

Analysing communication in participatory appraisal

K. Linzer and R. Kowalski

Introduction

This paper analyses part of the communication process in participation by examining a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) that was organised in Santa Cruz, Bolivia. The paper aims to improve the quality of communication between participants of the regional technology transfer system.

The Santa Cruz Department covers nearly 30% of the area of Bolivia. Most of the technical improvements to agriculture in this region have been developed by 'Centro de Investigacion Agricola Tropical' (CIAT). This is a semi-governmental institution, created in 1975, which is responsible for agricultural research and transfer of technology.

CIAT's objectives are to generate recommendations to improve the agricultural production practices and raise the crop yields of the farms in the region. CIAT's assumption is that the technology which fits the needs of the farmers is not available and needs to be generated locally. Its aim is to provide extension personnel, and through them, the farmers, with research results tailored to the needs of local farming systems. Thus, the communication between research programmes and extensionists has become very important.

Influenced by the trend of international development projects and donors, as well as new legislation about popular participation, CIAT's approach is changing towards increasing the participation of farmers. CIAT has a Department for Technology Transfer (DTT) which forms the link between research bodies and those institutions that develop extension programmes. One of the main

functions of DTT is to feedback technical constraints in the field and farmer demands for improved technology. This is realised in an informal way through permanent contact between CIAT researchers, DTT staff, extensionists and farmers. It is also achieved in a formal way by 'sondeos' (a local version of RRA), and more recently, by PRA.

Participatory appraisal in San Miguel

Since 1994, DTT has co-ordinated the use of PRA in three communities for planning research and extension activities. But how well is PRA working and what are the weaknesses in its current application? One of the first PRAs was undertaken in San Miguel de los Angeles, and this will be used as an example for analysing some characteristics of the communication process¹.

San Miguel is a small, peasant community located in the lowlands, 100 km north-east from the city of Santa Cruz. The villagers are of two origins: Quechuas and Chiquitanos. They took possession of this area 10 years ago and have achieved legal ownership. Their production system is based on slash and burn agriculture.

PRA in San Miguel was planned by DTT and OASI, an NGO with community development programmes in the area in health, education, social organisation and production. The project was then proposed to the community. The visitor team was composed of four agronomists and a communicator from CIAT, and two community workers from OASI. The team stayed in the community for five days.

¹ The information in this section is based on a report on PRA in San Miguel which was written and delivered in the community in August 1994, and also on notes drawn from direct observation.

The activities to be undertaken during the PRA were defined during the first community meeting and included the following objectives:

- Information gathering using PRA methods;
- Representation, analysis and systematisation of information by the PRA team (which included villagers) and in a meeting with 'local experts' (men or women who have experience and skills in aspects of the information obtained);
- Determination and classification of problems and opportunities;
- Elaboration of an action plan for solving prioritised problems in a community meeting; and,
- Development and delivery of a report, which contained copies of the diagrams developed during the PRA, a description of activities undertaken and a copy of the action plan elaborated during the final community meeting.

The outcome of the PRA was an action plan for solving the most important problems of the community in the areas of production, health and education.

Characteristics of the communication process in San Miguel

In agricultural research and extension programmes in Santa Cruz, communication is characterised as primarily 'one-way' communication: from researcher through extensionists to farmers. This approach is characterised by the absence of dialogue between the farmer and technicians.

For analysing parts of the communication process in San Miguel, the Lasswell model is used. Lasswell claimed that an act of communication is adequately explained only if every aspect of the following question has been answered: 'Who/ says what/ in which channel/ to whom/ with what effect' (Morgan

and Welton 1986). Here we use the Lasswell model to analyse the first step of the communication process in San Miguel, the first meeting between the visitors and the villagers.

• 'Who': the communicator

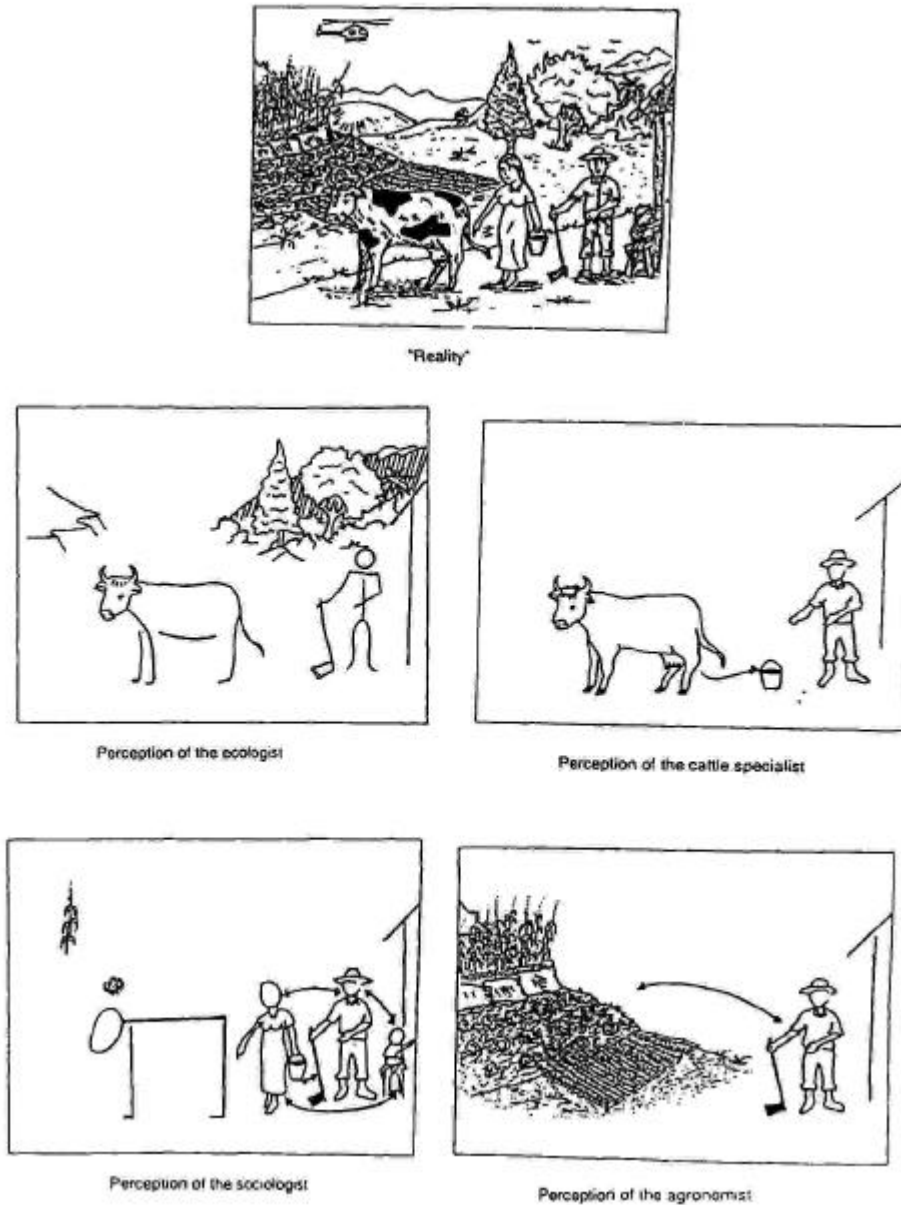
The 'who' is represented by the visitors. As described above, they have different professional backgrounds. They also have different experiences, work in different environments, belong to different cultures and were of both sexes. Thus, the visitors' perceptions of the 'reality' of the community were not homogeneous. As O'Connor and Seymour (1994) indicate: 'that part of the world we can perceive is filtered by our unique experiences, culture language, beliefs, values, interests and assumptions'. Figure 1 illustrates this situation.

