

Editorial

With this tenth issue of RRA Notes you will find enclosed a 2 page **Readership Survey**.

Some 60 articles covering RRA and related activities in 23 countries have been published. About 1000 copies of each issue are currently sent out to 65 countries. But we are concerned to better this service.

We would be very grateful if readers, would take a few moments to complete the readership survey and return it to IIED. We plan to publish the results in a future issue.

1

Farmer participation in on-farm varietal trials: Multi locational testing under resource-poor conditions

Michel Pimbert

In 1989-90, the performance of 4 pigeonpea genotypes resistant to *Helicoverpa armigera* - ICPL 84060, ICPL 332, ICPL 87088, and ICPL 87089 were evaluated in on-farm trials in Medak district, Andhra Pradesh, India. In this part of Andhra Pradesh, 50 to 80% of the pigeonpea's pod production is commonly lost to this pest every year.

Forty marginal farmers from 16 villages were asked to grow the genotypes on large plots (0.2 -2.5 ha) using their own management practices, and to compare them with local pigeonpea cultivars belonging to the same maturity group (medium duration).

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methods were used to elicit criteria for comparisons from farmers in semi-structured interviews. All participants were women farmers who play a central role in fuelwood collection and in all aspects of food production, preparation and storage. The PRA methods used were pairwise ranking and direct matrix ranking in the context of semi-structured interviews involving groups of 10-15 women. The outsiders were 4 staff members of the Deccan Development Society and one ICRISAT scientist, and, when shooting the video film sequences, 5 other people (cameraman, director etc). There were several important discussion periods at different times in the agricultural cycle:

- Prior to planting: pest diagnosis and matching the farmer's landraces with improved pest resistant material (3 days).
- Harvest time: preliminary assessments, farm walks (3 days).
- Post harvest evaluation: semi-structured interviews, quantification and ranking techniques, triangulation (6 days).

Throughout the project period NGO staff did provide advice when asked by women farmers.

The range of criteria normally used by ICRISAT scientists are: days to maturity, grain yield, seed size, seed colour, plant height, pest resistance and grain quality (protein content, cooking time). Twelve criteria were identified and used to rank the genotypes in order of preference by use of the direct matrix ranking method. By relying on a range of informants in different villages, farmers' evaluations could be cross-checked by triangulation. The criteria were:

- height of plant and ability to intercrop;
- flower production (flushes);
- young pod production;
- pod production;
- pod filling;
- pest damage by the pod borer;
- grain yield;
- wood biomass;
- quality of wood for palissade and other constructions;
- taste of grain;
- storability; and,
- grain price on local market.

All ICRISAT lines supplied to farmers did better than local cultivars in terms of yield, reduced pest damage, and other agronomic characteristics in the harsh environment of Medak District. Based on their own 12 criteria of evaluation, farmers ranked the genotypes in the following order of preference: ICPL 87089, ICPL 87088, ICPL 84060, and ICPL 332. Local varieties were all severely attacked by *H. armigera* (55-75% pod damage) and yielded less than ICRISAT lines. Farmers expressed their strong attachment to their land

rices, which are white seeded types (all ICRISAT material was brown seed and thus fetched a slightly lower price on the market).

Taste of whole grain was a particularly important criteria along with wood production and price of grain on the local market.

Table 1. Pair-wise ranking (Pigeonpea preferences)

	Local	Improved (ICPL 84060)
Leaf production	4	6
Flower production	3	7 (but much flower drop)
Pod production	6	4
Pod filling	6	4
Pod borer damage (pest susceptibility)	7	3
Seed yield	6	4
Taste	3	7
Wood production and quality	3	7
Market price	7	3
Storability	5	5

Village: Metlakunta, Medak District, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Note: higher figure represents greater preference.

Table 2. Matrix ranking (Pigeonpea preferences)

	Local	ICPL 84060	ICPL 332
Leaf production	3	1	2
Flower production	3	1	2
Green pod production	3	2	1
Pod filling	3	1	2
Pest resistance	3	2 (1)	1
Seed yield	3	2	1
Taste	2	1	3
Wood production and quality	3	1	2
Market price	1	2	2
Storing	1	1	1
If only one available	1	1	3 (reject on account of poor seed taste)

Villages: Ibrahimpur, Hoti-B, Metlakunta, Nagwar, Medak District, Andhra Pradesh.

Note: 1 = most preferred variety

3 = least preferred

Note: women farmers would like to grow both ICPL 84060 and the local variety next year. Local variety would be sold in the market and improved variety eaten locally. Risk minimising in face of uncertain environment was another reason given for broadening the genetic basis of their production system.

Interestingly, ICPL 332 - which was officially released by the State of Andhra Pradesh in 1989 on the basis of trials carried out with male farmers in better endowed areas - scored well on all-agronomic criteria but was down-graded on account of its bitter-seed taste. Women farmers indicated that they would not grow this variety next year even though it yielded more grain and was less damaged by *H. armigera* than local varieties. Data obtained (Table 3) from one of the large plots is typical of other situations where on-farm trials were arranged by the farmers. This result suggests that varieties identified for release in coastal Andhra Pradesh (A.P) are not necessarily acceptable to resource poor farming communities in the Telangana region of A.P. where Medak District is located. The diversity of situations in risk-prone, complex dryland

environments probably calls for a mosaic of improved varieties rather than a standardised technology (e.g. variety) for all locations.

The 40 farmers involved in this participatory rural appraisal felt that the other three *Helicoverpa* resistant lines were acceptable within their context. The assessments provided by women farmers, and the data obtained at ICRISAT under controlled conditions (Table 4), therefore suggest that at least three other *Helicoverpa* resistant pigeonpea genotypes could be considered for official release in Andhra Pradesh.

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Table 3. Comparison of ICPL 332 (*Helicoverpa* tolerant variety of pigeonpea) with the local variety at Pastapur, Medak District, A.P., during the growing season of 1989/90

Pigeonpea genotypes	No. of pods/plant (30 plants)	Borer damage (%)*	Pod fly damage (%)	Hymenoptera damage (%)	Total insect damage (%)	Sample yield (g)/plant
Local	72	66.5	9.9	1.5	70.9	9.5
ICPL 332	204	41.3	25.4	15.5	57.3	26.6
S.Em ±.	14.1	1.71	0.71	0.73	1.85	2.64
LSD at 5%	40.8	5.0	2.06	2.1	5.4	7.6

*Arcsin transformations were used for analysis

Table 4. Percentage pod damage by *H. Armigera* and grain yield of four pest resistant genotypes and two controls under insecticide-free conditions at ICRISAT Center, Patancheru, A.P., Inida, 1985-1988 (Personal communication – Jain, K.C., Lateef, S.S. 1990)

	Pigeonpea genotype					Controls
	ICPL 84060	ICPL 87088	ICPL 87089	ICPL 332	BDN 1	C11
Proportion of pod damage by <i>H. Armigera</i> (%)						
1985	8	-	-	12	33	21
1986	10	13	15	23	71	38
1987	39	42	44	47	79	86
1988	23	13	13	19	48	31
Average	20	23	24	25	58	44
Yield (kg/ha)						
1985	1400	-	-	1840	1440	1325
1986	1560	1535	1527	1434	1220	1050
1987	710	590	860	700	120	110
1988	1445	1595	1500	1480	1340	1680
Average	1280	1240	1310	1365	1030	1040

2

Rural development in the highlands of North America: The highlander economic education project

John Gaventa and Helen Lewis

Recently, a series of economic reports have warned of growing poverty and underemployment in the rural South (of the USA). Rural areas are seeing plants close, as jobs move to newly industrialised areas in the Third World where labour can be provided more cheaply. The South, it is argued, can no longer depend upon recruiting outside industry as its strategy for development. Rather, we must turn to a policy that nurtures development from within that encourages and fosters community-based organisation and enterprise as the solution to the needs of rural communities.

