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## Rapid assessment of artisanal systems : a case study of rural carpentry enterprises in Zimbabwe

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### • Introduction

Although rapid and participatory information gathering techniques such as RRA and Farmer Participatory Research often espouse 'holistic' or 'systems' approaches, the actual terms of reference tend to be strongly biased towards agricultural activities and to marginalise study of other rural income sources. To some extent this is a result of agriculture's domination of the labour calendars, physical environment and income-generation of many rural populations in developing countries. However, it also reflects the professional biases of many so-called 'multidisciplinary' study teams. Failure to consider rural off-farm activities adequately is not only to ignore their contribution, role and potential within the rural sector, micro-economic systems and service infrastructure but also to adopt the very tendencies of ill-informed descriptiveness that Rapid Rural Appraisal et al seek to overcome.

Involvement in socio-economic analysis of rural production and processing activities other than, or in addition to, agriculture has, for me, sharply highlighted the agrocentric nature of many current methodologies. A case study of one such non-agricultural field-study is outlined below. Originally the material contributed to an internal project feasibility report for ITDG. By presenting the study in the RRA Notes, I want to:

- draw attention to the need and potential for a less agrocentric approach to rural appraisal;
- share the lessons of an attempt to apply rapid participatory appraisal methods to

data collection in one non-agricultural sector of rural production; and,

- encourage the development of survey techniques that enable an understanding of rural circumstances above and beyond the agriculture alone.

I make no excuse for the lack of a methodological acronym - Technical Overview Using Rapid Information Search Techniques (TOURIST), Consideration Of Farm Family External Earnings (COFFEE), Technological Ecosystem Analysis (TEA) or even Multidisciplinary Investigation of Local Kraftwerk (MILK) are all possibilities... Other and better terms will no doubt be developed if this area of study attracts attention!

### • Rapid assessment of rural carpentry enterprises in Zimbabwe

#### Background

Since mid-1986 ITDG has been involved in a programme of technology transfer involving the training of rural carpenters in Malawi and Zimbabwe to self-capitalise by making wooden carpentry tools. The tools are low-cost, locally produced and locally repairable in contrast to the imported metal tools currently available (approximate financial cost ratios are 7:1 in Malawi and 2:1 in Zimbabwe). Following a positive evaluation of the pilot phase in Malawi, a study was commissioned in early 1988 to investigate the operating environments of rural carpenters in Zimbabwe and the potential for a similar project there.

The study was undertaken by a three-member rapid assessment team consisting of an ITDG Project Economist (the author), an ITDG Project Engineer (the designer of the tools and trainer of carpenters in Malawi) and a Zimbabwean trainee carpenter recruited in-country and familiar with ITDG's wooden tools.

The study was conducted during April and May 1988 during a season of relative prosperity in the rural areas (harvest-time following good rains in 1987), active transport networks and dry roads. However, with this in mind, it was possible to obtain representative information about other seasons and years.

Following a week of preparation, including meetings with appropriate local organisations and consultation of secondary sources of information, two weeks were spent interviewing thirty rural carpenters at their workplaces. Visits were also made to urban and peri-urban carpentry workshops and product sales points as well as to timber merchants and tool retailers in both rural and urban areas. A final week was spent in-country, grafting the study report and discussing its contents with local development organisations.

## Methodology

### Area selection

Three survey areas were selected using secondary sources and in consultation with local organisations. Selection was stratified to optimise diversity between population densities, economic bases, ecological regions, market access and geographical dispersion.

### Interviewee selection

It was originally intended to draw a sample from the records of institutions involved in the training of carpenters in Zimbabwe's rural areas. However, in view of the time required to draw the sample, establish contact and make all the subsequent arrangements required, it was decided instead to make enquiries at small rural settlements and thus to locate carpenters operating in the surrounding areas by word of mouth. This method was generally found to be satisfactory (despite the absence of some

carpenters) and, considering the high number of carpenters encountered who had no formal training, probably more representative than the sampling methods first envisaged.

## Interviews

Carpenters were interviewed at their workplaces, which ranged from a plank under a tree to purpose-built brick premises with both working and display areas. Each interview generally required one to one-and-a-half hours. Although questions and approaches were adapted in the light of information collected the following broad stages were followed throughout:

**Guided interview:** covering socio-economic and financial issues including occupation(s), raw materials, output, demand, credit and payment systems, logistics, employees and training as well as interviewees' own assessment of problems and solutions.

**Technical appraisal:** covering selection, seasoning, storing and preparation of timber; marking, cutting and fixing joints; finishing of products; recording and scoring of tools; recording and scoring of products.

**Tool demonstration:** the team carried prototype samples of some ITDG-designed, wooden-bodied tools made at a workshop in the capital (jack plane, rebate plane, grooving plane, mortise gauge and try square). These were taken to each interview site but only mentioned on completion of stages (1) and (2).

Following a brief demonstration and explanation by the Zimbabwean team member, carpenters tried out the prototypes on scrap timber and were encouraged to evaluate the tools. This, combined with a review of material covered in the preceding sections, generated immediate technical and economic feedback.

## Techniques

During the three stages outlined above we experimented with a range of techniques for rapid information gathering. Well-known appraisal techniques such as cash-flow analysis were also used but are not described below.

## Scoring

### 1. Tool scoring:

Tools owned by each carpenter were scored out of ten by the Project Engineer on the basis of quality, condition and maintenance. Scores were then summed and divided by the number of tools to produce an average score for each carpenter.

Comment: While the results of “the scoring system were not in themselves illuminating beyond giving a general indication of the spread of tool qualities,

the processes involved forced consideration and discussion of local levels of knowledge, maintenance practices, availability of tools, materials etc”.

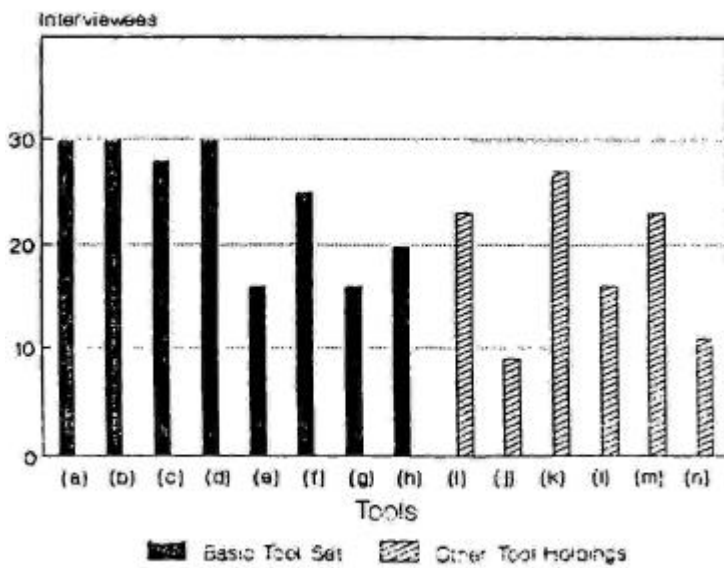
Attempts to attach a weighting system to reflect the relative importance of each item were felt to be inappropriate in view of the spurious accuracy of the results likely to be generated. Instead a matrix of tools and interviewees was drawn up. The tools required in a basic carpentry tool kit were ranked in descending order of importance and additional tools found were also shown (see Table 1). This illustrated clearly the areas of tool deficit.

Table I(a). Tools owned by interviewees

INTERVIEWEE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	TOTAL
(a) HANDSAW	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	30
(b) PLANE (jack)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	30
(c) CHISEL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	29
(d) CLAMP	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	30
(e) TONGUE SAW	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	16
(f) SQUARE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	25
(g) GAUGE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	19
(h) SILLICONE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	20
(i) BRACE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	23
(j) GROOVING PLANE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	9
(k) HAMMER	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	27
(l) SAW FILE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	18
(m) SCREWDRIVER	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	13
(n) VICE	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	11

(a) - (n) = basic set of tools required (MTR)

Table 1 (b). Aggregated tool data



Holding of (a) – (b)	Interviewees
8	9
7	5
6	8
5	7
4	1

All interviewees had at least 50% of basic tool set. Items lacking were:

Item	Interviewees
Marking gauge	14
Tenon saw	14
Oilstone	10
Try square	5
Chisel	2

## 2. Skill scoring:

Two systems were used:

- Products on view at the workshop were scored on the basis of the quality of their construction and finish and average scores were calculated as per the tools.
- Carpenters were asked to describe or demonstrate briefly how they undertook the following operations:
  - Tool sharpening;
  - Timber seasoning;
  - Preparation of wood for work (use of face marks, gauging to thickness etc);
  - Marking of joints for cutting;
  - Cutting of joints;
  - Types of joints used in their work;
  - Method of holding timber steady while working on it; and,
  - Glueing up.