The visitors formed a team with a determined goal: to facilitate a good PRA and to achieve the objectives mentioned above. According to O'Connor and Seymour (1994), the success of teamwork depends on dealing with the following key points:

- Goal setting;
- Communicating effectively within the group and to the outside world;
- Reading the environment accurately; and,
- Commitment to success.

In the San Miguel context, these key points rely on personal communication skills and knowledge about the socio-political situation of the farmers. In relation to the members of the visitor team in San Miguel, these were both underdeveloped.

Figure 1. Perceptions of reality Adapted from NUR (1994)



- **‘What’: the message**

In San Miguel the intended message has been: ‘we want to share your knowledge, to help you to identify your problems and opportunities and to plan actions for solving your most important problems’.

The message code

Morgan and Welton (1986) suggest that encoding a message supposes a conscious

decision by the sender to attempt to put the message across in a particular way using appropriate signs. The signs used in San Miguel were spoken words. The words used by the visitors were chosen according to the language to which the villagers are accustomed. For example, local terminology was used and technical definitions were avoided.

Other signs were also used and expressed through non-verbal communication. These non-verbal signs were used to gain rapport and facilitate communication. They included: the

wearing of simple clothes and sandals, the sharing of food and drinks, sitting on benches in the middle of the villagers instead of chairs at the front, participating in football games, sleeping in the community and other actions for matching villagers' customs.

The message content

Words are the content of the message. Postures, expression and the tone of voice provide the context in which the message is embedded. Together they make the meaning of communication.

This means that our unconscious attitudes and behaviour were communicated to the villagers. If a team member was expressing consciously 'we like you and want to share with you' but really did not like the community or felt superior, then s/he is likely to be unconsciously sending this message to the community.

For example, in one exercise in San Miguel, some team members lectured farmers about how to cultivate vegetables, when they were supposed to listen. Their unconscious message was 'I know more than you.'

This behaviour of technicians can be understood as we have often not been helped during formal education to see the farmer as a subject, rather than as an object, of research. As shown in Figure 1, a technician may not notice the farmers at all but focus on the crops and livestock.

Many of us agronomists in Santa Cruz have deep roots in the 'transfer of technology'. This means that we are used to deciding research priorities, generating technology and passing it to extension agents to transfer to farmers. Motivated technicians may be willing to be participatory and see the farmer as a partner. However, they may unconsciously express their traditional beliefs that farmers do not understand agricultural technology.

In communication theory, a transaction which delivers inconsistent messages is called an 'ulterior transaction'. Steward and Joines (1992) explain that every message has a psychological level as well as a social level. In an ulterior transaction, the two do not match.

One of the communication rules of transactional analysis states that 'the behavioural outcome of an ulterior transaction is determined at the psychological and not at the social level'. This means that the unconscious message, expressed through body language and tone of voice, is more effective than consciously chosen signs.

The treatment of the message

The treatment of the message refers to the combination of elements and structure of the message. In San Miguel, the treatment of the message was semi-structured. The idea was clear and some symbols and signs had been chosen. But the combination of symbols and signs depended on rapport and feedback during the process of communication.

The channel

In San Miguel, face to face communication was used. Group discussions were used for problem analysis, prioritising and action planning. Visual aids were included to represent and discuss information. This facilitated the participation of those people who were illiterate or not accustomed to express themselves through the spoken word.

• 'To whom': the receiver

The potential receiver was the whole community. Like the visitor team, the community is an organisation with its own culture and internal communication networks.

At the two community meetings, most of the adult villagers, both men and women, were present. Nevertheless, the level of participation was not equal between the community members. For example, the Quechua speaking women participated the least. They speak little Spanish and are mostly illiterate. If they wish to communicate, they must speak in Spanish, as this is the language used in formal meetings. Another barrier is their lack of self-confidence. Some of them and also some of their husbands believe that women have nothing important to contribute in public meetings. Many women remain silent rather than expose themselves to criticism.

This 'silent majority' in the local community was not drawn out enough in the group work. San Miguel consists of 30 families. The majority of men and many of the women participated in the first and last meetings. However, a problem identification meeting was attended by only 10 men and 3 women. During the early diagramming sessions, only 7 to 10 people participated, most of whom were men.

Ensuring balanced participation is a difficult task for both visitors and villagers. With hindsight it would have been better to run more homogeneous focus groups. In this way we would have gained a diversity of perspectives and could have brought participants together to review and consider the responses.

Similar to the perception of the 'outsiders', the perception of the villagers depends upon beliefs and experiences. They have been, and continue to be approached by, 'top down' methods. Now they need to become able to deal with participation.