While 'development from within' is a good idea, the rural South has had little experience from which to relate to it. Industrial recruitment relied upon enterprising elite to bring in outside industry and capital, which would in turn 'create' development. The role of the community was to make itself ready to receive and serve business; to make community and worker interests subservient to the needs of maintaining a favourable business climate. Development was done to and for local communities, not by the people themselves. If 'development from within' is to happen, communities need to develop a new literacy - an economic literacy which enables and empowers local citizens to analyse their own economic problems and resources to develop solutions to joblessness and poverty, and to gain the tangible skills they need to make rural community-based development happen.

In 1984 the Highlander Centre, a non-profit adult education centre in New Market, Tennessee, began to develop a program to assist communities to gain the knowledge necessary to support self-development. In the

last two years, we have concentrated our work in three rural communities: Dungannon, Virginia, in conjunction with the Dungannon Development Commission; Jellico Tennessee, in conjunction with the Mountain Women's Exchange; and Ivanhoe, Virginia, in conjunction with the Ivanhoe Civic League. The three communities have much in common: they are all rural, poor, and in search of a new economic base. Local citizens' groups led by low-income women have sprung up to create alternatives for the community.

At each site, Highlander has worked over a period of time, offering night classes ranging from 10 to 16 weeks in length and providing other types of technical and educational support for grassroots economic leadership development. Our role was not to create jobs or development; rather it was to help the community undertake a process of education and participatory research through which they could assess their own situation, define and implement strategies for themselves.

A number of methods were used, all of which are described more fully in a series of publications available from Highlander. In general, these methods emphasised the participation of community members in researching, analysing, valuing, and understanding their current economic state. This participation was considered vital to reversing the pattern of dependence on external economic forces. A few of the activities included:

- Oral histories: in order to understand the current economic crisis, people need to understand the changing patterns of work and subsistence in the community. Academics gain this knowledge from macroeconomic trends, changing

economic base, etc. Communities must seek this knowledge from within. Asking questions to grandparents, parents, and peers about their work and means of survival, and then charting those responses becomes an excellent way of understanding broad economic changes through people's own experiences.

- Community surveys: rather than rely upon external definitions of need, community participants developed their own needs assessment survey and used it to interview several hundred people in each community. The survey becomes a way of mobilizing the community to discuss their economic conditions. Collective analysis of the survey results also helps create a common language from which to state and prioritize problems to be addressed.
- Community mapping and drawings: visual portrayals became an important way for participants to describe current problems and relationships in the community, as well as to articulate visions for the future.
- Decision-makers' interviews: the process did not rely only on community analysis. After beginning their own research on the changing economy and on community needs, interviews were also conducted with key local decision-makers-bankers, industry heads and county planners. A prior process of 'reclaiming' the community knowledge about the economy was important, so that people did not simply defer to an 'expert diagnosis'. In fact, the community's definitions of needs contrasted so dramatically with those of the power holders, that participants were then able to understand why 'official' bodies often failed to reflect their own needs.
- Videos and readings: as people developed their own knowledge of their local situation, educational materials about other communities and trends were introduced. These included case studies of community-based development elsewhere, study of census data, videos on the global economic trends etc.
- Brainstorming and feasibility studies: participants brainstormed projects which they thought would help meet the community needs. They then developed internal feasibility studies, using the knowledge and research gained from other activities.
- Cultural components: at the community level, economic knowledge can not be separated from other ways of knowing. In Ivanhoe, community theatre became a way of recapturing and sharing knowledge about the community. In a very religious community, study circles about what the Bible had to say about the economy became another vehicle for analysing and understanding the community, as well as for clarifying values and developing a common vision of what should be done. Local cultures must be respected.

In each of these settings the purpose of the project was to reclaim knowledge and understanding of the economy in a way that could enhance effective citizen participation and strategy-development. In each setting, the education and research process were only part of a number of other activities in the community, so it is difficult to isolate the impact of this program alone. But in each case the educational process helped to spark results (which are still unfolding). Individual members of the community have gained confidence, knowledge and skills that have, in turn, contributed to action.

Perhaps these experiences give rise to a new understanding of the 'infrastructure' necessary for development. Traditional development policy emphasises the need for infrastructure development in physical terms - sewage systems, water and roads - as a necessary precursor to industrial development. The knowledge needed for development is 'technical' in nature business plans, feasibility studies, and market research. As important as these may be, case studies and experience suggest a broader view, especially if one is interested in participatory development. In the latter approach, the development of 'infrastructure' includes human development, an education for creativity, regaining and understanding of popular knowledge and history, democratic decision-making, and

consciousness of religious and political symbols. With this investment, people can become better equipped to rebuild their own communities and economies.

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3

Assessing women's needs in Gaza using participatory rapid appraisal techniques

Heather Grady and Amal Abu Daqqa

• Introduction

Save the Children Federation/US (SCF) has been implementing development projects with Palestinians in the Gaza Strip (Israeli-Occupied Territories) since 1978. Like many other international and local NGOs, SCF found itself implementing women's activities year after year without taking stock of women's expressed needs and their own proposed solutions. A better understanding of the interplay of social, economic, cultural, ideological and political factors in Gaza was critical to developing more appropriate strategies in response to women's needs. As a result, Save the Children organised a Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) focussing on women in the Gaza Strip in August 1990. The purpose was to understand the social and economic roles of women better and to obtain more information to improve women's projects. In addition, the PRA introduced women in Gaza for the first time to participatory research techniques.

• Background

The Gaza Strip, a narrow strip of land on the Eastern Mediterranean, has an estimated population of 750,000. It has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967. The Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank (total population about 1.7 million) have been engaged in the intifada, the uprising against the military occupation, since December 1987.

The political, economic and military implications of the occupation and the conditions of the uprising make development work in the Gaza Strip a unique and extremely complex endeavour.

Implementing development projects with, and for, women in the Gazan context poses many of the same challenges which face those working in more traditional and less developed Muslim societies. While women in Gaza have shared many of the gains made by urban women in neighbouring countries such as Egypt, Jordan and Syria, in terms of mobility and participation in the 'public' sphere, a resurgence of traditionalism in the last few years has taken away many of the options women could once exercise. Yet while prohibitions on dress and mobility have increased, women have also played an active role in the intifada. It was in this context that the women's needs assessment research was proposed.

The PRA fieldwork itself was done in two sites, Qarara and Zeitoun. Qarara is located in the south of Gaza Strip, an area of about 700 hectares of primarily agricultural land with a population of about 15,000. The great majority of the local population are landed farmers, with a lesser number of landless refugees and some Bedouin families. Qarara is divided into several relatively homogeneous family-based neighbourhoods.

