

## Food Calendar

Food calendar is a specific use of seasonal diagramming. Seasonal variations in food availability is an integral part of rural life and the PRA method of food calendar can illustrate food availability in different seasons. Both the quantum and the kind of food availability over different seasons or months can be shown through a food calendar.

In a PRA session in Nlaphwane village which is a resource-poor and a drought-affected village near Francistown, Botswana, the villagers made a food calendar as shown in Chart 6 and explained their seasonal food availability in a normal year. They drew a food calendar to describe the availability of food stocks, their staple food in different months and how they supplement it with other kinds of food. They started with the month of July in a normal year with adequate rainfall when they indicated that after the harvest they have 30 bags of staple food. The food availability dwindles slowly over different months and reaches seven bags in June after completion of a full year. It is supplemented through a wide variety of food from the 'wild' and other sources.

## (f) Ranking and Scoring

The methods of ranking and scoring reveal priorities and preferences. They provide opportunities to rural people to physically rank and re-rank some items or preferences or some uses and explain their reasons for a given ranking. Matrix ranking and scoring is most appropriate when outsiders wish to obtain precise information on relationships amongst several different criteria and wish to rank only a few alternatives, related to uses, preferences or priorities. They can help in understanding rural people's criteria for ranking as well as the relative position of their priorities, preferences and choice in matters of occupation, food, fuel, fodder, energy-use etc. They can be used for easy comparisons.

Ranking methods include preference ranking, pairwise ranking, direct matrix ranking and wealth ranking. Preference ranking involves ranking of a set of problems/preferences/priorities by a group or an individual on the basis of their criteria or perceptions. An illustration of preference ranking is given in Chart 7 which shows the relative preference for three kinds of cotton varieties with ten criteria. At the end of the matrix, the last row shows that the overall rating is in favour of the third variety of cotton.