• **'With what effect'**

The outcome of the communication process was the fulfilment of the objectives set at the first community meeting. This was achieved in a mainly relaxed and harmonious way. Six months later, some of the planned actions related to CIAT's programmes, such as participatory trials of cover crops for weed control, are being implemented in San Miguel. OASI is using the information for planning activities in agriculture, health and education.

The quality of the PRA has not been evaluated. Nevertheless, considering the communication limitations which have been set out so far, there is clearly room for improvement.

• **Constraints of communication**

The following are the main constraints of effective communication between CIAT staff members, extensionists and farmers. These were identified in the analysis of communication characteristics identified in the PRA in San Miguel:

- CIAT has no have formal channels for applying participatory methods nor for using PRA results in programme planning.
- Many people in communities now have the opportunity to participate in rural development projects, but they may not be able to take the responsibility of participation. Thus, technicians still initiate the dialogue with farmers.
- Most agronomists in Santa Cruz are focused on technical issues and are unable to embrace a more holistic world view. Thus, they do not understand farmers' behaviour and continue to feel superior to them.
- Agronomists often do not use farmers' communication systems and expect farmer to adapt themselves to the technicians' favoured methods.
- Many agronomists in Santa Cruz, even if willing to use a participatory approach, are not aware of their own limitations in terms of facilitation and personal communication skills.
- CIAT staff, extensionists and communities, who form parts of the regional technology transfer system, are comprised of people who are often not prepared for facilitating participation. Yet the weaknesses of each person affects the whole system.

• **Conclusions**

To achieve participatory communication amongst technicians, between technicians and farmers, and amongst farmers themselves, requires a change in attitude in the members of each of these groups. The primary responsibility for these changes must lie with the groups who initiate the process. This change of attitude can be learned and should be addressed through developing the skills of the researchers and extensionists. Furthermore, changes in methodology are required to ensure that, at least initially, PRA is undertaken in more homogeneous groups. This would enable more diverse views to be expressed.

To improve the level of participation in the technology transfer system in Santa Cruz and the quality of communication between participants, training programmes are required. Extensionists and researchers should attend workshops and courses aimed at changing

their behaviour and attitude. The workshops should address the need for greater self-awareness during communication, including the following:

- Critical analysis of beliefs and values of participants at the psychological level, based on transactional analysis techniques (Steward and Joines 1992). These promote the understanding of the role of programmed behaviour in interpersonal communication and the effects of such behaviour in determining perceptions of one's own and others' attitudes.
- Critical analysis of the behaviour patterns of participants. This should focus on the techniques of neuro linguistic programming (O'Connor and Seymour 1994), which is a system of understanding the way information is processed, stored and retrieved. This can promote more effective communication by recognising which methods are most appropriate for the individuals taking part in any given communication process.
- Training in communication based on close observation of effective communicators in action.
- Training in skills related to team building and management.

In addition, the attitudinal changes that are required for effective communication, must be institutionalised within CIAT. This is a process which is currently in progress. Finally, it must be recognised that what holds true for CIAT in Bolivia may also be more widely applicable. Thus, this paper challenges practitioners to reflect critically on the quality of communication in their participatory work.

- **Katrin Linzer**, CIAT, Cas. 427, Santa Cruz, Bolivia and **Robert Kowalski**, CRDT, University of Wolverhampton, Gorway Road, Walsall WSI 3BD, UK.

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2

Using PRA in organisational self-assessment

Michael Edwards

• Introduction

The use of participatory techniques in development work is now widespread. Yet comparatively little use has been made of their potential in helping organisations to explore their own strengths and weaknesses, reflect on their performance, and identify priorities for change. This is a shame. Participatory methods, and the philosophy behind them, offer a powerful vehicle for analysing organisational choices, and organisational choices are a crucial influence over developmental effectiveness.

This obvious point is often neglected in programme evaluations. These tend to focus on the external environment and what is happening in the community, often to the exclusion of the characteristics of the organisations which are funding, supporting or facilitating the work. This approach is fundamentally flawed and can only give a partial account of the real forces at work. PRA methods in organisations often work best where they are used in combination with other techniques. The latter are helpful in cross-checking findings and analysing information (such as income and expenditure data for the organisation) which is difficult to explore using participatory methods alone. Using a combination of methods both enriches the information base and lends greater credibility to the findings. In organisations which are bureaucratic and defensive, the credibility of research is particularly important.

• Self assessment

This paper provides a brief account of one attempt to use PRA and other methods to analyse the impact, cost-effectiveness and

sustainability of two Indian NGOs and two programmes run by Save the Children Fund-UK in Bangladesh. The aims of this study were twofold:

- to build capacity among the four organisations to undertake participatory self-assessment using PRA techniques and secondary research; and,
- to build up a comprehensive picture of the factors underlying organisational effectiveness in different contexts.

The working hypothesis was that impact, cost-effectiveness and sustainability are always the outcome of the interaction between internal factors (the choices each organisation makes about what it does and how it does it), and external factors (the wider political, economic and natural environment in which the organisation works). These interactions are complex and dynamic and so it is difficult to capture them at a single point in time. This was a flaw in this one-off study. However, the results show that mixing methods can be effective in generating credible research and in building people's capacity to reflect on and analyse the work they are doing. It appears that it is possible to achieve both objectives at the same time, though never perfectly.

The characteristics of the four organisations are summarised in Table 1. It shows that there is great diversity in the amount of money it takes to achieve different levels and types of impact. At one end of the spectrum, the People's Rural Education Movement in Orissa (PREM) has achieved spectacular gains at very low cost and across a population of 800,000 people. This is largely due to its strategy of supporting the development of strong, effective and sustainable grassroots organisations from the village level to the

State. These have achieved impressive results for their members in both material terms (health and education services, credit, food security) and in political representation (allowing tribal people and fisherfolk a voice in decision-making and resource-allocation at each level of the political system). At the other end of the spectrum, Save the Children-UK in the River Project (Bangladesh) has found it difficult to achieve broad coverage and sustainable change. This means that its programmes benefit relatively few people at relatively high cost. The reasons for this are complex, but revolve around a strategy which formerly focused on direct service-delivery with high overheads and little attempt to build

capacity among the poor for self-organisation and action.