Zeitoun is a very densely-populated quarter of Gaza City. Its area of 20 square kilometers is about one-quarter urban housing and three-quarters agricultural land, with a population of approximately 75,000. The current picture on the streets in most parts of urban Zeitoun is one of squalid crowding; outsiders would probably categorise much of it as an urban slum. The three main populations include refugees, citizens whose families inhabited Gaza before 1948, and a significant population of Bedouin, who have abandoned their traditional migratory lifestyle.

• Preparations

Prior to conducting the PRA training and forming the research team, secondary sources were reviewed, including books, journal articles and unpublished documents on women in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. While informative, this review revealed a notable lack of detailed and reliable data on women in Gaza. Afterwards, semi-structured interviews with key informants in the West Bank and Gaza guided PRA preparation and selection of the research team and tools. The key informants included representatives of women's committees engaged in productivity projects, academics involved in development work with women, and businesspeople promoting private women's industries. These interviews were very helpful in framing the terms of reference for the research itself, and highlighted the key issues related to women's programme in Gaza, specifically:

- Should women be encouraged to move out of traditional 'women's activities' (e.g. embroidery), or encouraged to continue activities in which they already have experience?

- Should all development projects for women be collective, or should organisations also encourage individual, home-based activities, and why?
- What are the relative advantages and disadvantages of women-only and mixed (men and women) development projects?

• PRA fieldwork

To approach the various topics and sub-topics, we reviewed the range of existing RRA/PRA literature to select the most appropriate methods from the 'basket of tools'. Semi-structured interviewing of individual community women, groups and key informants, review of secondary sources, and direct observation were obvious choices.

- Semi-structured interviews were carried out with about 50 individual women, several key informants, and a few groups of women. The information from these interviews formed the core results of the PRA.

Table 1. Research Plan: Gaza women's PRA
Goal: to improve understanding of the social and economic roles of women in Gaza

Topic	Sub-topics	Tools					
		SSIs with women	SSIs with key informants	SSIs with groups	Direct observation	Secondary sources	Diagrams
Community institutions, services and sources of support	national institutions		X	X		X	
	UNRWA & external assistance		X	X		X	
	mosques		X	X		X	
	neighbors		X	X		X	
	friends		X	X		X	
	training centres		X	X		X	
	preschools		X	X		X	
	health clinics		X	X		X	
Livelihood	women's work opportunities	X	X			X	
	women's activities	X			X		
	savings & assets	X			X		
	inheritance	X					
	income	X					
	household spending	X		X			
	home production	X			X		
	household duties (daily routine)	X					X
	family size & dependents	X					
division of labor	X						
Education, skills	training needs	X	X			X	
	education & work history	X	X			X	
	skills	X	X			X	
	awareness of rights & potential	X	X			X	
	level of education	X	X			X	
Decision making & participation	household duties	X			X		
	marriage	X			X		
	mobility	X			X		X
	spending in the household	X			X		
	dress	X			X		
	child bearing	X			X		
	working	X			X		
	education	X	X		X		
	all institutions	X	X		X		
	women's institutions	X			X		
women's aspirations	X			X			
Problems	women's problems	X	X	X		X	
	community problems	X	X	X		X	
	family problems	X	X	X		X	
	lack of confidence	X	X	X		X	
	dress	X	X	X		X	
	health	X	X	X		X	
	occupation	X	X	X		X	
	home life	X	X	X		X	
	lack of facilities	X	X	X		X	
	society & traditions	X	X	X		X	

- Direct observation was critical in cross-checking data obtained through interviews. A direct observation checklist was completed by one team-member during each individual interview, and included a section on perceived relationships among family members which was important in analysing male-female dynamics in the household.
- We tried using the seasonal calendar but found it not very relevant as women's lives did not vary enough seasonally to warrant using a seasonal calendar. It appears that seasonal calendars are more relevant for men's lives as their labour patterns tend to change according to seasons more than those of women. Seasonal calendars have become standard in male-focussed PRAs, while in this women-focused PRA a tool examining distribution of daily workload, for example, was found to be more relevant (see daily routine section below).
- Similarly, we experimented with a woman's life cycle diagram, but discarded it. It appeared that changes based on age were less important than political developments, like the beginning of the Israeli occupation (1967) and the intifada (1987), which were much more significant and seemed to overshadow other regular cycles.
- We created two new tools in response to the requirements of the PRA:
 - The first is a mobility map (see example), which was used during each individual interview to determine where, why, and how often women travelled. During the analysis stage these mobility maps served as the basis for discussions about women's mobility and allowed the team to produce a picture of where, and why, women travel.

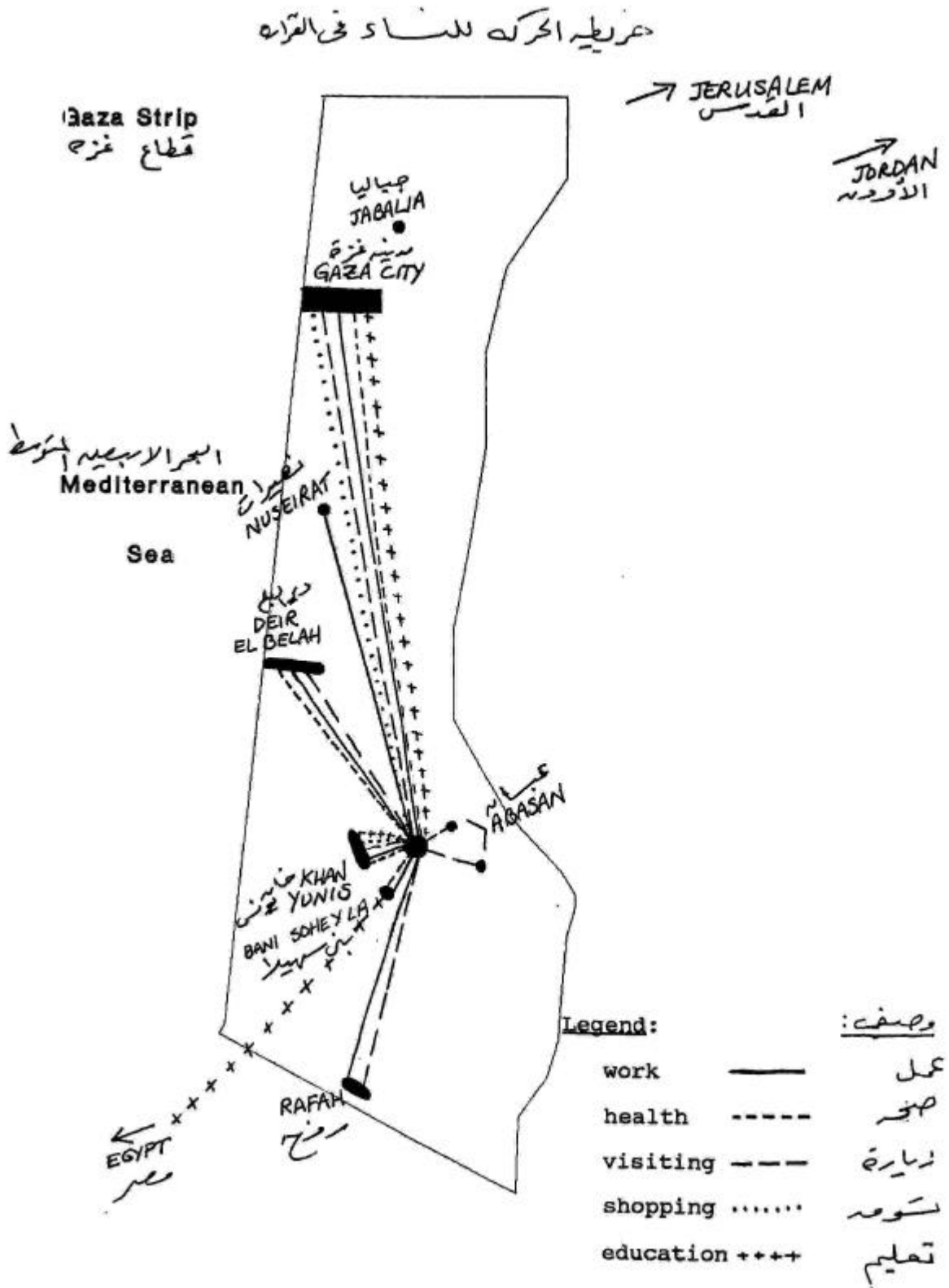
At the centre is the community itself, and at other points on the map are other possible locations to which women might travel. Of course, destinations not on the form could be written in. One blank map

