Introduction to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

PRA 入門

対応可能言語：英語または日本語

講義時間　通訳を介さずに実施する場合 3 時間程度。

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1

Introduction to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

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1. What is PRA?

"The term Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act." (Chambers, 1992)

PRA is sometimes called PLA, whish stands for the Participatory Learning and Action. This renaming is due to the common confusion with RRA (Rapid Rural Appraisal) and for the clarification of the meaning of the approach.

2. Basics of Participatory Approaches

Taking the example of PLA as the most popular participatory approach, we now discuss what a participatory approach all about is. Chambers (1997) identified that 'behavior and attitude', 'sharing' and 'methods' as three pillars in PLA. Following is my understanding, though, you may understand that people's physical participation is not enough to realize the participatory approaches.

2.1. Behavior and Attitude

Good behavior and attitude are the prerequisites for any development workers. How an outsider behaves influences the people's participation seriously. This means that the relationship between people and outsiders are critical.

(1) Make rapport
Before anything, rapport between people and facilitators should be made.

(2) See the process
Facilitators help the process in which people recognize their situation, share the recognition, seek the solution and act for improvement. It is not that the outsiders define goals and mobilize people for that.

(3) Hand over the stick (give up the leading role)
Outsiders give up the leading role and stop wagging the stick. Give the stick to people in both symbolic and practical meanings.

2.2. Sharing

Sharing does not only mean the sharing of information and experience but also the sharing of sentiment and feelings.

(1) Sharing among people
It is ideal that all the people share same knowledge, same analysis, same planning and same practical process. Since most of the societies are divided gender, wealth, ethnicity, caste and other differences, outsiders can play a big role to involve disadvantaged groups in the society. Also often more important is the recognition of the difference between people than finding common grounds.

(2) Sharing between people and outsiders

By sharing same information and experience, both people and outsiders can understand and agree on the process of development. Although people are capable enough to develop themselves, they still need certain assistance from outside. Each side should understand what they can and they cannot.

2.3. Methods

Participatory approaches are too often misinterpreted as methods. In participatory approaches, methods are not approaches but tools to be used in the approaches.

Followings are some characteristics of the PLA tools.

(1) Open
Tools are used with group of people rather than certain individuals. Also efforts are to be made to invite people. For example, group discussions are preferred to individual interviews. Maps are not drawn on a paper on the wall but on earth because it enables many people to work together.

(2) Visualized
Most of the tools are visualized. Discussion should also be visualized somehow so that those who cannot read also have access to the results. When there are many illiterate people, analysis that requires writing skills should be avoided. Pictures, graphs and models are understandable by almost everyone.

(3) Compare rather than measure
Results of a measurement is expressed numerically. However, numbers are meaningless for those who cannot understand them. If comparative differences are visualized, everyone can understand them. Numerical data are usually required by outsiders but not people themselves.

2.4. Facilitators

In PRA/PLA, filed workers that directly work with community are called facilitators. Facilitator means a person who facilitate. A facilitator simply helps people's own efforts but he/she does not teach, does not order, does not guide and does not instruct people.

It is recommendable to form a team of facilitators to carry out workshops and other events. Facilitators are preferably from different gender and professions. So, facilitators can cross check their behavior and attitude each other.

Big effort and time is necessary if you assign existing filed workers as facilitators. Existing field workers such as extension staff often have established certain relationships with people. Such relationships are usually, an upper-lower relationship. It may be very difficult for filed workers to change their behavior and attitude as uppers, and it is often equally difficult for people to consider the field worker well known to them as facilitators.

3. Process of Participation

3.1. Tools for Learning

As the name PLA implies, people are expected to participate in the process of learning and action. Physically attending to a workshop is not necessarily participation. Outsiders facilitate people to realize real participation by using a series of tools. People will learn the situation surrounding them and realize their potential by using tools.

3

There are countless tools for PLA but there is no rule of using them. Tools should be selected, combined and developed on the spot according to the situation. Fixing procedure to use tools should be avoided.

Combining some tools enhances the effects. Observing something from multi-viewpoints by combining tools is called 'triangulation'. Combination makes information more reliable. Also combining tools in sequence is very effective. Following are the most popular tools and their explanations. Although tools are sequenced in the most likely order, this should not be copied anytime.