• Approach

A key question is: what underlies the significant variations in the impact, sustainability and cost-effectiveness of organisations which all aim to achieve more-or-less the same things? Is it because they work in very different contexts (partially, yes); is it because they adopt different approaches and strategies to achieve their objectives (partially, yes); or is it a combination of these things (in all situations, yes)?

Table 1. Costs and benefits of the different programmes¹

Organisation	PREM	Urmul Seemant	Shariatpur	River Project
Target Population	Tribals in 9 districts of Orissa	One half of one block in Bikaner District (150,000)	3 unions of 1 District (48,000)	Population of project area (70,000)
Direct Beneficiaries	600 000 (approx population of villages 'fully-organised' by 1POs)	40,000 (women in IGP, men in farmers' groups)	4,000 (members of credit groups, trained TBAs and CHPs)	3,100 (members of credit groups, women in IES)
Indirect Beneficiaries	240,000 (approx population of villages 'partially-organised' by POs)	50,000 (as direct beneficiaries plus 10,000 for nominal knock-on effects)	40,000 (families in credit groups x 6 people per family, plus population of villages with access to 208 tubewells)	30,000 (families in credit groups and IES x 6 persons/family, plus nominal 11,400 knock-on effects).
Total Costs (Budget)	(1993/94) £145,363	(1993/94) £62,996	(1994/5) £109,499	(1994/95) £135,999
Programme Costs	£125,202	£56,695	£76,666	£112,333
Non-Programme Costs (Admin costs etc.)	£20,161	£6,299	£32,833	£26,666
Total Cost per Beneficiary	£0.17	£1.26	£2.74	£4.53

¹ IES Income Enhancement Scheme, POs People's Organisations, ICDS Integrated Child Development Services, IGP Income-Generating Programme, TBAs Traditional Birth Attendants, CHPs Community Health Practitioners. Exchange rates are UK £1: Rs 49.6 or Tk 55.

The focus of this paper is on the methods used to unlock the complex interaction of internal and external factors. Three sets of methods were used in combination with each other throughout:

- A *review* of existing documents including secondary literature (e.g. SCF files, NGO publicity material), annual reports and accounts, evaluation and research reports, outputs from monitoring systems, and staff profile over time.
- *Discussions* with NGO staff at different levels (individually and in groups), with others (e.g. local government, SCF staff), and with members of communities and participants in programmes (men, women, children and people of different castes).
- *PRA* methods used during meetings and field visits, including:
 - *direct observation* by mixed research teams;
 - *critical incident analysis* (asking people to recall something that happened to support a point they were making);
 - *organisational timelines* (to show how an agency or programme had developed since its foundation or the beginning of its work);
 - *diagrams* to show the structure of the organisation, its activities, and its linkages with other groups and organisations;
 - *time-allocation charts* (to map the time spent by staff in different tasks);
 - *flow-charts* (to show how one programme or activity is related to another);
 - *spider diagrams* (to evaluate progress towards different objectives); and,
 - *balance diagrams* (a method developed on-the-spot to examine different types of activity that comprise the complete programme).

To ensure consistency between the four programmes and to combat bias, a standard framework of questions was used (prepared

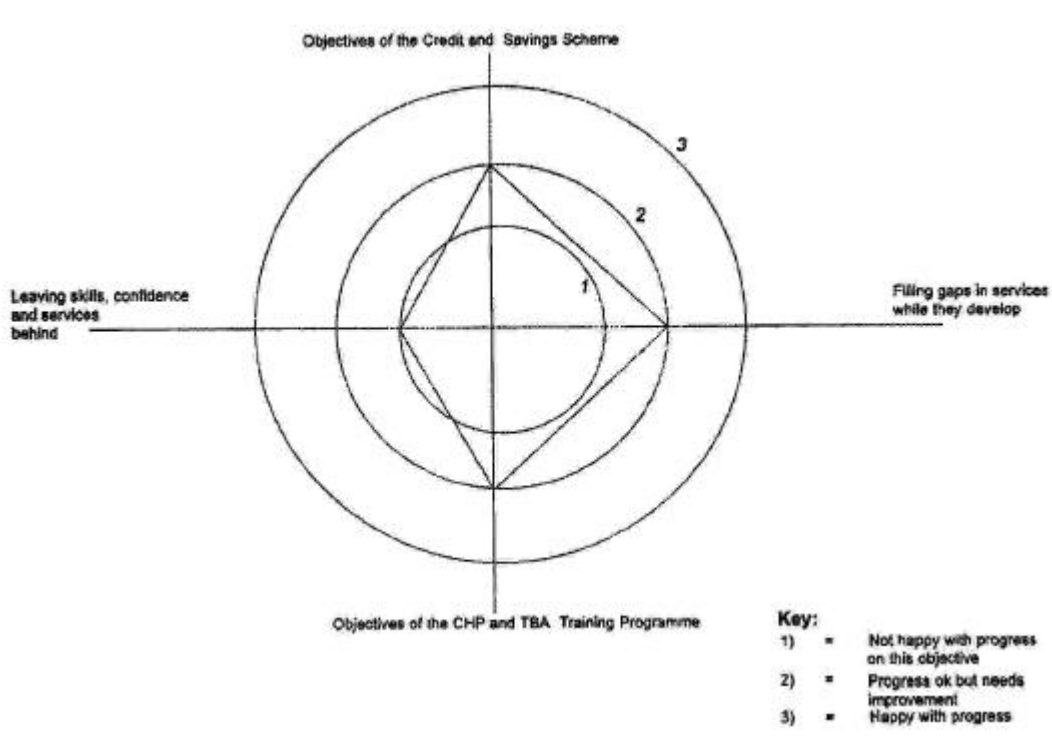
and distributed beforehand) and the same exercises were used with each agency visited. The results were cross-checked against other sources of information and by repeating the same diagram with a different level of staff, or a different part of the organisation. Each visit began with a workshop for staff and involved the production of timelines, and structure/activity diagrams. The following three days were spent in the field (using more PRA exercises, including time-allocation charts), and the final day took the form of another workshop to explore the preliminary results (e.g. using spider diagrams, see Figure 1). The timelines, structure and activity diagrams, and spider diagrams were the most successful techniques used. In all cases, participants were encouraged to produce their own versions of diagrams rather than follow a set format.