was used for each individual woman interviewed. The interview recorder noted destination, frequency and reason for travel, and the cumulative maps included in the report summarise the information (frequency of travel cannot be seen on the cumulative maps but is explored in the PRA report narrative). We were surprised by the relative lack of mobility of the women interviewed.

- We designed a second form for examining women's workload, the daily routine diagram, which was used to assess the typical daily pattern of women's lives in rural and urban areas. Like the mobility map, the daily routine form was used during each individual interview. While women's daily routine in rural Qarara was fairly uniform, the pattern in urban Zeitoun was more diverse. The major difference in women's daily routine depended on whether or not they worked outside the home. The daily routine form was useful in determining the burden of household responsibilities and the appropriate schedule for future community activities. It was also useful for cross-checking women's information about their time use. For example, some women said they did not engage in productive activities during the interview questioning, but when completing the daily routine form they mentioned that they sewed clothing every afternoon.

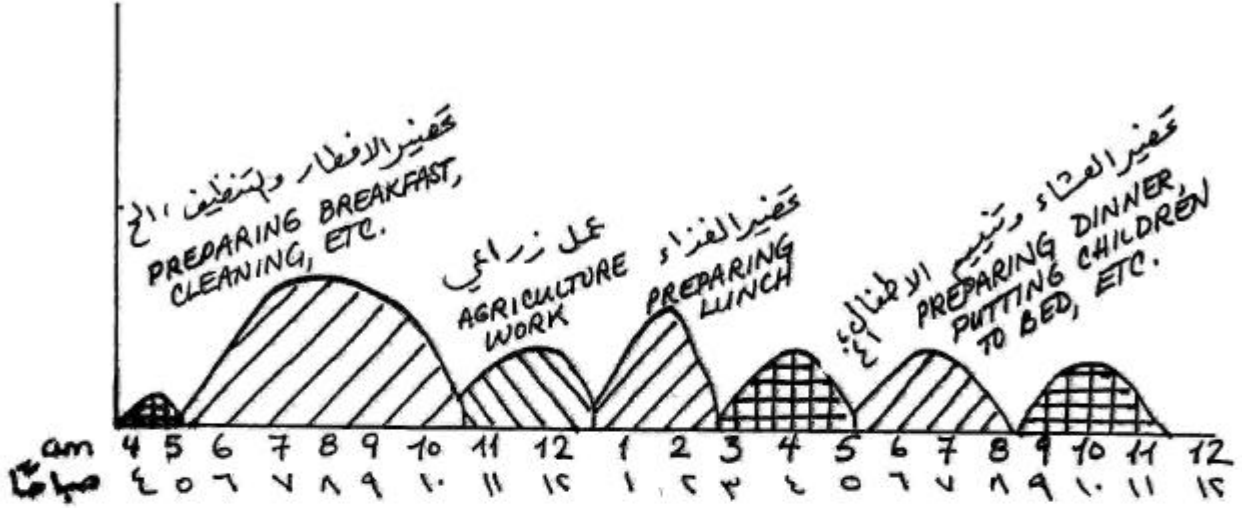
The final report from the PRA ('Participatory Rapid Appraisal on Women in the Gaza Strip', Oct. 1990, available in English and Arabic) provides results from the two areas of Qarara and Zeitoun according to these categories: education; health; life in the home and daily routine; agriculture; wealth, income and work outside the home; decision-making and participation in the community; and needs and problems.

Figure 1. Qarara women's mobility map

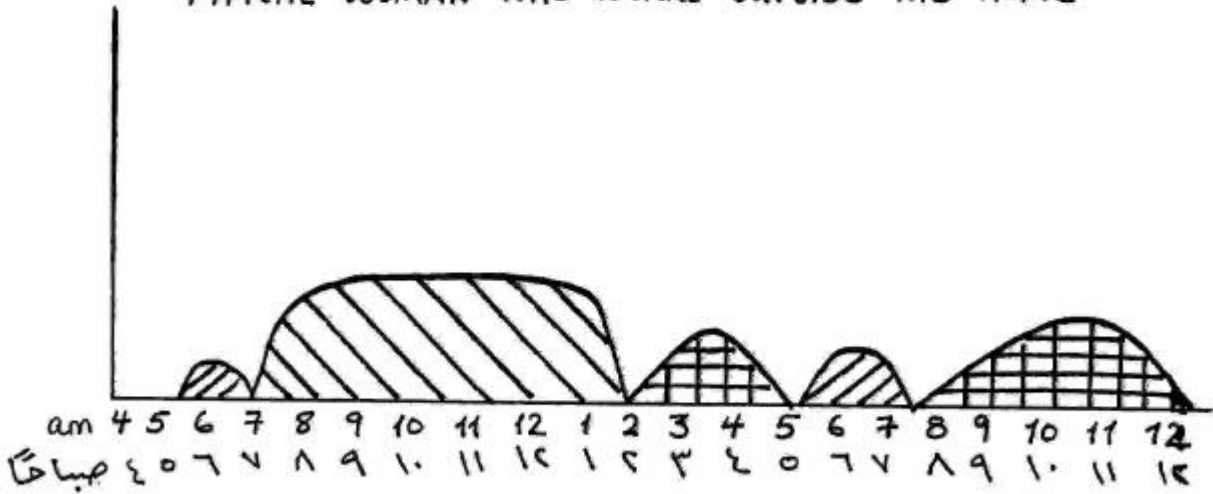





الروتينه اليومي DAILY ROUTINE

معدل المرأة التي لا تخرج للعمل
TYPICAL WOMAN WHO DOES NOT WORK OUTSIDE THE HOME



معدل المرأة التي تخرج للعمل:
TYPICAL WOMAN WHO WORKS OUTSIDE THE HOME



-  الواجبات البيتية
HOUSEHOLD DUTIES
-  الدخل الناتج بما في ذلك الزراعة.
INCOME GENERATION INCLUDING AGRICULTURE
-  وقت الاستراحة أو الترفيه
TIME FOR SELF - REST OR RELAXATION

• **Conclusions from the research**

Following the two-week field research, intensive analysis and discussions resulted in conclusions and recommendations for each of the areas, and comparisons between the two areas. It showed the many similarities in the situations and lives of women in two different kinds of communities in Gaza, and also highlighted existing differences. Conducting the PRA in two distinct areas, one urban and one rural, was critical because Gazan women's lives, and the choices they can make, are determined by their environment to a very great degree. The customs and traditions in rural areas like Qarara are strong enough to ensure a slow pace of change in women's roles in society. In Zeitoun, a wider and more complex variety of factors make the paths of women's lives less predictable, but change and development continue to be constrained. The summary sections of the report which follow show the kind of information on women which a PRA team can gather.