In this way detailed impressions were gathered concerning differing levels of local technical resources and knowledge.

As with the tool scoring, the numerical results were of secondary importance to the in-depth

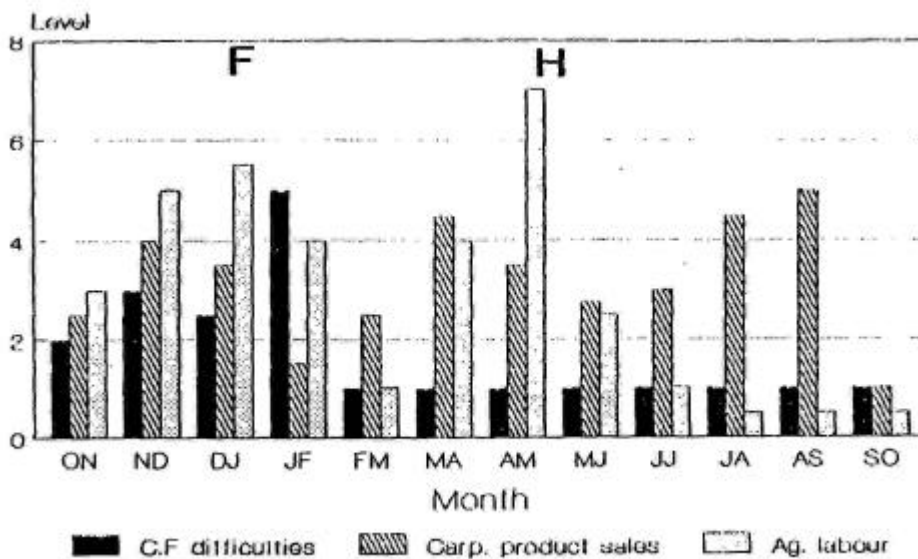
discussions that this approach provoked on a range of economic, technical and other issues. In addition, the combination of hands-on activity and discussion was found to be a very effective means of encouraging and sustaining debate and confidence.

## Calendars

The different occupations of each interviewee were listed and approximate labour and income calendars drawn for each on the basis of identifying peak months and then ranking the remainder on the basis of pairwise comparison or at least grouping into 'very busy', 'medium' and 'quiet' months.

Since most interviewees' labour use was closely tied to the agricultural cycle this tended to dominate their involvement in other activities. Similarly, since severe lack of working capital meant that carpenters tended to make to order rather than keep stocks, production of carpentry items tended to mirror periods of rural prosperity (harvest) and hardship (payment of school fees.) These relationships can be seen in the example of agricultural labour, cash-flow difficulties and carpentry product sales calendars shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Calendars (source: field notes)**



F= school fees  
H= harvest

## Ranking

### 1. By interviewees

Much of the questioning centres around the ranking of items or issues by the interviewees. These included the following:

- Constraints on their activities (esp. carpentry);
- Own perception of needs;
- Own perception of training requirements;
- Own perception of tools lacking; and,
- Preference among ITDG tools demonstrated (and reasons).

The results were listed in matrices in descending order, showing the number or percentage of interviewees identifying each problem. This enabled both individual perceptions and shared or recurrent topics to emerge. Table 3 is an example of one ranking exercise conducted with the interviewees.

Products were also ranked on the basis of the frequency of manufacture. This led to discussion of the timing of sales and saleability of different items in relation to local sources of income. It would be interesting to compare the relative prosperity of agricultural cycles over time with the number of wardrobes (a relatively large and, therefore expensive item) ordered from local carpenters within a given region.

**Table 3. Interviewees' perception of major constraints on their carpentry activities (percentage responses)**

	<b>Cashflow</b>	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Tool lack</b>	<b>Demand</b>
Area 1	79	7	14	0
Area 2	47	29	12	12
Area 3	60	20	8	12
Average	61	20	11	9

2. By team

Information was collected on a range of topics, including:

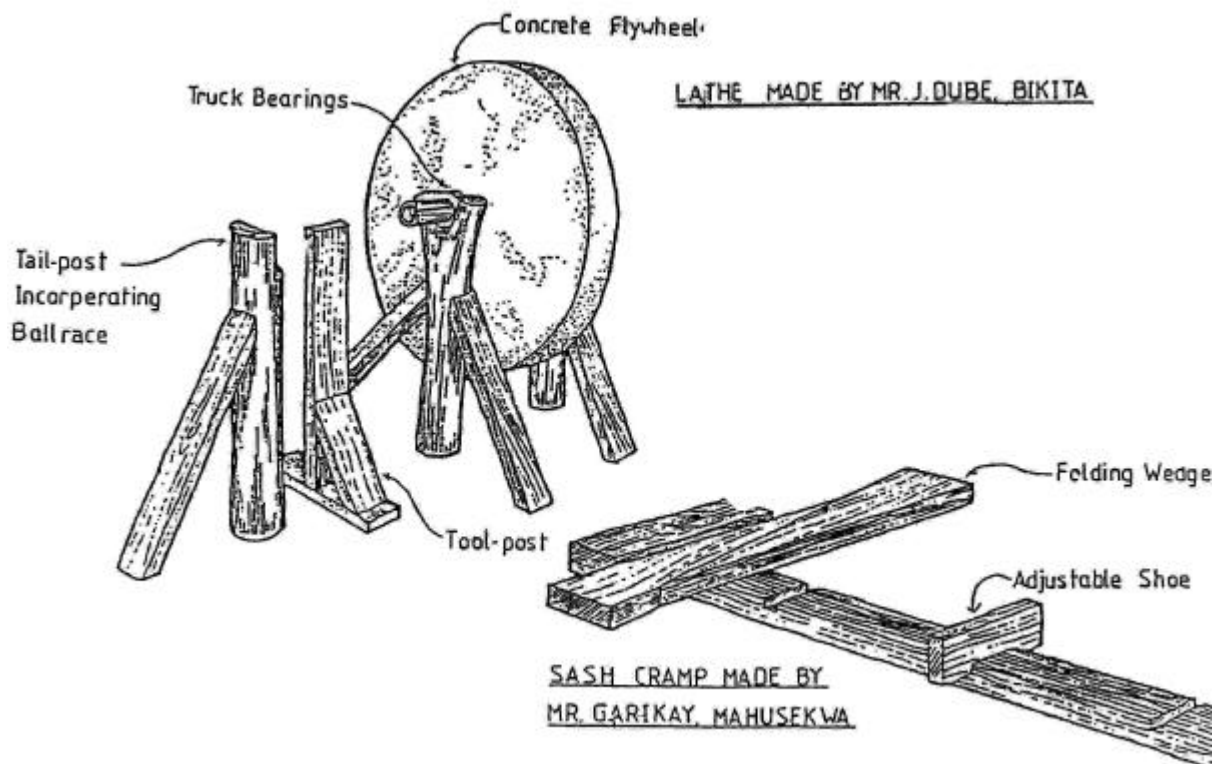
- sources of present training means of tool acquisition income sources;
- motives for choosing carpentry;
- number and type of home-made tools types and sources of timber used workplace types;
- employment of trainees; and,
- product and raw material price ranges.

These were ranked by the team on a number or percentage bases to bring out trends within the responses.

**Drawing**

Tools which had been innovated locally (for example home-made brace and bit, home-made sash cramp and home-made lathe) or products of interesting design were sketched for reference. Here are two:

**Figure 1. Sketches of locally innovated tools (AT Moore (ITDG))**



## • Conclusions

The techniques described above owe much to other work in the field of rapid assessment and are an attempt to adapt these methods for use in the appraisal of artisanal activities. In retrospect, greater use could have been made of calendar presentations and the exciting results obtained on occasions when groups of carpenters were interviewed (using a similar methodology to that described above) suggest that panel/group interviews or reviews would also have been productive.

Nevertheless, the study was able to reach conclusions concerning:

- socio-economic conditions facing rural carpenters;
- the status, problems and workings of the rural carpentry sector;
- details of local training and other needs in this sector; and,
- viability of the proposed project and conditions for its success.