• Findings

The PRA techniques were particularly useful for building capacity for self-reflection. Spider diagrams proved an excellent way of illuminating different views about progress among staff or in communities in a powerful and accessible way. PRA also provided a focus for group discussion around key points to emerge from the diagrams. For example, organisational timelines stimulated enormous debate about what had happened when, and why, and allowed different interpretations to be aired and challenged. By drawing timelines on large sheets of paper, it was possible for people to walk around and across them. In this way, they paused to identify critical moments in the life of a project and hold small group discussions about why they were important.

PRA also enabled large amounts of information to be codified, presented and analysed. The exercises produced hundreds of flipchart sheets and whole notebooks full of observations. Without visual ways of summarising this material, it would have been impossible to have a sensible discussion about the results.

Figure 1. Spider diagram produced by senior staff at Shariatpur CHP Community Health Practitioners, TBA Traditional Birth Attendants.



For example, the spider diagrams produced by different groups of people were overlain to produce one version. This represented the consensus scores along each objective. Time allocation charts for large numbers of staff were pooled to reveal the average amount of time spent on each activity. And, secondary data on costs and benefits were re-calculated from budgets and annual reports, and presented in a single table.

In addition to the PRA, the 'hard' data from secondary research and budget analysis, such as the number of beneficiaries and programme costs, proved very influential, especially inside SCF. It was the combination of striking visual results (from the PRA diagrams) with cost-benefit data that was important. One without the other would not have been so powerful. Bureaucracies need numbers as well as pictures if they are to take notice, even if, as in this case, the results (especially the averages and cost-benefit calculations) were highly imperfect.

The trade-off between rigour and accessibility was, in my view, a reasonable one. The study produced a set of empirically-based conclusions which are robust, reliable and

representative. Simultaneously, it provided a vehicle for critical reflection and analysis among staff and communities. This resulted in both increased capacity for organisational self-assessment in the future and valuable insights into NGO performance. These should make a useful contribution to the wider literature.

This is not to say that the balance between rigour and accessibility was right - it wasn't. There was not enough emphasis on training and capacity-enhancement (something which is being corrected in the next round) and the interpretation of results (the key area) was too dependent on myself. Thus, this paper very much represents my own views of what the results tell us. Furthermore, the follow-up was disappointing, although feedback from the eventual report was positive in most cases.

• Final reflections

There were suspicions among some of the organisations as to the motives of the exercise ('just another academic from outside who's come to take our knowledge', as one put it to me). It took a full day of discussion to air these

feelings and find a consensus from which to move forward.

The approach used in this exercise did not resolve this dilemma which is faced by all external agencies who use participatory techniques in their work. The 'extraction' of information for agency use went hand-in-hand with the 'empowerment' of staff and others through the process of capacity-enhancement. Indeed, these dual goals were always, and transparently, a part of the exercise.

We were honest about the motives of the exercise from the beginning. We only worked with organisations who actively requested that they be included. We pre-circulated a framework of questions and encouraged each organisation to discuss them independently of the research team. We asked them to be honest about those which they felt were relevant, those which could be dropped, and what others might be included. We tried to be open and flexible in terms of timing, techniques and reporting back and stipulated that nothing would be published without the explicit consent of all the agencies involved.

As the results emerged (especially in the preliminary written report) it also became clear that there would be substantive disagreement in some areas. This affected the SCF programmes in Bangladesh in particular. Some staff felt that we had underestimated the importance of decisions taken by SCF Headquarters in London, and apportioned too much responsibility for disappointing results to factors internal to the organisation in the field. It took four months or so to negotiate a form of words in the final report that satisfied

these concerns, while remaining true to the actual findings of the fieldwork.

The use of PRA techniques in organisational settings should only be contemplated by organisations which are prepared to reflect on their performance seriously and openly, and to change themselves as a result. For NGOs (or other agencies) which are committed to putting their participatory principles into practice, such methods can be invaluable in identifying ways forward. This project suggests that PRA methods are particularly effective when used in combination with other approaches which can give the results the 'credibility' that may be required in bureaucratic settings.

- **Michael Edwards**, 5 Medusa Road, London, SE6 4JW, UK.

NOTE

Readers who want to know more about the findings of the study should look at SCF Working Paper 14 ('NGO Performance: What Breeds Success?'), which presents them in detail. Contact Save the Children Fund, 17 Grove Lane, London, SE5 8RD.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank all those who participated in the study and offered their input and comments along the way, especially: the staff and volunteers of PREM, Urmaul Seemant, SCF Shariatpur and SCF River Project; the communities who participated in the fieldwork in India and Bangladesh; and SCF staff in Delhi, Dhaka, Kathmandu and London.

3

Involving resource-poor farmers in agricultural extension

S. K. Pradhan

Introduction

Conventional agricultural research and extension did not seem to benefit the smallholder farmers in the risk prone areas in the state of Tripura, India. The land consists of undulating hillocks, and extension and development activities did not seem to percolate into these communities. The scientists and field extensionists of the Kriki Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Farm Science Centre attributed this to:

- the gap between local practices and the technology packages advocated by KVK;
- local dependency on external institutions and subsidy; and,
- local expectations for physical inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, animals and feed.

Extension and development programmes are designed to address farmers' problems. But the extension scientists may not have adequate knowledge of the farmers' circumstances and needs. Perhaps the real problem lies in the approach itself. The rich experience of the farmers, their innovations and 'age-old' practices in handling the environment are often not given any importance.

Thus we used PRA to emphasise the involvement of the local farmers in every stage of decision making, from identification of problems through to collection of data analysis and planning. The following two examples demonstrate how agricultural extension and development activities were improved in Tripura through using a participatory approach.