• **Education and health**

The quality of women's lives, as measured by indicators like education and health, is relatively low in both Qarara and Zeitoun. In Qarara, the political situation in the last few years has thwarted any improvement in education for girls because of fears for girls' safety while travelling far to school. The educational level of girls in Zeitoun is better, and the dropout rate for girls is low. This should have a notable positive and lasting impact on the development of women in Zeitoun.

Health awareness is lower in Qarara, but more health problems are apparent in Zeitoun. In Qarara, women and men have healthier diets, rich in fresh foods and relatively low in refined foods. Most of the women work in agriculture and their regiment includes regular movement, while most of the women in Zeitoun lead very sedentary lives without manual work or any kind of exercise. Urban environmental problems in Zeitoun include overcrowding, rubbish, sewage, and vehicle exhaust fumes, plus regular military activity (tear gas, house raids, etc). These conditions certainly contribute to common health problems such as high blood pressure, respiratory problems including asthma, and psychological disorders. Overall, while women's lives in Qarara

have become easier with the introduction of running water, electricity and other modern conveniences, women's lives in Zeitoun have become more difficult with increasing urbanisation.

• **Life in the home and daily routine**

In Qarara, household responsibilities are greater, because in addition to cleaning the house and caring for children, women are expected to contribute to agriculture and care for the household animals. In Zeitoun, few women are expected to work in agriculture or animal husbandry, even those whose families own land. Qarara women also become wives and mothers earlier, and take on full responsibilities as the 'woman of the house' at a young age.

In Qarara, adult brothers are likely to set up separate households, so their wives usually live in nuclear family households. Family expectations come from their husbands and sometimes their mothers-in-law, more than from other family members. In Zeitoun, the extended family pattern is stronger and a variety of older relatives, especially mothers-in-law and uncles, exert control over women's lives. Their influence is often stronger than that of the husband. In Qarara the husbands were frequently at home during the individual interviews; in Zeitoun the research team rarely encountered the women's husbands.

• **Work outside the home**

Women in Zeitoun more frequently hold jobs outside the home than women in Qarara. While some women in Zeitoun believe it is forbidden for women to work outside the home, and some families prevent their women from doing it, there is less control because generally women's movement is less closely monitored than in Qarara. In Qarara a woman leaving the home for her job every day is very conspicuous. In Zeitoun a wider range of lifestyles is tolerated, for both women and men. However, this varies by neighbourhood in Zeitoun, and in some areas controlled heavily by fundamentalist groups a woman is likely to be criticised by her extended family and community for being active outside the home.

Although more women in Zeitoun work outside the home, women's contributions to the household and community economy are less than

in rural areas like Qarara. Women's potential productivity in urban areas like Zeitoun remains untapped to a large degree.

- **Decision-making and participation in the community**

Women in Zeitoun expect to share in most decisions made in their lives and homes, whereas women in Qarara feel much more strongly that they are on the receiving end of decisions. The girls and women of Zeitoun have relatively more input into decisions about education, marriage, childrearing, general family matters, and mobility. But their participation in community life (the 'public sphere') is still very limited. In both areas, attending meetings, coordinating neighbourhood activities, or participating in any communal activities (women-only or mixed) are extremely rare. There are no indications that these kinds of activities have increased since the beginning of the intifada. Indeed, women are now more fearful of leaving their homes to participate in activities in their communities.

Traditions are generally mentioned as the reasons why women may not participate in an activity, but traditions are not consistent throughout Gaza. For example, in Qarara it is considered shameful for women to work in sewing factories away from their neighbourhoods, but completely acceptable for them to do agricultural work. In Zeitoun it is shameful for women to engage in agricultural work, but acceptable to work in sewing factories. Many people also invoke religion as a reason preventing women from certain activities, yet this too is inconsistent among groups and areas.

In summary, the assumptions that women in urban areas of Gaza have a higher standard of living, more control over their lives, and contribute more to their communities, must be re-examined in light of the information obtained through this PRA on women in Gaza. Women in Qarara, unused to being approached by outsiders at all, could nevertheless identify potential communal activities in which they wanted to participate. Women in Zeitoun were less able to conceptualise activities they and other women could do to enhance their lives. The difference could be attributed to greater community integration, such that Qarara women can more readily imagine working together. It could also be that the existence of development projects

already undertaken by Save the Children and other organisations in Qarara has exposed women there to the concept of community-based projects.

A process of consciousness-raising and confidence-building will be important in both communities. Approaches will differ, and will have to be developed together with the different kinds of women in these communities, including farming women, housewives, professional women, and Bedouin women. These basic steps will be crucial in any attempt to bring women more fully into the development process in rural or urban areas of the Gaza Strip, and are the necessary underpinning to helping women to reach their potential in the home and community.

- **Lessons learned**

The women's PRA in Gaza generated the desired results in a reasonably short time. Involving community members in the research was an unqualified success. The research team being composed almost entirely of women from Gaza greatly facilitated the entering of the research team into the communities, and created an instant atmosphere of trust between the interviewers and the community. Furthermore, the two community members on the research team were able greatly to accelerate the team's understanding of the situation of local women, and they were able to put the collected information into perspective.

The importance of community participation in PRA became apparent when the team interviewed Bedouin women in Zeitoun. None of the team members were familiar with the lifestyles of the Bedouin, and there was an obvious distinction between the Bedouin community women and the non-Bedouin research team. It turned out to be much more difficult to interpret, generalise and analyse the information gathered from the Bedouin than from other women. This experience shows that women from the Bedouin community should have been involved in the PRA research team. A PRA team has to be aware of the main 'communities' it will study, and include representatives from each of these communities, before setting out to collect information.

Although only two of the women in the research team had prior experience in research methods, the intensive three-day training on PRA at the beginning gave enough skills to all participants to

make a well-prepared team. Nevertheless, team members needed coaching (by the trainer and each other) during most of the PRA constantly to improve their PRA techniques. Because of the flexibility of PRA, and the use of on-the-spot analysis, team members could identify problems and quickly rectify them.

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The most beneficial aspects of tools within this PRA were: the mix of both individual and group interviews, the element of surprise in the household interviews which allowed the research team to meet women in natural situations, the reaching of all socio-economic levels within the communities, and the ability to cross-check information through the use of different tools. One member of the research team who was simultaneously involved in traditional survey research noted two main benefits of PRA: the ability to add questions during the interview and probe, and direct observation as a cross-check to information obtained verbally.