Direct observation
Direct observation is always the basic. Environment surrounding people, people's life, relationship between people, all these are observing points. Observation helps to choose the selection of right tools and the use of them.

(1) Ice breaking

When outsiders are entering into a community, people may or may not accept them. Sometimes people are very cautious and it takes time to make a good rapport. Therefore, ice breaking here means possibly a long process of making rapport rather than games used in workshops.

(2) Mapping

Mapping is a tool to help people visualize their surroundings. Houses in a village, available resources would emerge on the map. When the different groups of people, such as men and women, and children and adults, maps often indicate the difference in interests and the mobility of each group.

Social map usually indicates each household and other important places/buildings in the community. If additional data such as household members are added to the map, it could be used something like a census.

Resources map indicate available resources in and around the community. Women, for example, may draw the forests for firewood collection, water points and local markets to sell their vegetable from kitchen gardens. While women often draw near-by resources, men usually draw wider areas.

Access maps indicate important places in their lives. Relative distance and/or importance can also be expressed by changing the size of circle, length of lines, etc.

Mapping in PRA uses symbols, which are understandable for all community members, rather than letters.

Mapping is usually practiced on the soil. If uneducated people are given with paper and pen, they often fear to make mistake. Soil and stick are more comfortable for them because it is very easy to make corrections. This is often called 'democracy on the ground'.

Figure 1: Resource map　（Slocume et al., 1995）

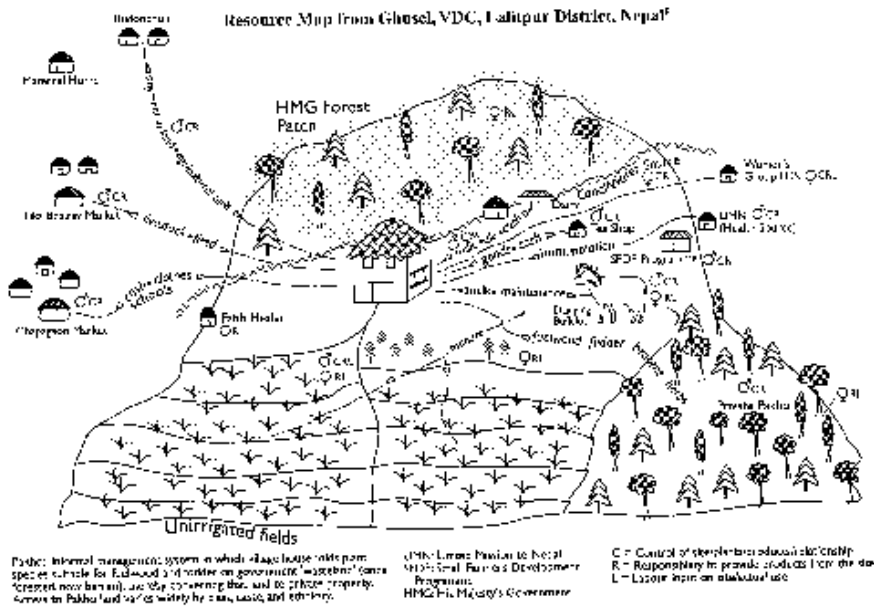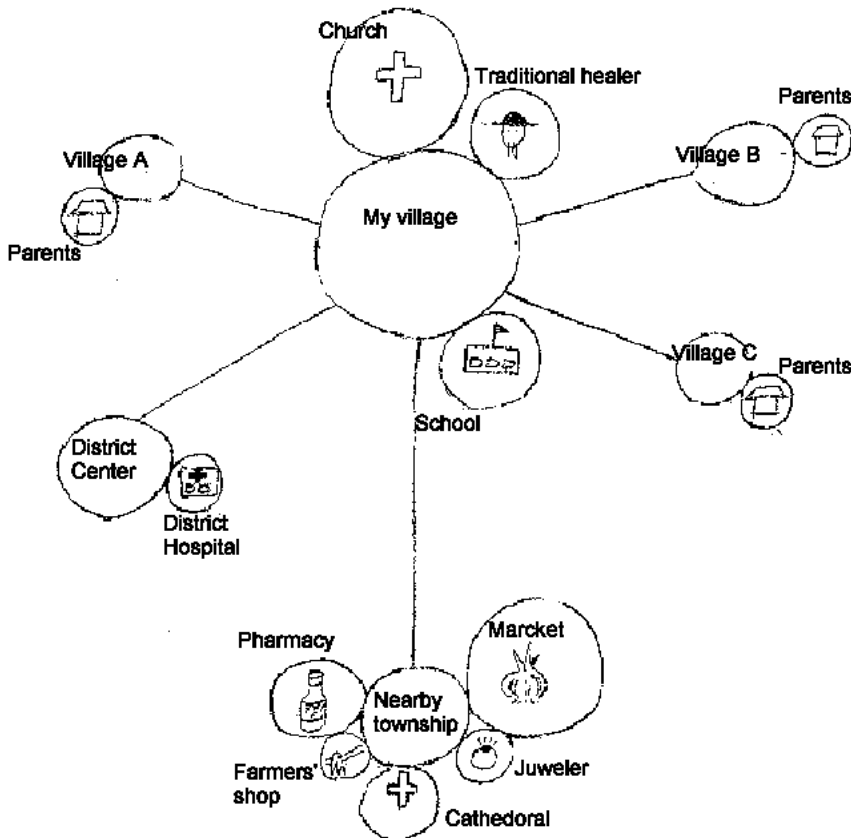Resource Map from Ghusel, VDC, Lalitpur District, Nepal