Improving extension through Venn diagramming

The K.V.K is meant to serve as a 'light house', to guide the progress of the farmers and the research scientists. In terms of extension services, it is important to use the right media and methods to get extension messages through to farmers. We used Venn diagrams with different groups of farmers to understand how useful various extension activities undertaken by K.V.K were for them (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Venn diagram of the effectiveness of extension efforts

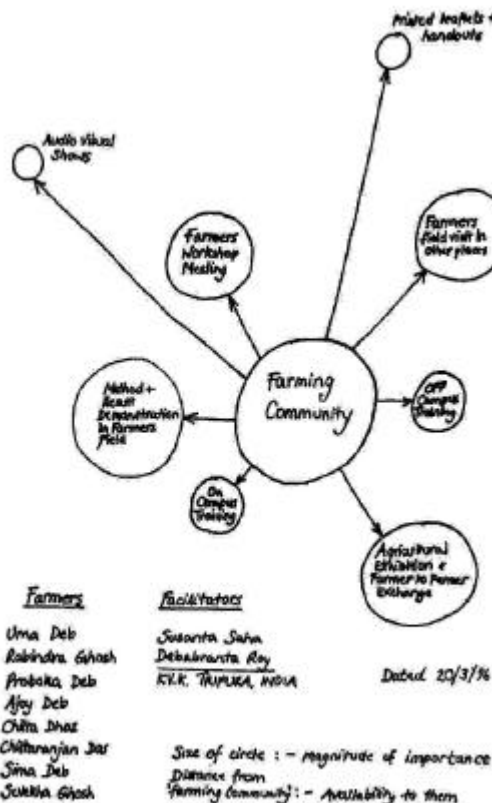


Figure 1 shows that the most important extension method for farmers (depicted by the largest circle) is demonstration plots in their fields. This is followed by workshops and meetings, field visits and farmer-to-farmer exchange programmes. Least important are training programmes, audio-visual shows and printed leaflets.

The distance between the circles in Figure 1 depicts how available the method is to farmers. It shows that training opportunities are more available than other activities. But activities which are prepared at the Centre for farmers, such as audiovisual shows, handouts and leaflets, are neither readily available nor important to them. PRA tools helped us to modify our extension approach so that the right methods and media were used that interested farmers and could get the information to them efficiently.

Historical matrices and projects

Many development projects have been implemented in Tripura to improve the traditional practices of shifting cultivation. Historical matrices were used to help understand the reason for the success or failure of previous development schemes. Table 1 suggests there is little to show for the previous development activities. People have used the project means for their own ends.

In general, the loans were seen as a 'subsidy' and were not valued by the farmers. Political leaders often encouraged them not to repay the loans in exchange for their votes. This created a local perception that it was the farmers' right to get 'free' money because they are eligible voters.

Table 1. A history of development activities and comments

Location	Year	Dept.	Programme	Amount in Rs	Purpose	Present Position	Comments
Binay Krishna Jamatia	1992	Co-Operative Bank	Animal Husbandry	-	2 calves	calves sold	used the proceeds on house hold expenses, believed that the amount need not be returned since it was a govt subsidy
Pradip Tripura	1991	State Bank	Integrated Rural Development programme	12,350	piggery 10 pigs	no pigs	sold pigs, with the proceeds bought land for agriculture
Nagger Basi Tripura	1991	State Bank	Integrated Rural Development Programme	8,950	piggery 10 pigs	no pigs	sold pigs, the proceeds have been used for household expenses
Sukan Chandra Tripura	1991	State Bank	Loan mela	12,350	piggery 10 pigs	no pigs	purchased bullocks with proceeds from the sale of pigs, for agricultural purpose
Nikhil Chandra Jamatia	1988	Corporation	Tea shop	7,000	Tea Shop	nothing	More credit than cash sale - no recovery

Table 2. Changes in action plans

Location	Items as per earlier plan	Items as per proposed plan
Zerkumar Tripura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exotic pigs 3F & 1M • balanced concentrated feed up to first furrowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullock one pair • Goat 4F & 1M • 10 indigenous poultry birds
Dayalaxmi Tripura	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exotic pigs 3F & 1M • balanced concentrated feed up to first furrowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indigenous cow -1 • indigenous poultry and ducks (10 each) • horticultural crops
Athoi Mog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exotic pigs 3F & 1M • balanced concentrated feed up to first furrowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indigenous cow -1 • inland fisheries • 3 indigenous pigs with local feed
Chou Mog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exotic pigs 3F & 1M • balanced concentrated feed up to first furrowing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 indigenous cow • 1 pair bullocks • inputs for paddy cultivation

Table 1 suggests that the development schemes were different from the farmers' needs and choices. In most cases, the physical inputs of the project, such as the cows, were sold to buy an alternative product. The size and type of enterprise provided were not matched with the local farmers' abilities and capacities.

Further discussion revealed that the quality and quantity of inputs and their untimely supply were contributed to failure. Apart from project-led failure, some farmers expressed that their lack of skills also contributed to the downfall of the activities.

In the light of the findings of the historical matrices, planning exercises were used to follow up proposed new projects. An important outcome of this exercise was an attitudinal change: a self-help group was formed to help the communities develop their future activities in a more sustainable manner. Table 2 shows the radical change in the action plans of activities to be undertaken in one project.

In the previous project, the needs assessment was completed with a questionnaire survey. As most of the tribal families maintain indigenous pigs, the planners included exotic pigs in development projects. They believed that the participating families would earn more money and thus the family would be able to sustain and continue the activity. However, while some farmers prefer exotic varieties, others prefer indigenous varieties. This depends upon

their resources and capacity. Most people rear one or two pigs at a time using local feed purchased on a shared rearing system. PRA was used to give them the option to plan the development activities through the self-help group and develop a repayment schedule made by them as per group consensus. Immediately the farmers shifted from exotic pigs to other items. There was great diversity in the enterprises chosen to ensure returns.

• Changes observed

Although this is just the beginning, various positive signs are being observed amongst the participating farmers, scientists, extensionists, development workers and the project. The following changes were observed during and after the PRA exercises:

- a change in attitude, away from seeing subsidies as derived from external institutions towards using their own efforts together with those of external agencies;
- a sharp increase in participation in all activities and partnership decision making process for sorting out problems; and,
- formation of a local institution for organising farmer-led research programmes.