Problems which arose during the PRA were:

- Too many women (sometimes four at a time) conducted the interviews - it would have been better to have two to three team members in anyone interview. The high number was chosen because: more women received training and practice in PRA techniques; a larger team helped overcome lack of experience as members contributed distinct strengths; and in the unpredictable climate of Gaza, with frequent curfews and strikes, it lessened the risk of losing a 'critical mass' of research team members.
- The interview questions were not 'perfect'. Some interview questions were unclear, especially for uneducated community women. There was some repetition of questions, and not enough questions which could uncover inaccuracies in responses.
- Finally, PRA was found to be better suited to a rural area with a small population where life among the community is relatively homogeneous. In Zeitoun, the information from a one-week PRA could not be as reliable or representative as that obtained for Qarara. Either more time, or perhaps an expanded methodology, would have elicited better results.

4

The bias of interviews

John Mitchell and Hugo Slim

• Introduction

The informal interview is a very accepted medium in our culture but it is not so well understood in rural areas. People often find it a very strange way to communicate. Their surprise at the medium raises important questions about the 'informal interview' which is central to many interviewing techniques such as the semi-structured interview, which is used in Rapid Rural Appraisal.

As a means of talking and listening to rural people, the informal interview can be an important way of learning from rural people, but one that needs to be better understood by its practitioners. Apart from the many specific problems in interviewing we have experienced an inherent bias in the interview form itself. The very act of interviewing often seems to assume two things; namely that:

- questions always have answers; and,
- these answers can be given briefly.

These assumptions create a bias in the interview as a means of discussion and often work directly against the understanding rural people have about questions, answers and the nature of knowledge and information.

• The interview format

Most rural people are accustomed to the simple dialogue the free-for-all conversation or the formal set-piece speech. The medium of the short question and answer interview fall between these three types and is often strange to many people even absurd. The fact that interviews are often carried out through an interpreter obviously makes things doubly unusual.

Informal interviewing is therefore a difficult business. Questions are often met with uncomprehending silence or with a shrug or a chuckle as if to say - 'how do you expect me to answer that?' Answers to large questions like those about drought and famine are usually not even attempted but are very naturally referred to God. In our experience, the fact that one often does not seem to be getting through to people in interviews seems to be because the informal interview is often misunderstood by practitioners and interviewees alike. As a means of communication, it seems to have implicit assumptions, which go against the grain in rural people.

• The structural bias of the interview

There are two main structural biases in the informal interview - both of which seem to come from western ideas about 'answerability' and brevity. First, the interview tends to assume that answers to questions do usually exist and can be given - the idea that most questions are 'answerable'. Secondly, if answers are offered, the fundamental momentum of an interview is often towards a 'summing up' of issues rather than towards a 'talking through' of issues. Thus, interviews often have a tendency to try and put things in a 'nutshell'.

Expecting answers

The first bias which affects interviewing is the assumption of 'answerability'. Interviewers automatically expect answers to their questions. However, whether answers are possible hinges on people's idea of knowledge. This affects whether they think that 'answers' exist in the same way as we do and if they do exist, can they be packaged up

and spoken? People we have talked to seem to have an idea of knowledge as something very complex, something which one not only learns over time but which is also handed down through time and through the land. It is a mysterious thing which cannot be glibly articulated in response to quick questions. They realize very clearly that one cannot know everything and that the little one does know cannot be uttered in a moment. Often the implication is that if the interviewer wants to learn a little, he or she had better stay around - watching and living.

Questions are therefore considered to be big, open-ended things. Answers and understanding are not expected to come quickly and are not always assumed to be 'knowable' and 'speakable'. The wise person is often the silent person. 'Knowing' things is not necessarily equated with speaking them and the existence of answers is not taken for granted. Mystery, ignorance and the superiority of God's knowledge are acceptable. 'Answerability' is not always assumed. People often seem to live free from the illusion that there are answers to every question and as a result they find both the questionnaire and the informal interview a rather curious exercise. The pressure to find 'answers', which is implicit in the classic interview, is often not appropriate when talking to rural people for whom many questions continue unanswered, as mysteries or facts of life.

Nutshelling

The second cultural bias which can be implicit to an interview concerns the idea of brevity. Western ideas often consider the best answer to be the short answer. In our world of newspapers, radio and TV, job interviews and exams we are totally accustomed to the interview form. We are brought up with the habit of individual questioning and quick answers. Many people are used to having enormous questions fired at them in quick succession and are trained to be ready with fast, well packaged 30 seconds answers. The momentum of the great majority of media interviews and exams is towards a 'summing up'. Most radio or TV interviews which people listen to in the west are therefore driven by a desire to encapsulate, to render simple

and immediate. In our culture, a wise person is a person who can talk and answer questions in a brief and concise fashion.

In this way, interviews often aim to contract issues and to simplify them rather than to explore their complexity. This tendency is obvious in many interviews where pressing interviewers want to interviewee to 'put the issues in a nutshell' and encapsulate them for quicker, easier consumption. In this way, interviewing can tend to 'shrink' issues. This 'nutshelling' pressure is often alien to people in rural Africa where questions remain open, mystery is acceptable and brevity is not a necessary virtue.

• Conclusions

Recognition of the cultural bias of the interview is important in good interviewing. Being aware of the unusual pressures it puts on some rural people will make for better understanding. Interviewers will not be so discouraged when they get no short and direct answers or when issues are impossible to grasp immediately. They should not be alarmed if they seem to be 'talking round' issues but should be prepared to follow the course of the conversation and resist the temptations to make people 'nutshell' issues or to force them to come up with definite answers. Short, quick answers often give a veneer of simplicity which glosses over a great deal of complexity. If we are to be better listeners we must be patient and be aware of the strange bias in our questioning and in our expectations.

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5

The outsider effect

Ueli Scheuermeier

RRA Notes 9 got me thinking, particularly the contribution by Weyman Fussell. He raises a very important issue in his account of PRA in Guinea Bissau: What is the role of 'outsiders' in RRA, and how can this role be acceptable to both 'outsiders' and 'insiders'? I've become sensitive to this, as I've now experienced RRA's both as an outsider (i.e. I was the expatriate on the team) and as an insider (i.e. the RRA was done in my own culture, with me having to translate between an outsider and my own culture).

There always is this unasked and never answered question: what's that foreign guy doing here? Why is he here? Consider the old lady in front of her house being informally interviewed by some members of an RRA-team. Of course it may be interesting for her to discuss and explain about life in the village, maybe even piling little cards into neat heaps (wealth ranking etc.). And yes, maybe she even knows why precisely they're asking all those questions and probing and prodding in a friendly manner: it's because they're trying to find out what would make sense in developing her village etc. and that foreigner must somehow be in on it because obviously there must be some sort of 'wisdom' or knowledge coming from him. But still: why is he here? What makes him tick? How come he's interested in the problems of her village, seeing he comes from such a far away place and going back there again? - I've always come away from such encounters with an awkward feeling of voyeurism.