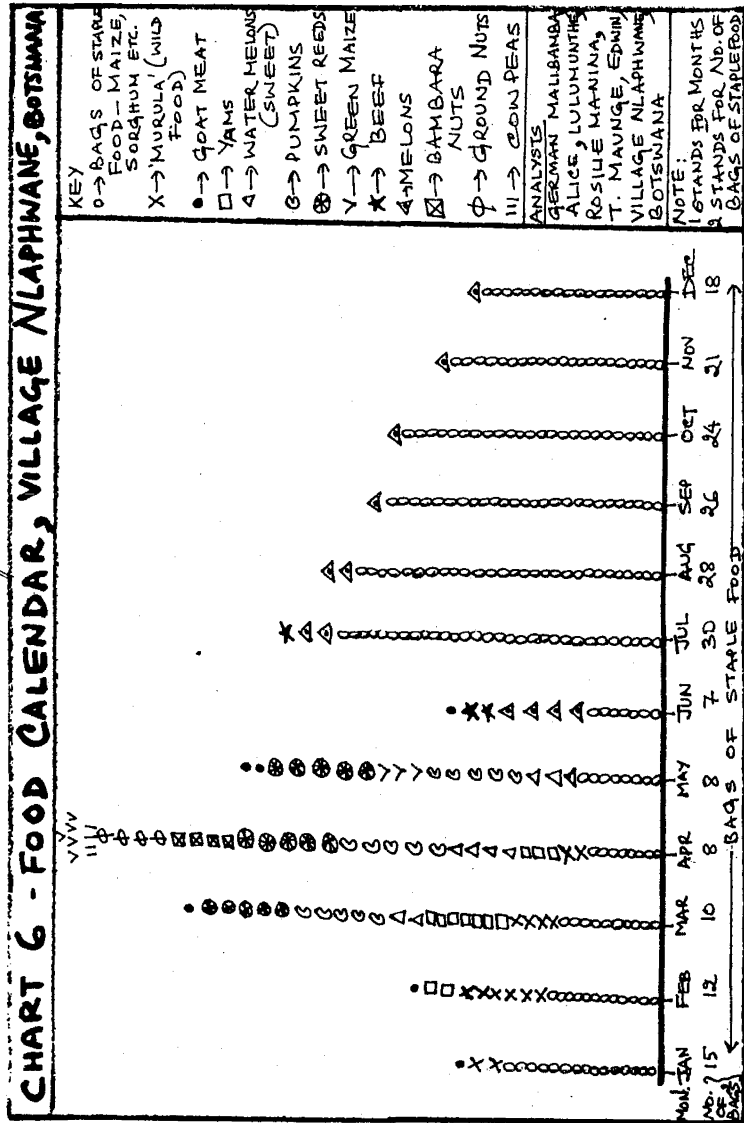


CHART 7

MATRIX RANKING OF COTTON VARIETIES			
VARIETIES CRITERIA	COTTON VARIETIES		
	KARUNGANM	LAKSHMI	LRA 5166
DURATION	x x x x x x x	x x x x x	x x x x
BOLLS/ PLANS	x x	x x x x x x x x x x	x x
BOLL WEIGHT	x x x	x x x x x	x x x x x x x x x x
PEST RESISTANCE	x x x x x	x	x x
RESPONSE TO MANURING	x x	x x x	x x x x x x
EASE OF BOLL PICKING	x	x x x	x x x x x x
POSSIBILITY OF INTERCROPPING	x	x	x x x
PESTICIDE USE	-	x	x x x
YIELD	x	x x	x x x x
NET RETURN	x	x x x	x x x x
OVERALL RATING	③	②	①

PARTICIPANT - MR. PAI PANDIAN, VILLAGE - MEENAKSHI-PURAM, THE SIGN X INDICATES SCORING.  
SOURCE: SAME AS IN TABLE 2.1, CHAPTER 2.

Pairwise Ranking

Pairwise ranking which uses two items or attributes at a time for ranking can be used to explore rural people's criteria for choosing one alternative over another. A villager or a group of villagers can compare one pair at a time and give reasons for the choice made. At the end, the most favoured choice is identified if it is a question of choice or, the major problem is identified in case of problems being ranked.

Matrix Scoring

In a matrix scoring exercise, different attributes and criteria are listed which are ranked either on the basis of fixed scoring (say scoring out of ten) or free scoring (as many or as less as one wishes) according to their relative importance. An exercise in matrix scoring can illustrate its use in revealing perceptions of rural people.

An exercise on wild trees was conducted in Nlaphwane village in Botswana. The scores are presented in Chart 8. In the matrix scoring exercise, 16 wild trees along with their 16 uses were identified and score for each tree was placed in the matrix, according to its relative use. The villagers used seeds for free scoring. For instance, it can be observed from the matrix that 'Mupani' tree had the following uses (i) firewood, (ii) poles for making houses, (iii) fencing fields, (iv) fibres (v) edible fruits and worms, (vi) shade, (vii) animal fodder and (viii) less harmful insects. Each of these uses had a separate score according to their importance to the villagers.

The exercise of matrix scoring of trees provides a wealth of information. It shows how wild trees play a significant role in the lives of rural people. It also shows how the relative utility of each tree is different to the villagers. The rural people are conversant with such uses because they use them in their daily lives.

(g) Wealth Ranking and Grouping

Wealth ranking/grouping is a method of ranking/grouping of households on the basis of income, wealth and other local measures of well-being. Different criteria can be used for wealth ranking/grouping based on rural perceptions. Wealth ranking/grouping is based on the presumption that rural people have the necessary knowledge to rank/group households which implies that they have knowledge of kinds and position of household assets, other items and attributes of the households concerned.