The quality of the PRA gradually developed through time. It was initially difficult to bring together different political groups because of the high level of political consciousness within the community. It was also difficult to conduct

PRA exercises in areas where farmers were used to subsidies and handouts.

• **Conclusion**

Although it is just a beginning, we increasingly feel that a more participatory approach has reduced many of the bottlenecks and poor performance associated with previous projects. This has improved our progress towards the project objectives. It is felt at all levels, from the farmers to volunteers and project personnel, that the approach and methodology has had an enormous effect on the development process. We have improved our extension approach and learned from the past to improve the development process.

- **S.K.Pradhan**, Training Organiser, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, P.O.Chebri, Dist.-Tripura (West), PIN -799 207, India.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Kamal Kar, Calcutta, India and Dr.P.Das, Deputy Director General (AE) ICAR, New Delhi, India, for providing the opportunity to learn the methodology and approaches. Also to S.Satish, Social Development Officer, World Bank, New Delhi, for encouragement to conduct PRA under the project.

4

How big should on-farm trials be and how many plots should be measured?

William J. Fielding and Janet Riley

• Introduction

Traditional agricultural research has been the preserve of scientists who have acted on behalf of farmers. This research resulted in many measurements of great precision which can be analysed according to standard procedures. However, no matter how good the science might be or how persistent the extension efforts, it has been found repeatedly that technological advances will not be adopted unless they are acceptable to farmers. For example, in Jamaica the recommended practices for the control of sweet potato weevil have been known, and extended, for 100 years but never adopted by farmers because of their labour constraints.

The participatory approach to agricultural research and development attempts to overcome this problem and learn from the farmer. Since agricultural researchers have left the confines of research stations to pursue their investigations alongside farmers, new research techniques have had to be developed, and others modified, in order to adapt to changes in location as well as to a more multi-disciplinary approach. This article discusses some conflicts which arise when agricultural research is conducted on farmers' fields. Such research often has multiple objectives which can be incompatible.

On the one hand, researchers wish to gain reliable, objective and quantitative information on the performance of a technology, while at the same time, obtain the farmer's opinion of it. Further, economists may wish to assess the potential economic impact which the technology may have and the sociologist the social aspects (e.g. displacement of labour).

On-farm trials are often conducted where only limited areas of land are available and where there is the likelihood of large differences in production from different sections of the field. The usual approach to research comparing different technologies would require many harvest areas to be planted to get precise (if inaccurate) estimates of yield. Large harvest areas would be required to get accurate yields for economic analyses and assessments of inputs (particularly labour).

Yield measurement

Current literature indicates that to assess a technology fully, agronomic, economic, statistical and farmer evaluations must be made. The importance of each evaluation depends upon the objectives of the research and the stage of the research process.

Although much attention has recently been paid to collecting information on farmers' perspectives, one of the key measurements which is always required is that of yield. Ultimately, the farmers' goal is to produce enough food to meet his/her requirements. The farmer's opinion of how a crop produces its final yield (at harvest, after storage etc.) is vital to test the robustness of the technology and to assess its acceptability to producers. An accurate and precise yield measurement is required so that production can be compared from different technologies used by the same farmer or to compare similar methods between locations. Reliable assessments of trade-offs between yield and other indicators of production, such as, greater market sales or increased need for labour, also require accurate yield measurements.

When scientists are estimating yield from a farmer's field, both the area used to produce the harvest and the harvest weight need to be measured accurately. Under many circumstances neither measurement may be easy to make. Areas can be marked out at the start of a study or just prior to harvest. Yields may have to be recorded in local units, using local measures, and converted to standard units, at fixed moisture levels, for purposes of comparison. One of the difficulties faced by scientists is that there is little information available on how large harvest areas should be, and, how many they should use in order to obtain reliable estimates of yield.

The literature associated with agricultural research seems to suggest that measurements from farmers' fields should come from harvest areas which are larger than those traditionally used on experimental stations. It also suggests that one measurement for each field can be sufficient. However, measuring farmers' yields from a research and development project in which the farmer has participated in, for example, the choice and implementation of components of the technology package, is identical to measuring farmers' yields in a production survey. The only difference between these measurements is their end use.

The established literature on the estimation of crop yields from farmers' fields suggests that harvest areas should be in the order of 100 m² but that it is better to have two harvest areas of 50 m² than one area of 100 m². The second harvest area serves several purposes:

- it reduces bias in the yield estimate (this can be by as much as 50%);
- it allows location variation to be taken into account; and,
- it allows for a check on the reliability of harvest yields and to highlight peculiar values.

Our recent work, using vegetable yield data from on-farm trials in Jamaica¹, suggests that harvest plots should be between 75m² and 150 m², depending on the crop, and that precision of

yield estimates can be greatly increased by use of a second harvest unit (see Box 1). Thus, examination of harvest data from on-farm trials results in similar guidelines to those given by surveyors.

If yield estimates from participatory on-farm experimentation have features common to those obtained from surveys, what else may they have in common? Yield measurements obtained from measuring produce from an area (which is less than the total crop area planted) result in estimates from what is known as crop cutting. This method has been much criticised as it invariably results in over-estimation of crop yield, typically in the order of 30%. Major reasons why they are inaccurate include the following:

- It is not always easy to decide if plants at the edge of the measured area are or are not part of the area under investigation. If the area is small, edge effects can become a major source of error, hence the need for large plots.
- Harvest areas must be chosen at random from the field under investigation. Non-random selection, particularly if plot size is small, can distort the estimated yield.
- Yield estimates take no account of storage or transportation losses, and so may not reflect the yield which can be used by the farmer.

It is convenient, but not necessarily wise, to assume that yield data collected from farmer-run trials can be incorporated into economic analyses of a technology. The problems of scaling up data from small plots is well known. Thus measurements from 1m² samples from farmers' maize terraces may be multiplied up to compute national yield statistics but if they are not measured precisely that imprecision will be multiplied up also (see Box 2). Although the weighting of yields by harvest area can help to improve the overall yield estimate, it may result in some values being influential on account of harvest area rather than being typical of the location under study.