I am glad Weyman Fusell writes that outsiders are agents of change. And he's quite right in pointing out that they act on the prevailing beliefs and values. I find his distinction between the two quite useful. However, it's not really as clean-cut as is suggested. The conclusion that 'it is a proper role of a change

agent to engage in exchange of knowledge about fundamental natural processes' does not include process of decision-making in communities. Such social processes are also fundamental, and just as important, and they border on the values. Repeatedly I've been drawn into discussions on the way we make our decisions in Switzerland (usually by colleagues on RRA-teams), and there was no point in trying to evade them, because they were right on the topic at hand.

Furthermore, I find there is an implicit assumption that traditional values are always 'good' and should not be manipulated or 'bulldozed'. Certainly there always has to be respect for the reasons why the local value-system developed. However, we sometimes do run into trouble, e.g.: the belief that there are intrinsic differences between humans (due to karma), leading to a caste-system whereby serfdom is explained - well, that's a bit hard to take for an European brought up on an egalitarian background. Or: psychic power being exerted to the detriment of others in the community (black magic, etc.) is not something to be taken lightly.

So what are we to do as outsiders whenever we're on an RRA (or PRA for that matter)? Where does this lead to? The following rather preliminary points come to mind:

- a) I just don't see how outsiders can stay aloof from local values. Outsiders must enter a process of interaction with the insiders on both beliefs and values. Of course this interaction has to be based on mutual respect. However, respect cannot mean holding back with your own opinion. Holding back would lead to voyeurism. My own opinion - clearly stated as such and presented as something up for debate - may tell the lady in front of

her house what makes me tick, and it may get both of us thinking!

- b) My observation is that insiders are always puzzled at why an outsider is around. Due to sheer politeness (and very often bewilderment) they don't ask the hard questions: what the hell are you doing here, and why do you think I should be answering your questions? Making the role of the outsider explicit and explaining it to insiders enhances trust enormously. However, most outsiders I've come across (including myself) actively evade and fudge on the reasons for their being around, often giving technical or methodical reasons - never personal reasons. It's the personal reasons the lady in front of the house is wondering about!
- c) Let's face it: outsiders always change local beliefs and values. There's no point trying to avoid it. Besides, that's what I would suggest is precisely what outsiders are for in an RRA: ensure another perspective of the local situation from which new insights into the system are gained by the insiders (new 'beliefs'), leading to new ideas as to what should be done (new 'values').
- d) The decisions for action ultimately have to lie with the insiders, as only they know the complexities of the local system well enough. This accords with Weyman Fussell's 'catalysing development initiatives that are consistent with the felt needs and values of a community'. However, with c) in mind, one would have to accept that these needs and values change due to the outsider input.
- e) Somehow outsiders have to learn that the problems and chances of the village where the 'lady in front of her house' lives concern them personally too in some sort of way. This personal concern (which should have nothing to do with any helper-syndrome) is what makes outsiders credible to insiders as real partners in getting on with a project, a program, an RRA.
- f) What's an outsider, what's an insider? Here I was rambling on the notion that

outsider would mean an expatriate from another culture. But obviously an urbanite would be an outsider in the village, or even the neighbour would be the outsider in a household. And besides, we're all insiders when it comes to looking at things with a planet-wide perspective. So some thought might have to go into the demarcation on outside - inside....

I am aware that here we are touching on very personal issues of motivation and justification among the people who 'do' RRA's, and I know it's sometimes painful to confront these issues. Still, I would be glad to hear from other RRA-practitioners how they cope with the never expressed, but always present question: 'what on earth are you doing here? Why should I answer your questions?' and maybe there are some who already have experience in 'coaching' outsiders: how do you translate the reason for the presence of outsiders to local people?

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6

Focussing formal surveys in Thailand: a use for rapid rural appraisal

Karen Ehlers and Christine Martins

A key stage in formal surveys lies in the identification of the topics to be explored. Commonly these increase in number, so that the survey becomes too long and unwieldy. This article describes the experience of a Centre for Advanced Training in Agricultural Development (CATAD)¹ team in focussing for a formal survey. This process is defined as concentrating on those aspects directly related to a core problem by identifying a limited set of pertinent variables to be assessed, and by identifying and using appropriate low cost data collection methods.

The CATAD-team was requested by the Thai-German Highland Development Programme (TG-HDP), a rural development project, to prepare a survey for assessing key parameters of farms and the distribution of different farm types in TG-HDP's project area Nam Lang. To focus this survey we decided to use methods from the RRA analytical toolkit.

The composition of the CATAD-team was made up according to classical RRA-demands of interdisciplinarity: the 7 team members and a team leader originated from the respective fields of agronomy, plant production, animal production, regional planning, geography, sociology and psychology. The full results of the work are reported in Nagel et al (1989).

• Location and problem setting

The Nam Lang area is situated in the North-West of Thailand close to the border with Burma. The hilly landscape is partly interrupted by steep slopes and rocky elevations. Different ethnic groups traditionally conduct shifting cultivation, which for centuries had been a well-adapted

and sustainable farming system. The production system was characterized by rice cultivation for subsistence and opium cultivation for sale. But increasing population pressure and the ban on poppy cultivation has challenged the basis for this traditional production system. To try to solve the resulting problems, TG-HDP introduced a permanent agricultural system and different cash crops for cultivation.

Since it is not known whether these recently developed extension contents are fully compatible to the situation of each farming household, the CATAD-team was asked to prepare a distribution survey under the premise that it should be as time- and cost-effective as possible. The survey results should then enable TG-HDP to modify their extension concept according to different farm types.

• Procedure

After a preparation in Berlin (1.5 months) and Thailand (2 weeks), the team conducted a 4 weeks' RRA in the Nam Lang area. In the following 6 weeks we developed the Nam Lang survey design parallel to a methodology for focussing formal surveys.

The following procedure was applied:

1. Definition of the core problem, output, purpose and users of our study;
2. Definition of research topics and research questions;
3. Definition of relevant variables, indicators for these variables, their respective survey units, data collection methods for the indicators and formulation of items for the questionnaire;

¹ CATAD is in the Technical University of Berlin.

4. Training of enumerators, pretest and finalisation of the Nam Lang survey design; and,
5. Elaboration of a methodology for focussing formal surveys.

Step 1 aimed at the specification of our tasks, while Step 2 defined the fields of research in detail. Step 3 consisted of the reduction into relevant variables and their further operationalization into questionnaire items. This was done by literature research, by consultation of resource persons as well as by research during the field stay. The following example may explain our concept from the definition of variables up to the formulation of questionnaire items:

- variable: land under cultivation
- indicator: seed input per field in rai (local unit)
- survey unit: household
- data collection method: interview
- item: "How much rice seed did you use for this field?"

In Step 4, a training concept for the Nam Lang survey enumerators was developed and tested, which was combined with a pretest leading to the final survey design. By generalising our experiences made during the Nam Lang survey preparation we developed a guideline for focussing formal surveys (step 5), which is the core part of our report.

• RRA-procedure

4 mini-teams of 1-2 CATAD-members (1 natural, 1 social scientist) with changing composition in course of the RRA plus 1 translator each investigated different villages which met certain criteria (e.g. ethnic group, duration of settlement, altitude, access to market). After village stays of 3-4 days with different tasks, all mini-teams met for 1-2 days to evaluate their findings.