Many survey methods currently available are effective only in determining local perceptions and priorities relating to the known status quo and are generally unable to include new options in their terms of reference. One feature of the study described here that is denied to many others was the availability of prototypes of the technology being appraised for transfer. Immediate feedback on these enabled us to learn very rapidly about carpenters' perceptions of the prototypes, their requirements and reasons for modifications (even including suggestions for a catchy Shona brandname) and their attitudes about confidence concerning the various project options discussed with them. This ability to conduct instant field trials at the project/product design stage has been very useful both in subsequent project planning and in technical modification of the prototypes.

It should be stressed that the techniques and methodology described above are only selected aspects of the study. Questions and discussion around the data collected by these methods was at least as important as the information itself in providing understanding.

Consequently the final report was based on considerably more material than is presented here. The specialised but multidisciplinary nature of the team and the inclusion of a Zimbabwean team member were also major assets in probing for and discussion of information.

Finally, humour, generally omitted in manuals of social science techniques, was vital in obtaining time and information. In particular, light-hearted role-playing, good-humoured mutual mockery and willingness to discuss topics apparently irrelevant to the matter in hand are the unsung keys to many explanations (as opposed to superficial statistics). Uptight or self-important researchers, however well-equipped with matrices, maps and interview guidelines etc, are likely to miss important pieces of information.

As many rural populations encounter problems of rising unemployment and agricultural marginalisation the need for alternative sources of income becomes ever more acute. Consequently (and at the risk of provoking an explosion of jargon) methods adapted for analysis of rural productive activities other than agriculture are required. Furthermore, truly rural appraisal must take great account of the multiplicity of complex, interrelated and changing activities undertaken by rural communities. Not only do such activities often provide essential sources of income on which household security or the pursuance of other activities (education, access to agricultural inputs etc) may depend, but they are also likely to be of increasing importance for rural development.

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## 2

## The rural rides of William Cobbett : RRA and sustainable agriculture in the 1820s

Jules Pretty

We talk of RRA and the underlying principles and rationale as being relatively new to the analysis of rural systems. Yet let me take you back 160 years or so to England in the 1820s, the time of William Cobbett, journalist, politician and farmer. Later to become a Member of Parliament, Cobbett was at this time producing the popular 'Political Register'. To gather material for this journal, Cobbett set out on his 'Rural Rides', a series of rides across the countryside of southern England, with the express purpose of:

*"Finding out the real state of the countryside".*

These rural rides, conducted between 1822 and 1826 and first published in 1830, are the first example I have come across of Rapid Rural Appraisal.

His objectives were quite clear: he would write articles based upon his findings to further the causes of political and financial reform. He was determined to find evidence that would support his theories. Yet his approach makes fascinating reading, and there are many parallels with current research and development activities. Writing on the evening of his first days travel from London he very quickly makes clear his intentions regarding spatial, and in particular road, biases: despite setting off in rather a drizzling rain he said:

*"It is very true that I could have gone to Uphusband by travelling only about 66 miles, and in the space of about 8 hours. But, my object was, not to see inns at turnpike-roads, but to see the country; to see the farmers at home, and to see the labourers in the fields;*

*and to do this you must go either on foot or on horseback" (his emphases).*

His whole approach was to travel on horseback through lanes and paths to talk to people, stop at cottages and to understand intimately what was going on in the countryside. Later that year he stated proudly:

*"I have crossed nearly the whole of this country from the NW to the SE, without going 500 yards on a turnpike road, and, as nearly as I could do it, in a straight line".*

He was well aware that his behaviour was rather unconventional:

*"They think you are mad if you express your wish to avoid turnpike roads".*

And the following year in Kent, on a wet August afternoon:

*"I made not the least haste to get out of this rain. I stopped, here and there, as usual, and asked questions about the corn, the hops, and other things".*

Discovering the unusual requires a degree of stubbornness, often to overcome a tendency to take the path of least resistance, whether it is a line of questioning, or a route of travel. And Cobbett was frequently stubborn: he will not be put off from a desire to see certain features, trying to put himself in situations that may throw up some unexpected discovery:

*"I asked a man the way to Thursley. 'You must go to Liphook, Sir', said he. 'But', I said, 'I will not go to Liphook".*

He had resolved to see and understand the 'low countries', and wished to avoid the hill over Hindhead. On another occasion he wishes to pass over and down the precipitous wooded hillside of Hawkley Hanger in Hampshire. On asking the route he receives strong advice and warnings of the dangers of that route, but he simply asks whether people were in the habit of going along that route. On learning that they did, he immediately sets off through lanes with high banks and steep turns, and then:

*"Out we came, all in a moment, at the very edge of the hanger! And, never, in all my life, was I so surprised and so delighted! I pulled up my horse, and sat and looked; and it was like looking from the top of a castle down into the sea, except that the valley was land and not water".*

He admonishes his warning informants thus:

*"Those who had so strenuously dwelt on the dirt and dangers of this route, had not said a word about beauties, the matchless beauties of the scenery".*

But beauty was not enough - it was the combination of people and the environment that was critical to Cobbett. As a later editor, George Woodcock, put it:

*"There was nothing that made him (Cobbett) more uneasy than a landscape without people".*

One consequence, though, of this admirable approach of only accepting those facts he saw with his own eyes was that he was perhaps subject to another set of biases. 'Official' census figures put the population growth at 40% between 1801 and 1831, yet Cobbett was determined to disprove this trend. In the Committee Rooms of the Houses of Parliament the:

*"mad wretches...are bothering this half-distracted nation to death about a surplus population".*

Cobbett was quite against the proposed policy of enforced transportation of people away from England, and all because of the principles of one Thomas Mathus:

*"a monster who furnished the unfeeling oligarchs...with the pretence that man has a natural propensity to breed faster than food can be raised for the increase".*

There was an 'Emigration Committee':

*"sitting to devise the means of getting rid, not of the idlers, not of the pensioners, not of the dead-weight...not of the soldiers; but to devise means of getting rid of these working people, who are grudged even the miserable morsel they get!"*

To support his argument Cobbett used the size of churches and the number of people they could comfortably hold as a proxy indicator for past local population size. In southern Kent:

*"The church at Appledore is very large. Big enough to hold 3000 people; and the place does not seem to contain half a thousand old enough to go to church...At 3 miles from Appledore I came through Snagate, a village with five houses, and with a church capable of holding 2000 people! At Brenzett (a mile further on)...a church here...and nobody to go to it...At Old Romney there is a church (two miles only from the last, mind!) fit to contain 1500 people, and there are, for the people of the parish to live in 22 or 23 houses! And yet the vagabonds have the impudence to tell us, that the population of England has vastly increased!"*

Later he rides up the valley of the Avon in Wiltshire, where there are 29 agricultural parishes containing churches within the distance of 30 miles. According to population returns these contained some 9000 people; according to him it was manifest that the population of the valley was once many times this value.

*"What, then, should all these churches be built for?"*

In three instances the church porches alone could have held all the inhabitants, even down to the bed-ridden and the babies. In the Wiltshire Vale there were 120 churches built for the apparent purpose of holding 2080 people.

*"In short, everything shows, that here was once a great and opulent population; that there was an abundance to eat, to wear, and to spare; that all the land that is now under cultivation, and a great deal that is not now under cultivation, was under cultivation in former times".*

Another major element of rural systems that fascinated Cobbett on his Rides was mixed and integrated farming. He ranted about the monoculture cereal lands, saying that there were:

*"no hedges, no ditches, no commons, no grassy lanes...All the rest is bare of trees and the wretched labourer has not a stick of wood, and has not place for a pig or cow to graze, or even to lie down upon...the poor day-labourers suffer from the want of fuel - for this reason they are greatly worse off than those of woodland counties. What a difference there is between the faces you see here, and the round, red faces that you see in the wealds and forests"*

But elsewhere, things could look quite different:

*"the labouring people look pretty well. They have pigs. They invariably do best in woodland and forest and wild counties...But as man is not to live on bread alone, so corn is not the only thing that the owners and occupiers of the land have to look to. There are timber, bark, underwood, wool, hides, pigs, sheep and cattle".*

Rural people's ability to carry a number of options in their livelihood basket is often seen as a strategy guarding against risk. If the door to one option is closed then it remains possible to substitute energy and attention to one of the other options. Evidence suggests that the poor and ultra-poor actively maximise the number of options open to them: they prefer and survive through multi-faceted livelihoods.