Figure 2: Women's access map

(3) Transect

The word 'transect' came from the vegetation research.

For example, facilitators and villagers together walk in a village along a predefined line. Land use systems, resources, and problems found along the line are recorded on a profile. Facilitators raise some questions on crops, soil, forests, etc. and discuss them with villagers. If this practice is repeated at regular intervals, it would be a good monitoring method. Combining this tool with the historical profile is often very effective. For example, asking questions on the spot such as 'Why trees have disappeared from here within five years?' makes things clear and understandable for everyone.

Figure 3: Combination of transect and historical profile (MaCracken et al., 1988)
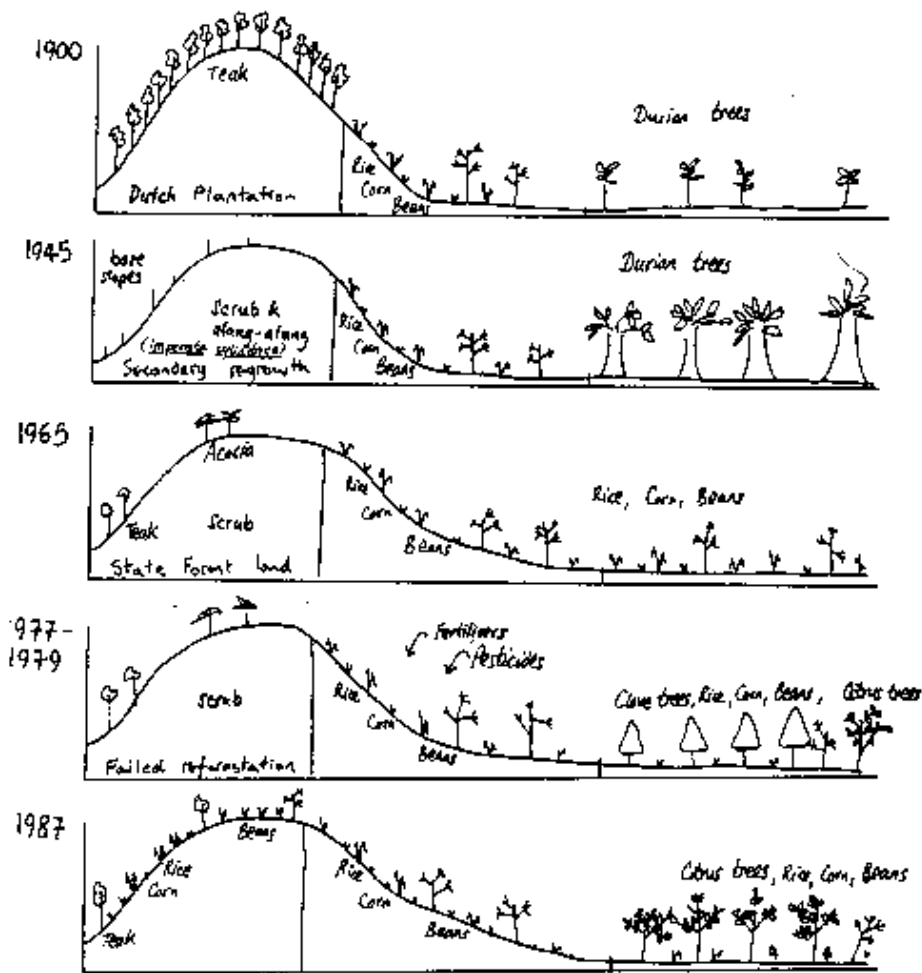
(4) Seasonal calendar