**CHART 8 - MATRIX SCORING**

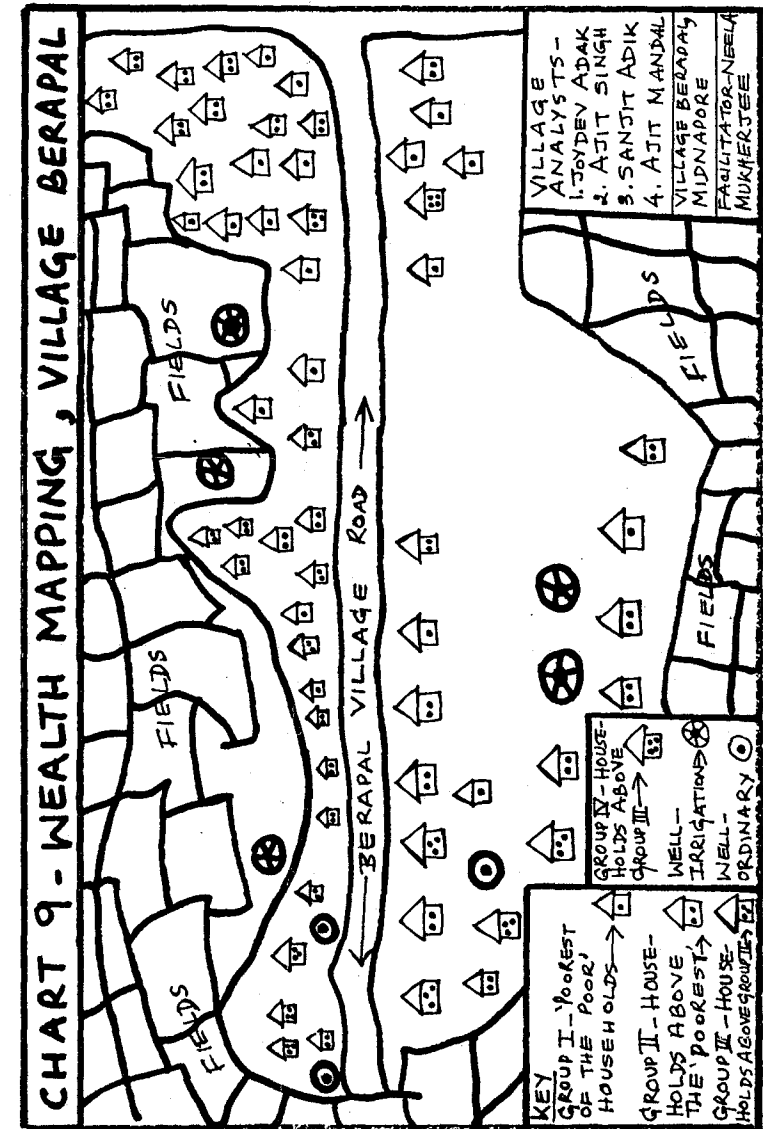
MATRIX SCORING OF WILD TREES, VILLAGE NlAPHWANE, BOTSWANA

Criteria for Scoring	1. MUPANI	2. MUPANI	3. MUPANI	4. MUPANI	5. MUPANI	6. MUPANI	7. MUPANI	8. MUPANI	9. MUPANI	10. MUPANI	11. MUPANI	12. MUPANI	13. MUPANI	14. MUPANI	15. MUPANI	16. MUPANI
1. FIREWOOD	20	4	2	1	2	1	12							3	12	
2. POLES FOR HOUSING	7			12	8	11										
3. FENCING FIELDS	9			5	4	5										
4. FENCING WELLS		10					8									
5. FENCING CATTLE																
6. DASHIGOMA				10			8									
7. FIBRE-MAKING	10														17	
8. SQUEEZING BEER								15								
9. EDIBLE	9		12	8				13	10	9	10				8	9
10. SHADE	7		6	10				8		7						
11. TO STRAI-GATE WELLS							9							8		
12. TO GRIND SEEDS				12												
13. MAKING OF YOLKS					13	9									13	17
14. MEDICINES				14												
15. LESS HARMFUL INSECTS	18	12	11	13					13	10	8	9			11	13
16. ANIMAL FODDER	5	4		5	4	3	3		5		5	7		5	4	5

Grandin's (1988) method of card-sorting is a method for wealth ranking where a list of households is prepared with each household having a separate number. The number of each household together with the name of the head of the household are written on separate pieces of paper which are then ranked by some key informants individually according to their criteria. The different criteria used in ranking by key informants emerges from their discussion on wealth classification which also helps in cross checking of the list and the final wealth classes are computed on that basis. Direct probing of wealth of any household is a sensitive topic. This method helps in ranking of households without any discussion of absolute wealth of the households concerned. Wealth ranking helps in understanding socio-economic disparities amongst households and reveals local criteria for wealth classification. It helps in stratification of a sample according to people's criteria for further study and policy-making. It also helps in examining survey data from a rural perspective (Scoones:1988).