He also disapproves of the enclosures movement, not at this time in its height, but with a long history stretching back some 500 years. Common fields, woodlands and downs were enclosed to encourage increased food production, even at the possible loss to equity

and sustainability. Of the Longwood Warren he says:

*"These hills are amongst the most barren of the Downs; yet a part of them was broken up during the rage for improvements; during the rage for what empty men think was augmenting of the capital of the country...The herbage was not good, but it was something. Instead of grass it will now, for 20 years to come, bear nothing but species of weeds".*

These concerns of Cobbett identify him quite clearly with a long tradition of writers on rural and agricultural matters dating to the 13th century and Walter of Henley and the anonymous author of Husbandry. Both were familiar with these issues of diversity and sustainability. I have recently analysed the manorial agroecosystem of the 13th and 14th centuries. These manorial estates survived many centuries of change and appear to have been highly sustainable systems. Yet this sustainability was not achieved because of high agricultural productivity. Productivity was remarkably low and it appears that farmers were trading off low productivity against the more highly valued goals of sustainability and equity. These were promoted by the integrated nature of farming and use of natural resources; the great diversity of produce, including wild resources; the diversity of available livelihood strategies; and the high degree of co-operation, particularly on the local management of natural resources.

How history repeated itself. Cobbett was concerned with issues of rural depopulation and integrated land use. And in the 14th century, when some 1300 villages in rural England were deserted as the population crashed, those most likely to be deserted were solely agricultural. People tended to migrate from the agricultural village to villages situated by woodlands and forests, for they offered a greater diversity of livelihood options.

- **Jules N Pretty**, IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, WC1H ODD, London, UK.

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### 3

## A note on the use of aerial photographs for land use planning on a settlement site in Ethiopia

Dick Sandford

### • Introduction

Two NGOs, Concern and BandAid have been assisting settlers at two resettlement sites in Western Ethiopia since 1985. Their assistance has been directed towards a better appreciation of environmental factors and greater participation by the settlers in planning the use of their land.

The two sites were photographed from the air at a scale of 1:20,000 and local consultants were employed to carry out a land capability study. Their report was submitted in June 1988. This report was in the usual form, of more or less use to professional land use planners but with minimal value as a communication tool for discussing land use with the settlers.

To overcome this the prints were enlarged to a scale of 1:5,000 and mosaics were made up at these scales for each of the village settlement areas.

A preliminary test run with a few farmers using one of these mosaics showed that:

- the settlers immediately recognised that this was a photograph of their land;
- they could without difficulty indicate the boundaries of their land on the mosaic (correcting in the process errors made by the consultants);
- they had no difficulty in recognising features such as ponds, swamps, woods, their own huts, thrashing floors, tracks, areas under crop etc;

- they could take one to any spot on their own land shown to them on the mosaic; and,
- they could identify on the mosaic their position at any point of a walk round the land.

Although none of them had seen an aerial photograph before, it was as if they had the stereoscopic vision facility acquired by experienced photo-interpreters in so far as they could show us on the mosaic steep and gentle slopes. This may be a question of transferring actual knowledge of the land onto the photograph rather than seeing slope on the print (as one can test by looking at a picture of an area intimately known to one). But I cannot be certain.

Subsequently a one-week workshop was organised by the NGOs at which representatives of all the villages concerned, including those of the indigenous population and of the Ministry of Agriculture, discussed land use planning with especial reference to the next cropping season. After one or two full sessions, each village took its photo-mosaic and, with its development agent and the local farmers, discussed and agreed on a pro-forma land use allocation. These allocations were then marked and labelled on transparent acetate sheets overlaid on the mosaic. Each village in turn presented their proposals to the full session using the mosaics and overlays.

• **Outcome**

Aerial photography helps technical staff who do not know an area well to identify its superficial characteristics and to visualise development options. It does not help a farmer who does know his land well, including details that cannot be shown on an aerial photograph, to make better plans for its use. It was, however, shown to be a valuable tool whereby farmers could illustrate their knowledge and ideas to others, i.e. developers, and enable developers to extract information of useful accuracy, for example this side or that of a path, without having to walk every part of the land. It provided a visual medium of mutual recognition, the farmers transferring their knowledge of the land onto a representation of it that they could recognise and explain to developers who could visualise what was being told to them through their greater or less ability to interpret photography.

A practical outcome of the workshop has been the start of a longer term programme of land use planning, already under way in which staff of the Land Use Planning Department of the Ministry of Agriculture are discussing land use plans in much more detail with settlers at each village site using the photo-mosaics.

The area in this case was specifically flown and the photo-prints were therefore up to date. A possible snag might be the use of the more commonly available prints which may be 10-20 years old. Especially in recently settled areas, or areas where there has been a dramatic change in the vegetation, for instance through expanded cropping, farmers might find it more difficult to recognise the photo imagery.

- **Dick Sandford, Ludlow, UK.**

## 4

# Using Rapid Rural Appraisal for project identification: Report on a training exercise in Jama'are local government area, Bauchi State, Northern Nigeria

Michael Hubbard, Robert Leurs and Andrew Nickson

### • Introduction

In April this year we co-operated with Ahmadu Bello University in running a pilot course on rural project identification for heads of local government departments of Agriculture and of Community Development of several states in Northern Nigeria. The course was based on fieldwork in five villages in the Jama'are local government area, Bauchi state. We focussed the fieldwork on applying Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques, namely wealth ranking, community, group and household interviews, and various diagrammatic instruments (transects, seasonal calendars, historical profiles and village maps). The purpose was to provide the course participants with improved tools for assessing rural needs in relation to local government services.

Here are some of the high and low lights of the work and what we learned about trying out these RRA techniques in a training course.

### • **Wealth ranking: selection of key informants in the small traditional village**

Done in consultation with the head of the village, to get a variety of occupations and degrees of wealth and any different cultural groups. But there was reluctance among the elders of these Fulani villages to name a woman as a key informant. In two cases the assessment by the woman key informant produced the most radically different wealth ranking classification producing larger wealthy groups than the other key informants. Not clear why.

Ideally we should have consulted others than the village head in making the selection of key informants. But this is very difficult, especially if the wealth ranking is done at the beginning of the work. Advance literature on the village or the area would be useful, particularly if there are any indications from this of any particular group (occupation, status, culture), which is thought to be particularly deprived. In our case we did not have such advance information. Our own findings suggested that among deprived groups are old couples whose children have grown up and left home and new immigrants who live on the edge of the villages. Others who may have been more specifically selected as key informants were: small scale traders, craftsmen and mat weavers (often people without resources for farming or without livestock).

### • **The appearance of poverty and apparent wealth**

While the poverty identification exercise using the wealth ranking method proved successful on the whole, a number of practical problems were encountered, as follows:

- In some villages several households share the same surname. Hence it was necessary to distinguish clearly between them before asking the informants to rank households.
- Some informants, while most willing to help in the exercise, were not prepared to categorise some households as poor because they believed the families would not like to be so classified if they found out. Hence confidentiality was essential,

strengthened by interviewing in the privacy of informants' own houses.

- Conceptual problems arose concerning the definition of poverty itself. In these villages whether a person is thought to be wealthy or not depends on their ownership of land. Hence several informants stated that 'X is poor but may not be poor'. What they meant was that X owned little land and therefore had to buy food from the market - a sure sign of poverty. However since X in fact owns a cattle truck which is used to take produce to the market for other farmers he earns a reasonable income from this. According to an outsider's perception he is not poor. Yet since the social value placed on land is so high he is still regarded as poor within the village.
- A separate but related problem concerns sons who have not yet inherited wealth (land) from their father. According to the prevailing social structure young married sons mainly till the household farmlands (gandu arrangement) but later on they are also assigned separate plots by their father in order to feed their growing family. Until they obtain such land, they are nominally landless and hence classed by some informants as poor. Yet these same informants know full well that eventually they will inherit lands from the father. Hence the youngest son of one of the richest families in one village was classed among the poorest.
- The list of village households we worked from had been compiled by the head of the district. But there was some question (never really answered) as to whether this was the list used for tax collection purposes which might therefore not include names of evaders, and also as to how up to date the list was.
- **The problems with probing, using government officials easily suspected of tax interests**

Our course participants were local government officials. It was clear from comments made once we had established better communication

that some suspicions existed at first, even though we had emphasised the confidentiality of the information.

- **The questionnaire problem - checklists far better**

We made the mistake in preparing for the fieldwork of letting the participants prepare interview schedules in the form of questionnaires. This resulted from our wish to involve them as much as possible - but their experience was with closed type of questionnaires worked mechanically through, and it was difficult to free them from this once they had started, and to discourage them from analysing and generalising (even to decimal places!) the results of the untested, non-randomly applied questionnaires.

In future we will construct checklist (trying to build in easy-retention lists, in mnemonic form perhaps, or like the 'five I's' and the 'six helpers'<sup>1</sup> to provide a basic reference for interviews, and encourage a flexible, probing approach. A few specific, unambiguous questions on which comparable, quantifiable (or at least rankable) information is needed can be added.