Events in a year are visually indicated in a diagram. Events include climatic changes, farming practices, festivals, etc. Calendars may not start from January. It is possible to start from a very important cultural event or, according to the farm practices of the most important crop.

6

Figure 4: An example of seasonal calendar

Month	1月	2月	3月	4月	5月	6月	7月	8月	9月	10月	11月	12月
Preference												
Rainfall												
Crops												
Working Place												
Expenditure												

(5) Historical profile

All tools mentioned above are to know and analyze the current situation. Historical profile, on the other hand, is used to know the events in the history and the change along the timeline. Village history or the change of land use systems may be analyzed in connection with the topics outside (such as independence). If the information is visualized, everyone can have a look and make correction and/or addition.

(6) Group discussion

Once current situation and the history are analyzed and shared, discussion will focus on current problems and possible solutions. Topics mentioned should again be visualized by using symbols and pictures. If the differences between genders and/or age classes are significant, smaller groups may be formed. In developing countries in general, gender roles are very clearly defined and men tend to have most power. In such cases, effort should be made to create a chance for women to express themselves.

(7) Ranking

If necessary, topics will be ranked. There are several methods of ranking. Pair-wise ranking is the most common one.

But, before carrying out ranking practices, please think twice the necessity of ranking something. If there is no good reason to rank things, i.e. to select one activity to be funded, the results of ranking in not important, or, in some cases, misleading.

Options which are low in ranking tend to be considered less important. However, people rank things only because they are asked to do so. In realty, many things are equally important and equally necessary for people's life. It is meaning less to rank, for example, air, water and food.

(8) Scoring

As in the ranking, there are many way to score options. For example, each participant gets 10 stones and makes vote, i.e., five for school construction, three for well digging and two for health post. The one has got most should be the first priority of the community. With this practice, domination of certain groups could be avoided, though, the facilitators should be very careful to watch the attitude of dominating community leaders.

The results of scoring are often different from the results of ranking, even if same set of options are compared. Also, scoring indicate relative importance of each options with certain weight while ranking just indicate the order.

Figure 5: Ranking (Debrabandere and Clarke, 1995)
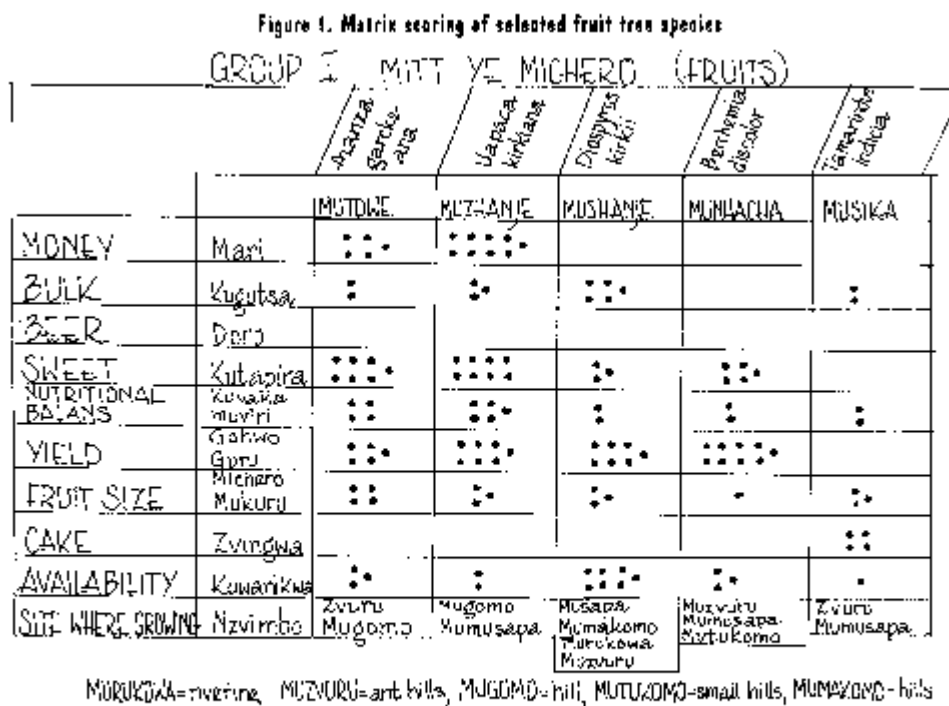
Figure 1. Matrix scoring of selected fruit tree species