One other way of wealth ranking/grouping is that of wealth mapping which can also be used to generate information on well-being of different households or members of a community through comparison of households by different criteria of rural people. In a social map, wealth of different households can be identified by key informants, separately or together, and on that basis, they can be ranked one after another or formed into different groups. This can illustrate the socio-economic disparities within a village according to rural people's criteria. An interesting aspect of wealth mapping is that the points of distinction between households which outsiders' tend to overlook or miss can form an important basis for differentiating between households and their ranking/grouping by rural people (Mukherjee:1992). As an illustration shown in Chart 9, wealth mapping has been presented as done by villagers in a village named Berapal in Sadar block of Midnapore district in West Bengal, India. The village consists mostly of small and marginal cultivators and landless labourers.

On the basis of the village map, the villagers attempted to group the households. They marked the households which were at the lowest strata of poverty according to their perceptions. These included the widowed households which had single widows as heads of households and were maintaining livelihoods with practically no assets, no regular source of income and not enough to eat throughout the year. Others in this group included agricultural labourers having neither any land, nor any regular source of income or food.



Identification of 'poorest of the poor' households was followed by the villagers marking the groups of households above the extreme poor group. They distinguished between these groups on the basis of land ownership. The group of households next identified was described as having better production from land. The production from land helped them in meeting their consumption requirements within the households as well as procuring income through selling a part of their produce.

Wealth ranking/grouping shows the patterns of wealth across households in a community as per local people's perspective. However, such patterns may tell us little about the process of wealth creation, impoverishment and differentiation. Intra-household dynamics are also not fully reflected in such a method (Scoones:1992). This, however can be overcome by extending wealth mapping to show intra-household differences in a historical perspective.

The method of wealth ranking/grouping becomes cumbersome in villages with large number of households because it may not be feasible to have knowledge about each and every household. Grouping/ranking of households by analysts having sufficient information on all households is also not easy to find for large villages. The same is the case with wealth mapping involving a large number of households. The households are neither easy to be ranked/grouped nor efficient for group discussions on criteria used for ranking/grouping. In this context, it may be mentioned that wealth ranking/grouping by villagers can be strengthened by other methods of PRA such as livelihood analysis so as to probe deeper into the issues concerned.

#### (h) 'Chappati' or Venn Diagrams

They are visual methods to represent the role of individuals/ institutions and the degree of their importance in decision-making. In such diagrams circles of different size represent an individual or an institution, whose size shows its degree of importance in decision-making in a village and the over-lapping of circles indicate their over-lap in decision-making. Overlapping of circles arise due to one institution/ individual interacting with another institution or individual. Such overlaps may be large or small depending on the extent of interaction. If the circles are separate, the institutions have no contact and if they touch each other there is information passing between institutions.

Venn diagrams can be useful in study of relationships of institutions/individuals with rural people. For rural people in a village community venn diagrams would reflect the kind of communication between them and the rest of the village community and other governmental organizations and NGOs. Different aspects of their life can be taken up to see their interaction and their role in decision-making involving village planning, in running of projects, in distribution of land, credit, water and other assets and in construction of roads, school building, dams etc. Chart 10 shows the key institutions and individuals important for decision-making for control of village water use in Sudan. It identifies the degree of contact and overlap between them in terms of decision-making.

#### (i) Farm Map

Coming to individual households, a villager with his/her own farm can be asked to draw a map of his/her farm in order to show what he/she grows on his farm and where he/she grows them. Chart 11 is a farm map of a farmer in a village in Botswana. It shows the different crops grown on the field together with the layout of the house on the farm. Chart 12 shows a farm profile of a farmer in a village in India which apart from different crops grown also indicates the soil conditions of the farm. The farm map is an ideal tool for knowing the minute details of a farm, its soil conditions, the variations, different crops grown, water management, fertiliser use, yields and ownership. A farm map can help in sequencing of seasonal analysis or livelihood analysis to know more about livelihood patterns of resource-poor farmers.

#### (j) Case Study

A case study is a focused study and can be undertaken either for an individual/household/group/community in relation to one or more events or a phenomenon or alternatively, it can be a study of some socio-economic or political change in relation to an individual, household, group or a community. The difference between the traditional case study method and the case study method of PRA is that in the latter case it is essentially based on a participatory mode along with the principles of PRA as discussed earlier. Case study method can be used effectively for analysing coping strategies of rural households during say a famine, drought or a disaster.