- **A better introduction to RRA as a method needed**

With little time to prepare the participants for the fieldwork we concentrated on teaching the RRA techniques to be used and on preparing the interview schedules. With hindsight, a more thorough grounding in RRA as a method was needed (built around 'optimal ignorance' and 'triangulation') distinguishing it from traditional survey methods.

- **Using rapid nutrition assessment**

Upper arm measure seems designed for measuring more extreme malnutrition than the weight for age; weight for height results generally indicated stunting: children who were well below the 'path of health' on weight

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<sup>1</sup> Six helpers: who, what, where, when, how, why.  
Five I's (for farming): incentives, inputs, innovations, information, interventions

for age were OK on weight for height. Also there was a practical problem that most parents had only a vague idea of the birth date of infants - usually only to the nearest six months. This reduced the usefulness of the weight for age measure in particular.

- **Interviewing mistakes**

Firstly, in the community interview it was difficult to get much participation of ordinary people, rather than just the village elders. We felt that although reasons of suspicion and hierarchy were partly responsible here the sitting arrangements did not help - with the questioners sitting near the headman and elders. We hope to change this in future.

Secondly, some of the household interviews were conducted away from the informant's home, in the centre of village. Although obtaining privacy was not the problem (no shortage of isolated shade trees) these interviews were generally less successful than those conducted in homes.

- **Lack of an analytic tradition in the bureaucracy**

Many of the government officers still believe that their role is to 'enlighten' the village people about the 'importance' of education, health, water and community associations. They are also more used to descriptive reporting. Probing is essential to RRA, but many tended to accept what was said at face value, not look for linking points, and to be satisfied with poor information. Among some there was reluctance to remain long in the village and look for detail by consulting different informants.

It could be argued that RRA presupposes that its practitioners already possess a grasp of social processes. For this reason RRA may be easier with NGOs whose approach to rural development is often more oriented to poorer

people's needs. But such a grasp cannot be assumed with local government officers. This was well summed up by one participant, genuinely perplexed, who asked: *'This wealth ranking exercise is very interesting but why are we trying to identify the poorest?'*

Our response to this question was that besides the priority that the poor should receive in government social planning the access by the poor to government services is the best measure of the adequacy of those services - since the poor are invariably last in the queue.

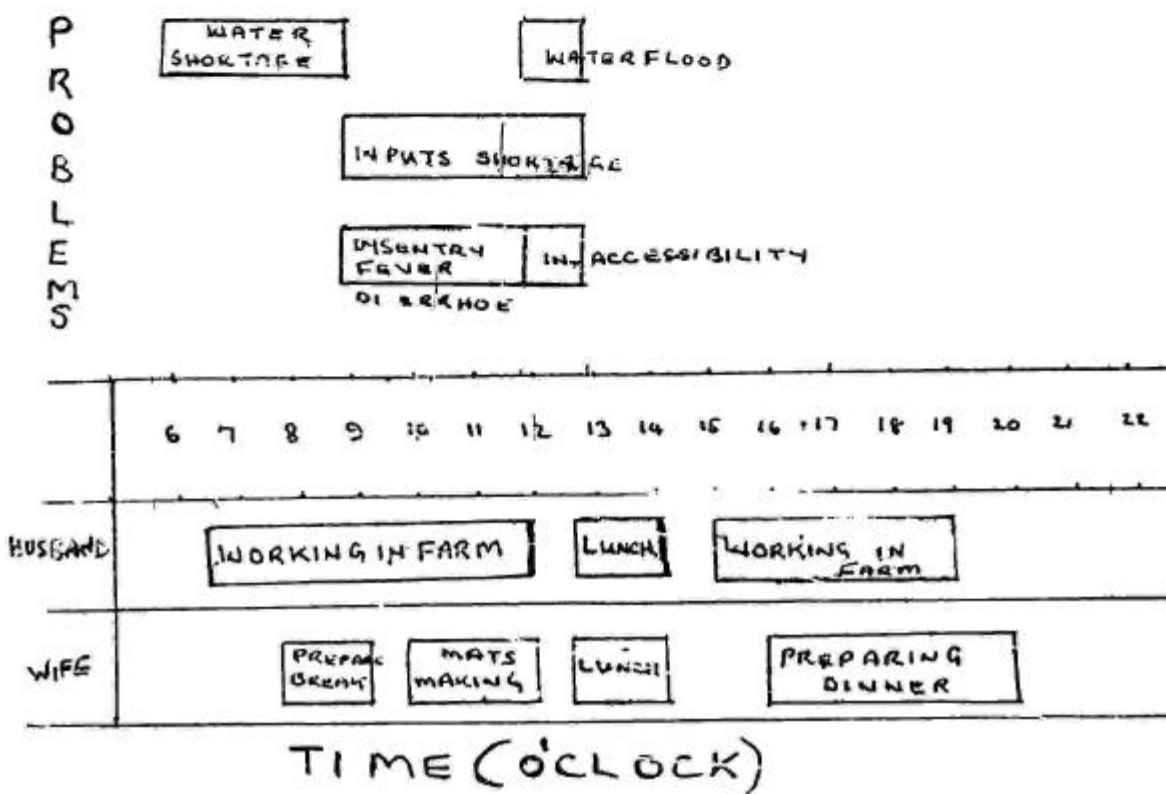
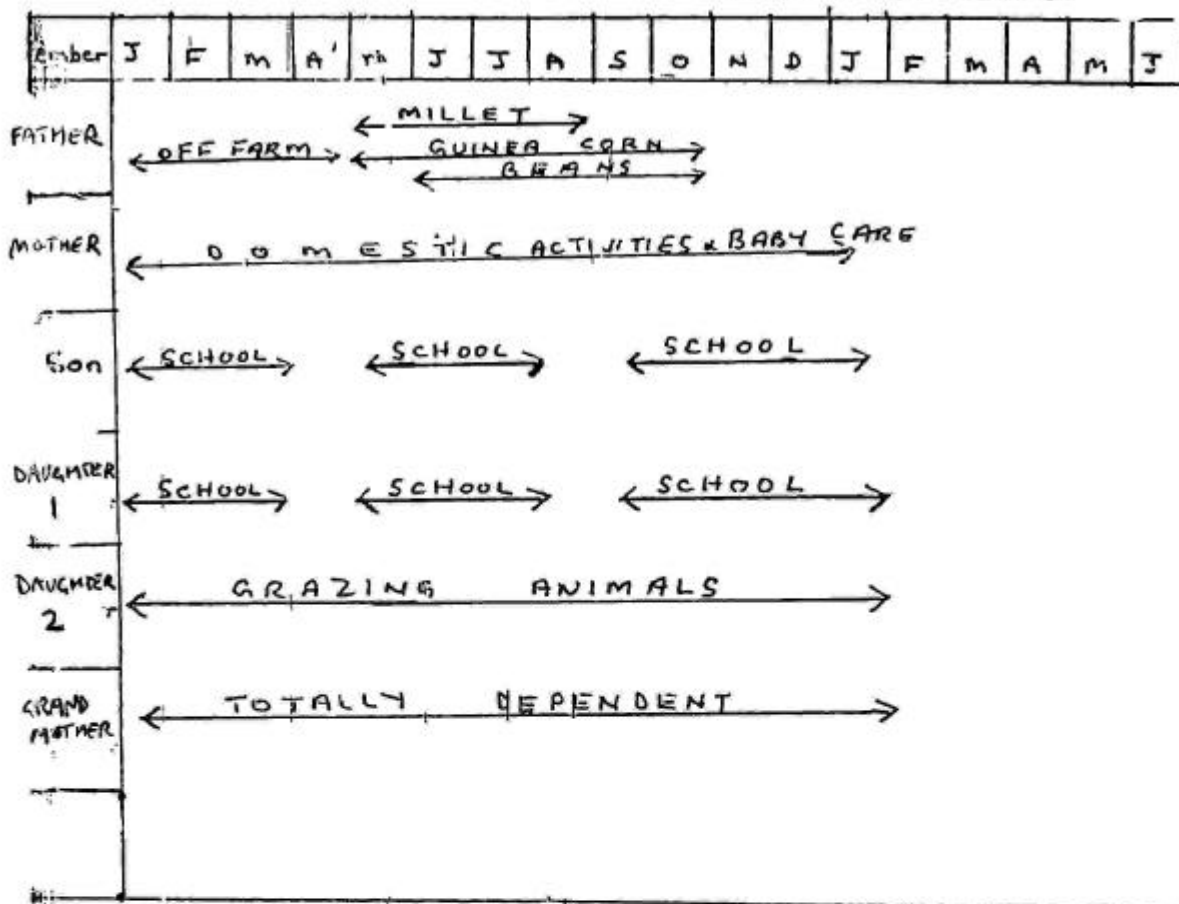
Perhaps at the back of some of these problems was a low level of formal education among the participants combined with lack of a consultative tradition in the bureaucracy. Supplying them with techniques to enable them to go into the villages to find out information with more confidence than before was a major benefit of the course, as cited by the participants in the course evaluation.