(9) Wealth ranking

Wealth ranking is practiced to know the poorest segment of the people in the community. Those people may be prioritized for aid. If outsiders decide that who should get the aid first, it may cause troubles in the community. However, if facilitators let people do the job, it is the people themselves that made decision. Therefore, people understand better why those people are selected.

Wealth ranking is sometimes very sensitive so it should be used with caution.

(10) Interviews

In PRA, interviews are also used .Semi-structured interview and key informant interview are two forms of commonly used interviews in PRA.

In semi-structured interview, list of simple questions are often used. These are more like reminders to ask questions. Questions indicated below are the examples of questions asked in the semi-structured interview.

Livestock
Crops
Education
Water
etc.

8

These questions are actually the topics to start free discussions or conversations. Detailed answers, especially numeric data usually gathered in the structured interviews, are not required.

Key informant interviews are to ask questions to or to have conversations with a key person/ key persons in specific area. Community members may act as the interviewers to share the information.

(11) Day analysis

Day analysis visualizes how a person or a certain groups of people allocate their daily activity in a 24-hour clock. For example, men's time use is compared with the women's one by day analysis. Generally, each social group (i.e. gender, age, occupation) tends to have its own pattern of time use, which is often not well known by other groups.

(12) Other tools

There are many other popular tools like diagramming and role play and, nowadays, participatory video making is also used, thank you for the development of technology. Also, there is no fixed set of tools in PRA. So, invent your original tools!

3.2. Use of tools

(1) Asking to the map

Inexperienced practitioners tend to think that the objective of each tool is to get the result. However, in good PRA practice, completing a tool and getting a result is not an end but just a starting point.

Facilitators may ask many questions to the map for example. People may hesitate to answer to questions when they are directly asked. So asking to the map or other results without any eye contact with people makes people more relaxed and encourages people to answer.

By asking questions, understandings by both people and facilitators can be strengthened.

(2) Triangulation and sequence

PRA/PLA tools are often used in combination. There are two main ideas to combine tools; triangulation and sequence.

Triangulation

3.3. Continuous Process of Learning and Action

People will plan and choose their actions, and monitor and evaluate them by sharing knowledge and experiences obtained through the learning process. All these are the parts of the participatory process.

Tools are not only for the first stage of learning. Tools can be used for monitoring the changes and evaluating the achievements.

Repeating this kind of learning and doing process, people gradually will release their potential and obtain the ability. This is actually a process of empowerment. Main objective of the participatory approaches is not to achieve a goal but to enable people to make their continuous development process. Participation into a certain project is only a small part of this endless process.

4. References

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5. Necessary skills

Levels	Personal attitude and behavior	Inter-personal communication	Facilitation tools	Specific skills and knowledge (Extension)
Skills	Perceptiveness Self-reflectiveness	Communication Team building (Culture of sharing) Mediation (Counseling) Creating joint learning environment Presentation Problem solving Analytical Enhancing creativity	Mapping Modeling Scoring Diagramming Etc.	Agriculture Forestry Health care Small industry Etc.