After an area reconnaissance phase of 3 days, the tasks for the first two village stays were to verify and define variables and indicators and to identify survey units. The third village stay aimed at testing data collection methods. During the fourth village phase, items for the questionnaire were formulated and tested in cooperation with TG-HDP trainers and

enumerators. Finally, the RRA-phase was evaluated.

• Wealth ranking

We used the wealth ranking method as described by Barbara Grandin (1988) for the identification of indicators as well as for sample stratification. It was quite a problem getting the names of the village inhabitants since official Thai names and tribal name were often mixed up. Some people did not know their Thai names and, thus, official lists of village inhabitants could hardly be used. The list of names was produced during several meetings with key informants. The names of the heads of households of the village were then written on cards. Illiterate persons were assisted by reading the respective names frequently. By using the cards different persons (headman, a group of key informants village inhabitants met accidentally) were asked to divide the households according to their wealth into different groups. The number of piles varied between 3 and 7. The villagers' concepts of wealth were analysed and different wealth indicators were investigated (material of walls or roof of the house, possession of livestock or luxury goods, the quantity of cooking oil used in the kitchen, the number of shoes bought per adult per year, etc).

Due to the heterogeneous structure of the villages, no regions wealth indicator could be identified. Within villages, farmers use their income to a different degree for subsistence, savings, input in agricultural goods or luxury expenditure. Wealth indicators such as corrugated iron roofs can be the result of wealth in the past, e.g. from income through poppy cultivation, and are not necessarily indicators of present wealth.

Most importantly, the wealth ranking method proved to be an excellent system for sample stratification -members of different wealth groups could easily be selected for interviews. Depending on the purpose of the respective village stay (verification and definition of variables and indicators, test of data collection methods, etc) we selected one or more households of each pile for interview. Per village stay, 3-10 households were interviewed.

• Estimation of field size

The measurement of each single field cannot be done in the context of a cost-effective survey. Several potential proxy-indicators had been identified and tested during the RRA in order to get a reasonably exact assessment of the field size:

1. Area in rai as stated by farmer;
2. Labour input for seeding in person-days per field multiplied by a standard factor;
3. Yield per field multiplied by a standard factor;
4. Size of field as compared to reference fields;
5. Rice seed used per field multiplied by a village standard factor.

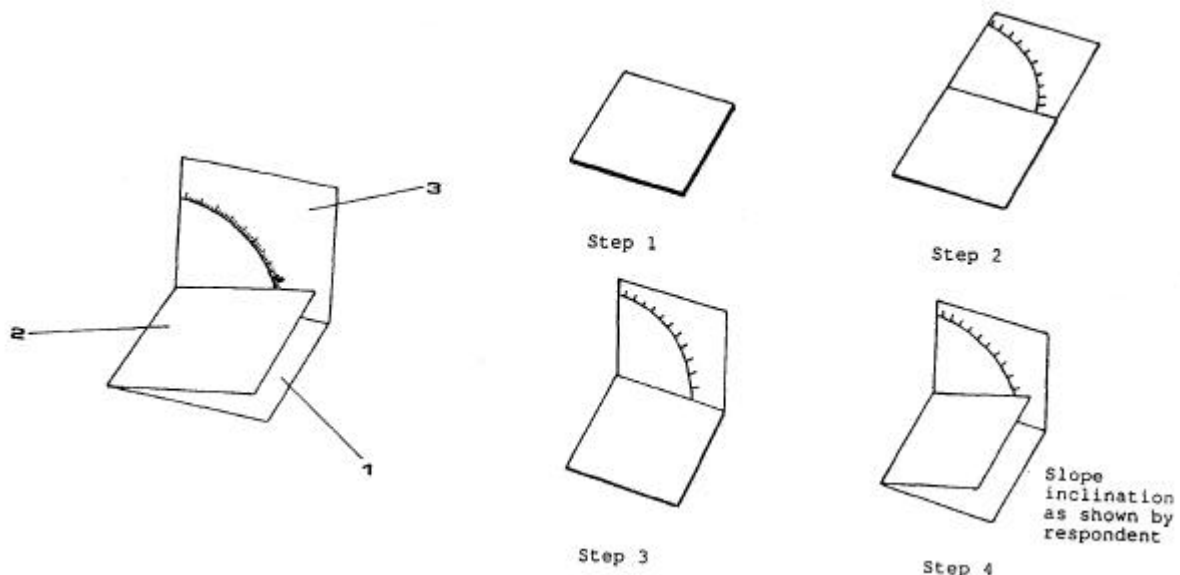
The first three proposals had to be rejected due to an unrealistic assessment of the size of the fields investigated, while the fourth was rejected due to the difficulty in finding suitable reference fields which are known by every farmer of the village. The proxy-indicator for field size finally chosen was the rice seed used multiplied by a standard factor of rice seed input which has to be calculated on village

average by measuring 6 fields and determining the average seed input per rai.

• Physical model for slope inclination

For estimating the slope inclination of fields we developed and tested a special model. It consists of three parts: (1) the ground, (2) a side which represents the farmer's field, and (3) a side with a scale to determine the slope inclination (see Figure). Side 2 and 3 of the model are joined to side 1 by hinges. The farmer moves side 2 and indicates the slope of the major part of the respective field. On side 3 the slope inclination in percent can be read.

Several cross-checks proved that the assessment by the farmers and the reality came sufficiently close, though there was a tendency for the inclination of very steep fields to be overestimated. We cannot explain why - on very steep fields one gets the impression that the field is steeper than it is - just by feeling uncomfortable (it's difficult to explain in words, we hope you understand what we mean).



• Recommendations

Our experiences indicate the importance of an adequate RRA-time schedule. Documentation and analysis of the interviews took more time than anticipated. So the missing time had to be compensated for by sacrificing leisure time - a practice not necessarily to be recommended. A systematic documentation of the results and the elaboration of proper evaluation sheets would simplify the analysis.

Our experiences with the wealth ranking method used for indicator identification showed the necessity of investigating the validity of wealth indicators before their general application. Wealth ranking during group interviews proved to be most effective - lively discussions gave evidence on the villagers' points of view unless a strong hierarchy prevented contributions of under-privileged members of the community. Wealth ranking can be conducted with illiterate persons if someone reads the cards.

Since it is generally quite difficult to meet "the poor", the advantages of the wealth ranking method for sample stratification are obvious with the help of the village representatives the respective target population can be identified.

Proxy-indicators for field size and slope inclination have to be identified and tested under the respective conditions to find the most suitable ones. In the Nam Lang area, the assessment of field size by the rice seed input and of slope inclination by using a model gave sufficient information. Exact definitions of the terms used as "field" and the local measurement units have to be made clear in advance.

In summary, the staff time was higher than usual for normal RRAs. But our RRA had a different task when compared to "normal" RRAs: the focussing of a survey which includes all steps from survey preparation up to data analysis proposals. Our survey preparation took more time than the final survey - this was done within 4 weeks. It is better to spend some more time in survey preparation to limit the survey to its real needs than to do a survey getting a lot of information which may not be relevant. The really useful

information arising from the questionnaire is - as it was requested for by the project - the quantitative data gained.

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