- **Poor performance on diagrammatic techniques**

Partly a training fault. Although the techniques were taught their relevance to project planning was not specified sufficiently. The result was that many were skimpily done in the field and hardly related to the analysis contained in the written report. Trainers should have taken more lead in carrying out themselves high quality transects. Seasonal calendars were generally better done but historical profiles were disappointing, perhaps because participants saw no relation to current policy.

A useful means in compiling the historical profile, tried successfully in one village, is to find out if there are village songs which tell its story, to listen to them and go over the events described in a community interview. This proved an excellent ice breaker and source of information.

TEGOYEL VILLAGE - BAUCHI STATE, NIGERIA  
 SEASONAL LABOR SCHEDULE OF MEMBERS IN F/HOUSEHOLD.



HISTORICAL PROFILE CHART FOR SABON KAFI VILLAGE

DOGON DASI DISTRICT, JAMHARE LOCAL GOVT  
BAUCHI STATE OF NIGERIA

- 1869 - FIRST SETTLEMENT, KNOWN AS KAFIN MANOMI.
- 1939 - FIRST VILLAGE HEAD
- 1944 - DISEASE/DISASTER (SMALL POX AND LOCUST),
- 1948 - 2 CONCRETE WELLS CONSTRUCTED.
- 1954 - FIRST FEEDER ROAD FROM GAUNI BAHANI - SABON KAFI.
- 1964 - 1 CONCRETE WELL CONSTRUCTED.
- 1974 - PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILT.
- 1975 - DROUGHT WHICH CAUSED MIGRATION FROM SABON KAFI.
- 1977 - DISPENSARY BUILT.
- 1979 - VISIT BY MOHMED GIDADO, STATE ASSEMBLY MEMBER,
- 1980 - COMMUNITY FARM ESTABLISHED.
- 1982 - BORE HOLE SUNK.
- 1984 - MOSQUE BUILT
- 1987 - DROUGHT,

SOURCE:- FROM 6 ELDERS INTERVIEWED FROM  
THE VILLAGE HOUSEHOLDS.

## • Limitations of an open ended RRA for training RD officers

The focus was on teaching a variety of RRA techniques. No particular investment projects were in mind and the object of all the techniques was to produce a picture of how people of different wealth levels make their living in the villages, the access they have to local government's services and the use they make of them.

As such, the work was of the 'Exploratory RRA' type. The outcome was also general in nature, covering all the different sectors in which local government is involved (agriculture and livestock, education, health, water and community development). The strength of this approach from the training point of view was that many different RRA techniques were introduced, tried out and the many resulting issues discussed with local government and, at a still more general level, in the workshop at Ahmadu Bello university which ended the course. The disadvantage was that covering so many techniques and sectors limited the depth of enquiry and contributed to the superficial preparation and use of some of the RRA techniques. Further, the RRA techniques used were of a widely differing nature: the sketch map, the transect through the village and the seasonal calendar are aimed at resource potential and use. The historical profile and the different interviews (community, group, household) are aimed more at household and community problems.

The interviews require more skill to be done well but were more readily embarked upon in our work by the course participants than were the transect, map and seasonal calendar.

The alternative would be to have specific projects or services in focus, and to select the RRA techniques accordingly.

## • Linking RRA to local government's project identification

Our reason for focussing on RRA techniques was to improve the participants' project identification skills. Since the project

executing body was in their case local government, we needed to develop an institutional rapid appraisal - to link RRA in the villages to local government planning. For this purpose we constructed a 'Use of Local Government Services' pro forma listing the services currently provided, with spaces next to them to fill in the use made of these services by village informants, and how they would like them to be changed. It provided us with a summary statement of issues by sector and department to take to local government.

This needs to be developed further. In future work we would like to add the following:

- During the fieldwork preparation: to work with councillors in the local government area where the fieldwork is to be done to get a good idea of the present project ID and management problems as they see them. This would be in addition to working with local government officers as we did. The excellent co-operation we received would have made this possible; there is a genuine interest in improving project performance.
- To trace through with councillors and officers the decision trees of particular projects - as part of the work done by course participants:
  - a) when and where the major decision on the inception and continuation of the activity are taken; what decisions are and are not in the hands of the council; and,
  - b) how the allocations of funds for recurrent costs are made, for each area of activity.

Together these two little investigations, when combined with the investigations in the villages regarding the use of services, services wanted and resource potential, provide a basis for a rapid appraisal of local government project ID.

## • Too many participants

Carrying out the work with 30 course participants proved logistically horrendous, for transport, accommodation and communications (especially since phoning was

virtually impossible and petrol was scarce). In future we would want no more than could travel in two large estate cars (12 or so). This would also make local accommodation easier even increasing the possibility that we could stay in the villages, with all its attendant learning advantages.

This was the pilot course of a five year programme. Much was learnt - not only regarding the advantages of smaller numbers but also of the ways of linking RRA to project planning and management. Future courses will develop these ideas further.

- **Michael Hubbard, Robert Leurs, and Andrew Nickson,** Development Administration Group, University of Birmingham

## 5

## Visualising group-discussions with impromptu cartoons

Ueli Scheuermeier

### • Background

The Banque de Development de l'Afrique Centrale is assisting the government of Tchad in a project for the production of milk-products and poultry in the surroundings of the capital N'Djamena. The whole project is running into major financial and conceptual problems. Small farmers and small-time enterprisers were organised by the project into groups and financed with a credit scheme. However, results were far below expectations. As a consultant I was asked to find means of improving the programs in the poultry-sector. This obviously also implied improving the relationship between farmers engaged in poultry and the project (SONAPA).

### • The problem

One major problem was that the farmers' perception of the situation was unknown (as 'farmers' one would have to imagine people living in suburbs, with small enterprises - not actual farmers). The aim was therefore to identify the problems as perceived by them, and to rank them.

However, the challenge was language! The language-capacities of the people involved in the discussions (farmers, field-personnel the project, myself) was as follows:

- 'Southerners':  
 Mothertongues: various local languages  
 Lingua Franca amongst themselves: Sarrha  
 Working knowledge of French  
 Working knowledge of Arabic
- 'Northerners':  
 Mothertongue: local Arabic dialect  
 French very insecure

No Sarrha

Myself: Mothertongue: a Swiss-German dialect  
 Working knowledge of French  
 No Sarrha, No Arabic

There was therefore the acute danger that the Southerners would resort to talking French with me, that the translations into Arabic would not happen in the heat of the discussion, and that therefore the Arabic speakers would be marginalised in the discussion - a potentially dangerous development in the context of the Tchad.

### • 'Cartooning'

The groups already knew what the sessions would be all about, because of an introductory tour to all contacts two days prior to the discussion.

Structure of the discussion:

- Drawing of cartoons: As soon as a particular problem started to become recognised as such by most of the participants, I set out to make a rough-handed sketch of it (paper and felt-pens of various colours). Each sketch took no more than 30 seconds to make, and was a pictorial as possible.
- Once finished, this 'cartoon' was shown around and the problem-definition was established. At this stage Arabic speakers would get the cartoons explained to them by Sarrha speakers (in Arabic). Often the cartoon had to be changed or amended. Before going on, it was made sure that each participant related the same problem-

definition, agreed upon by everybody present, to that particular cartoon.

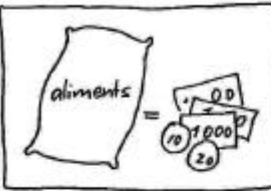
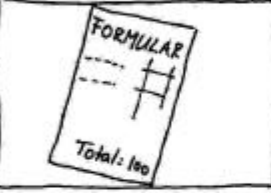
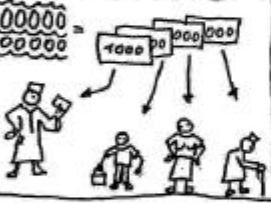

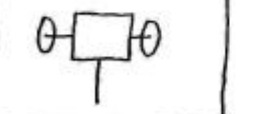

- Further problems were listed in the same way until exhaustion, *i.e.* until further problem-suggestions were being laughed at by all other farmers, indicating that they were personal problems not directly relevant to everybody. The final problem-list consisted of up to seven pieces of paper, each with a cartoon, spread out on the mat everybody was sitting on, and weighted down by twigs, stones, fingers, and elbows due to the blustering dust storm around us.
- Ranking: the cartoons were ranked on the mat into a sequence. Usually the least important were quickly established. Where ambiguities, insecurities, or even quarrels

broke out, strict pairwise ranking was carried out to establish the particular place of a cartoon in the sequence. Often this pairwise ranking resulted in a new problem being recognised, drawn and defined. The new cartoon would then be added, usually resulting in the resolution of the conflict.

- The three top problems were individually discussed for solutions. Whatever notes I wanted to make, I made them directly on the paper of the cartoon being discussed, in view of everybody, in French, and explaining what I was writing.

Each discussion took about 2 hours. The cartoons were taken along and processed into discussion-protocols (Figure 1).

Figure : Protocoll of a visualized group-discussion with cartoons.

Identification Cartoon	Definition of the problem	Counter-measures discussed.
	<p>The feed is too expensive, even though quality is quite all right presently</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The price should follow grain prices on the open market.</li> <li>- Only buy concentrates and proteins to add to the grains (but this would mean we would have to crush our own grains).</li> </ul>
	<p>We don't understand how we are paid by SONAPA for the products we are delivering. Either we are cheated, or mistakes are being made.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A system must be found which we understand and which is acceptable to SONAPA.</li> <li>- No delays in payments!</li> </ul>
	<p>When we go selling eggs in the market, we can't keep much of the money, because everybody knows we have cash and come present their problems to us.</p>	<p>We prefer selling to SONAPA, with monthly payment. That way we have a sum in hand with which to do something!!</p>
	<p>We are afraid that the new chicken-breeders association is going to block our access to SONAPA. We're afraid we will no longer be able to deal with SONAPA on an individual basis.</p>	<p>SONAPA should not believe any organisation which claims to be representing all chicken-breeders. SONAPA must remain accessible to individuals</p>
	<p>We have no pousse-pousse for transporting bags of feed.</p>	
	<p>We have no cemented floor in our chicken-houses.</p>	

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Original text : French ; Ranked, with most important at top.

• **Evaluation**

- Everybody seemed to enjoy the exercise. Interaction was vivid, not only between myself and farmers, but also among themselves. Often I was left completely out of the discussion, and the cartoons would be shuffled and reshuffled. Cartoons would change hands, fingers would point at cartoons while making a point, somebody would angrily throw away a cartoon and then hold another with both hands, etc. During such phases I consciously concentrated on the body language, which helped me to gain an intuitive feeling (not an understanding) of where the pressing points were. After things settled down and were explained to me, I usually already knew the gist of the discussion and only had to make sure I wrote the right interpretations as notes on each cartoon.
- The act of drawing the cartoon had a strong fun-component for everybody. This was instrumental for acquiring a personal rapport with the farmers. Sometimes things were suggested which I did not know, and therefore could not draw, as in the case of a 'pousse-pousse'. I handed over paper and pen to the farmer suggesting it, and he drew it to the hilarious comment of everybody. Seeing the drawing I immediately knew he was referring to a two-wheeled cart which you push (French: pousse).
- The project field-personnel were in the beginning rather lost in their white veterinary coats, notepads and ballpoints. Most of them finally managed to get themselves involved in the discussions and enjoy them. They were often very important for nailing down a clear-cut definition of a problem. However, this was a completely new experience for them.
- Possible draw-back: the knack of visualising and drawing a problem as a picture on-the-spot is not given to everybody. However, the capacity for drawing is not a problem. It should be clear that the quality of the drawing has

nothing to do with its value as a communication-facilitator. The point simply is to make sure that everybody relates a particular problem to a particular cartoon. In the extreme case this cartoon can just be a black dot - but that is no fun! Cartoons are fun, even if they only resemble childrens' drawings!

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| • <b>Ueli Scheuermeier</b> , Berne, Switzerland. |
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## 6

# The use of community theatre in project evaluation : an experimental example from Zimbabwe

**Andrea Cornwall, Mathou Chakavanda, Simbisai Makumbirofa, Guilter Shumba and Abraham Mawere**

### • Introduction and background

ENDA-Zimbabwe (Environment and Development Activities), an indigenous Zimbabwean NGO, has been running a community woodland resource management project in Southern Zimbabwe since 1987. The project places an emphasis on community research and aims at a participatory framework in implementation. The following account relates to a workshop that was held at Mototi Township, the area where the project originated. Locally based project staff, a community worker and village researchers, facilitated the workshop, which had as its broad aim the creation of a piece of community theatre reflecting perceptions and concerns about the project and trees in general.

Our objectives in holding this workshop were the following:

- to highlight key concerns of the community regarding the current tree population of the area;
- to look for solutions from the community and evaluate the role of ENDA in facilitation of this;
- to expose obstructive factors to the attainment of these goals;
- to work these issues into a short piece of theatre which exposes conflicts over trees and could be used to stimulate discussion in community workshops, as representative of community concerns; and,
- through drama, to involve people more closely in the issues which emerged and strengthen motivation.

### • Methodology

- The groups were selected by the community workers from the main household clusters, over a wide age-range and with roughly equal numbers of men and women, so as to represent the community as fully as possible.
- In order to bring about fuller participation in discussion, the groups were divided into single-sex sub-groups of 5 or 6 people. This was also intended to allow women freer expression and to expose the different concerns of women and men where they existed.
- The sub-groups selected a representative to present their points of discussion to the group as a whole. General discussion followed presentations, centring on the issues raised.
- Four animators were involved in going to the groups to stimulate and channel discussion, where necessary. Their role was to be active only where the group remained hesitant about discussing (in the context, this was superfluous). General discussion was facilitated by the community worker and there were four observers, who took individual notes on the proceedings which were compared and discussed in the evaluation session after the workshop.

### • Structure of the discussions

- The groups were given five questions to debate, these having been formulated by the community worker and team of animators

prior to the workshop. Once they felt that they had pooled their views and ideas they were asked to return to the group to present them, upon which a general discussion was held.

- Moving to the specific issues of the value of and threats to trees, the sub-groups each chose 6 important trees by calling out a name in rotation. Discussions in the sub-groups focused on these themes and presentation and general discussion followed.
- To the group as a whole the question was asked: “When did these trees start to disappear?” People shouted out dates and were asked the reasons for their choices.
- General discussion centred around ENDA’s role in improving the situation and how the community perceived this.
- The group decided to focus on three areas in which trees are found and threatened, to emphasise their value. These were:
  - around the home
  - in the field
  - in the forest

For each of these areas a short sketch was created, with people personifying the most important trees selected by the group as a whole and others posing threats to the trees.

- Throughout the emphasis was on what the group felt was the best approach; they made decisions about using the small-group format again after it was tried out in the first discussion and on the structure and content of the play. The facilitators were very much on the side-lines; the structure of the workshop seemed to allow people to participate fully without needing any encouragement.

#### • **Content of the discussions**

#### **Discussion one: Evaluating current status of trees and stating goals**

- 1 The 5 questions posed were:
  - what is the present situation with trees in this area?

- how did this situation come about?
- what is the situation we would like to bring about in the future?
- what are the obstacles to achieving this?
- how do we overcome these obstacles?

- 2 The present situation was seen as being that there were few trees and that they were decreasing in number.
- 3 The causes of this situations fell into three broad categories:
  - a) drought and its consequences: infertile seeds, less potential for growth;
  - b) over-population and increased demand for wood; fuelwood, fencing, building etc.; and,
  - c) mismanagement of resources: destumping from fields, burning to cut down trees, carelessness.
- 4 The goal was seen as increasing the number of trees and, at the same time, awareness of conservation of resources; to plant trees to replace one cut by three planted, for example; to replace dead trees; to leave stumps and cut rather than burn, so that the stumps can sprout; not to cut large trees which can yield seeds; not to be careless and cut trees without a good reason.
- 5 Obstacles to these goals were seen as identical with points 3 a and c.
- 6 Overcoming these obstacles requires heightened awareness and, to counter the effects of drought and encourage community management of resources, the setting up of village nurseries run by the community.
- 7 These two aims were seen as being tackled by ENDA. Firstly, by Mathou Chakavanda, the community worker, in encouraging people to take more care, and in giving people ideas and assistance on where and how to plant trees. Secondly, the nurseries will allow people to overcome the problem of infertile seeds and enable them to replant areas which they observe have become deforested.

8 There were no distinguishable differences between the concerns and solutions articulated by groups of men and women.

### Discussion two: Important trees and their uses

The trees were chosen in rotation, a) being first choice, not necessarily first preference.

#### Group one (of women):

- a) mutarara gives shade, good for crops
- b) mupfura gives shade, good for crops, cure for toothache (as a gargle)
- c) musuma fruits for birds, animals and peoples
- d) mupanda browse for cattle and donkeys
- e) muonde fruits for birds and people, good for crops
- f) rnuhngeni fruits, leaves used for wounds, root used for diarrhoea, 'good for oxygen'

#### Group two (of men):

- a) munyii fruits, bird's food, yokes, good for craft-making, bark used for dying baskets, cure for diarrhoea
- b) muuyu fruits, bark for making string for mats, roots used for washing children after birth
- c) rnuhondo firewood, browse
- d) rnurnveva browse, making doors, washing infants after birth
- e) muzeze twiglets used to chase away ngozi (avenging spirits), roots used if the placenta fails to be expelled after delivery and as an abortifacient, gargles to preserve teeth
- f) muvunga browse for goats, fencing for fields and home

#### Group three (of women):

- a) muchakata fruits keep healthy, for dovi, a source of protein, fruits

- pounded and eaten as dovore (especially good for children)
- b) mutohwe fruits, to make sticks for porridge, it doesn't affect crops when in fields
- c) mutsviri for building, ashes used for decoration of walls
- d) mugaragora food for birds, good for shade
- e) munyambo fruits, cure for sore eyes
- f) mususu yokes, pestles, cure for sore eyes

#### Group four (of men):

- a) mupani for poles, roofing, firewood, caterpillars found on it
- b) mutamba fruits, porridge
- c) musvimwa fruits, birds depend on it
- d) munyera can chew the roots, browse for goats
- e) mukwakwa fruits, food for baboons
- f) mukosvo fruits, poles for building

It was interesting to note that there was little in the way of differences between the uses suggested by the groups of men and of women. Men's knowledge about issues which could be labelled 'women's affairs' by an outsider, observing the sexual division of labour in the cultural context, is often as extensive as women's knowledge.

### Discussion three: the disappearance of trees over time

- 1 Three questions were asked:
  - when did you notice that trees were starting to disappear?
  - what caused it, how did it come about?
  - what made you notice it at that time?
- 2 The group called out the years in which they noticed that trees were disappearing.
- 3 The years mentioned and reasons given were:
  - in 1961- with the introduction of lines, many new homes were built; increased

- population meant an increased consumption of fuelwood.
- in 1969- the winters very cold and there were severe rainstorms.
- in 1970- trees were being used for fencing in the lines; one participant remarked that he had walked 10km before find poles adequate for roofing.
- in 1975- people were cutting down trees in the waterways.
- in 1981- new homes were being built, trees were cut down as fodder during drought; it was observed that before this time the business was dense.
- in 1982- drought again, donkeys depended on trees for their survival.
- in 1987- trees were being cut for fencing and firewood; it was remarked that it was impossible as cover was sparse.

- 4 The group discussed places where trees were still plentiful, places far away such as Gokwe (in the far north-west) were mentioned, in stark contrast to this area.
- 5 People felt that 'with people's desire' and the help of ENDA the situation could improve.

• **Preparation of the play**

- 1 Three scenes were decided upon to show the conflicts over trees in:
- the home
  - the field
  - the forest

For each scene people chose to either act (as trees of those threatening trees) or observe and direct.

- 2 After discussions on which trees should be included, people got up and started to improvise scenes, prompted by the occasional comments from onlookers. At first, five or so trees were suggested for each scene, but after trying this out it was felt that it made the play too long and the point had already been made. Some of the threats

people suggested were also laughed out as being irrelevant. Three trees were decided on for the first two scenes and four for the third, the issue of firewood cutting in the forest being seen as the most important one.

- 3 As people began to improvise the scenes, a director stepped forward and acted to channel the comments which were being thrown in and to suggest where people stood and so on.
- 4 In an hour or so the play was completed to everyone's satisfaction and the performance received lively applause and laughter. From the comments made after the workshop, it seemed that people felt they had created something that they felt good about and really enjoyed themselves in the process.
- 5 In the first scene, a man is sitting at home when he is approached by his two wives who moan about the trees in the homestead - for example, that people are always coming to eat the fruit and then hang around to be fed a meal (it is customary to feed visitors, unavoidable if they appear at mealtimes!). He protests and refuses to give them permission, but they carry on complaining and eventually ignore him and go off to do it anyway. This is repeated for each tree, with a different reason (happening over a period of time), the man getting more and more despondent at their lack of respect for his authority. When they try to cut down the tree, it protests, saying 'Don't cut me down! I am tree X and I give you ...' This has a lot of humour value - firstly because if a man refuses, a women is supposed to obey him (but if he is an old man, they don't) and also because men are always complaining about the perseverance of women in complaining about something so that they can get their own way.

In the second scene, a man is sitting at home, quite drunk, when his two wives come to tell him about the hassles of the trees in the field - for example, children come to take fruit and trample all over the crops. He is totally disinterested and say they should do what they want. The same pattern is repeated as in the first scene. By the time the women ask permission to cut the third tree down, he's asleep and wakes up complaining about his hangover, saying "Go on, run and cut it

down, I don't care, I have a terrible hangover". This again has a lot of humour value, especially for the women.

In the third scene, two women go out to look for firewood and in two of the instances, do what has been discussed previously as being wrong. They attempt to cut down a huge tree, needing a man to help them and they try to set fire to another tree at its base. As they go through the forest, the women make jokes which keeps the audience amused. The last speech from a tree is long and impassioned, appealing to people to realise the effects of what they are doing.

- 6 (In subsequent performances, people changed roles, others came in, different trees were suggested - the play was essentially quite fluid and was adapted by the actors who improvised as they went on.

Whenever I had used drama before I found that people quickly created the play and could improvise freely. This is bound up in the way people interact in that cultural context and therefore may not be so readily repeatable elsewhere).

## • Discussion

- 1 Two features of the method used for the workshop merit comment:
  - The division of the larger group into sub-groups of men and women allowed fuller participation. This was especially relevant to the participation of women, who had a chance to air their views more freely for example, in joking competitiveness, group one, of women, was applauded for raising the best points.
  - The structures given to discussions seemed to enable them to move more rapidly and remain centred on the key issues. Together with general discussion, in which comments sparked off further unstructured exploration of the issues, this seemed an effective approach.
- 2 We feel that the play could be a useful tool to generate discussion and concern at a more

personal level if used in larger community workshops, as well as having use in community evaluation.

## • Conclusion

The outcome of the workshops was a piece of community theatre portraying conflicts over communal resources in a form that the representatives of the community taking part felt could help promote awareness and concern. Through dramatisation of their own concern, the participants may have identified more closely with the issues raised and experienced enhanced motivation to tackle and resolve these problems.

It is through identifying with and taking responsibility for such issues that a community can be self-motivating and that a project such as this one can be sustained in the absence of outsider intervention. Drama is a powerful tool in facilitating reflection and stimulating personal involvement in such areas of concern, often enabling people to see things from a new perspective.

Participating in the drama as an onlooker, by internalising the issues, or as an actor, by expressing them in role-play, can lend this new perspective and engender greater personal commitment to a cause or project. The involvement of local community members can act to legitimate the message and to articulate it more clearly to the target audience. As an exercise in itself, the creation of a piece of theatre of this nature can be valuable. Each area has its own problems, and perceptions may differ as to where priorities lie: locally based theatre allows people to develop ideas and solutions themselves, rather than see outsiders to the community articulating their perceptions.

Using a structured format, with small groups, this type of workshop virtually runs itself. The group of animators can be appointed from local people and facilitate the proceedings, as minimal direction is required. Participation in this form of workshop can lead, as it did in Mototi, to the group taking control of the proceedings, creating the drama for themselves. It does not require a skilled facilitator, but does require for participants to be chosen from the livelier people in the community - in every group some people will attempt to lead, directors can present themselves to the group

rather than a director being imposed on them. A possible approach is to ask for volunteers from the group as a whole to act as facilitators and for this sub-group to take part in discussions on the way in which the workshop will be run and briefed on their role as facilitators. In this way people will come forward rather than be chosen by the people responsible for running the workshop, which could potentially work better.

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