¹ Data from the Rural Agricultural Development Authority/Soil Nutrients for Agricultural Productivity, CIDA funded project; used with permission.

Box 1

HARVEST AREAS USED IN JAMAICAN ON-FARM TRIALS

Crop	Average area used in the study (m ²)	Suggested harvest areas for on-farm trials (m ²)	Average areas used for on-station trials (m ²) in Jamaica
Cabbage	37.1	75	16.7
Peanut	67.2	300	14.9
Sweet pepper	39.7	100	50.2
Tomato	48.4	150	5.7
Yam	31.8	100	15 plants

About 100 on-farm trials were conducted in Jamaica to assess fertiliser response to a range of domestic crops (land availability was not a constraint). The trials were laid out according to standard statistical practice. Analysis of the results showed that much larger plot sizes would have enabled more precise yield measurements to be obtained. The importance of repeating the trials at different sites was also highlighted. More precise yield assessments can be made when a technology is applied to more than one area. Increasing the number of harvest areas from one to two improved the precision by 45% for cabbage and 20% for yams, compared to using only one area. Using two sites with two harvest areas improved the precision by 72% for cabbage and 60% for yams, compared to using only one area at one farm.

Box 2

PROBLEMS OF MULTIPLYING UP YIELD FROM SMALL HARVEST AREAS

In St. Kitts a broccoli variety trial was conducted using small plots. Next to the trial two of the varieties were grown in areas similar in size to that of a commercial plot in St. Kitts. The kg/ha yield estimates for the two varieties were as shown in the box below. Clearly use of the yields estimated from small areas could give quite misleading results.

Variety	kg/ha extrapolated from small area	kg/ha extrapolated from large area	% error in small area estimates
A	6,320	3,480	+82
B	6,530	4,800	+36

Implications for participatory research

Given the circumstances under which participatory research is done, researchers must be aware of the difficulties of collecting unbiased yields. It is unlikely that an entire field will be available to test a production package. Therefore, scientists should attempt to collect at least two yield values from large harvest areas representative of the farmers' field. If these areas cannot be chosen at random, the yield may result in biased estimates of the 'true' yield. Even if large areas are used, care must still be taken at harvest to reduce bias arising from edge

effects. This may require more supervision than one may wish to impose, but if poor quality data

are collected, they will degrade the value of any agronomic, economic or statistical evaluations, as well as the understanding of farmers' evaluations. Even under favourable circumstances, the limitations of yields obtained from only part of a farmers' field should be remembered. There are other implications concerning size of test area and farmer's attitudes to a technology. These concern the extent to which the size of the area to which the technology is applied can influence farmers' responses.

Are farmers' attitudes similar when they are based on what they see from a single small area compared to seeing several large areas? Would a farmer respond in the same way if he/she sees a small, bad patch in a small area compared with seeing a large, bad patch in a larger area?

If there is only one area to which the technology is applied, will he/she respond in the same way if he sees the crop response in two areas, particularly if one is favourable and the other less favourable? If not, would conclusions about the technique be changed and if so, which set of responses would be regarded as best representing the farmer's reaction? (see Box 3).

Presumably there is an optimum amount of information which the farmer requires to make a firm decision; if so what is it? How the requirements for large areas are met when land area is a limiting factor will remain a headache which will require the researcher's skill to solve, or he/she may need to resolve not to collect data which may be unreliable. At least the researcher must be aware of the risks taken when observations are made from small plots.

BOX 3

Opinions and attitudes are obviously subjective. Most of the information which the brain receives comes from our eyes. However, it is well known that our eyes are often deceived through optical illusions. Consider the simple case of choosing a patterned material for a dress. How does our opinion of the pattern and colour change when we see one small area, two small areas or a large area of the material? What we 'like' can change as we see more of it. Presumably similar changes can influence what the farmer likes; if so, the size and number of test areas could have a critical influence on farmer response for some characteristics.

• Conclusions

Estimation of harvest yield from farmer participatory research programmes has much in common with yield estimation from survey work. In order to obtain unbiased estimates of yield, yield should be estimated from the entire field under investigation. When this approach is not possible, large duplicate harvest areas should be used. These must be chosen at random from

the study field and care must be taken to distinguish between the recorded yield and yield available for the farmer's use.

Lack of such rigour typically inflates yields, results in unreliable economic estimates and incorrect information being passed to farmers. Size of test area may influence farmers' perceptions of success of new technologies. All of these factors will affect technology selection in on-farm trials and should be considered early in the planning stages of the research with the farmers.

- **J. Fielding** and **J. Riley**, Institute for Arable Crops Research, IACR-Rothamsted, Harpenden, AL5 2JQ, UK.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

IACR is grant aided by the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council of the United Kingdom.

Performance and Participation

An overview

Andrea Cornwall

- **Performance and participatory development**

Drama, stories and song have long been used in development. Most commonly, performances used for and by development agencies feature pre-scripted plays and catchy tunes that entertain and engage as a way of getting messages across. Like advertising jingles, such performances seek to 'sell' particular ways of doing things by offering new and different practices which they show to be more desirable. Laughter and action draw the crowds to see characters facing the problems and practising the solutions that development practitioners regard as the most pressing or appropriate. Audiences come away having seen characters with which they can identify washing their hands, planting trees or refusing to have sex without a condom.

All too often, these audiences remain passive spectators and play little to no part in selecting the themes, shaping the action or defining their own solutions. Lipservice may be paid to 'participation' in order to enhance effectiveness. Surveys may be carried out to get the messages right, local actors or tunes may be used to make the performance more authentic. But control over the messages and over the medium remains in the hands of outsiders. From AIDS plays to fertiliser songs, these top-down interventions give local people little scope to explore their own realities for themselves.

Participatory uses of the arts in development break away from the 'we know best' approach. The Freirean approach to education begins from what people know and works with them as subjects, rather than objects who are simply fed information. Similarly, participatory performance work emphasises the importance of working with and from people's own realities and using their own modes of expression. Local people replace outsider scripters, illustrators, editors, directors and actors and become active participants in creating and exploring solutions to real-life dilemmas.

By engaging the creativity, as well as the analytic capabilities, of local people, the use of participatory theatre, video and other art forms can stimulate and sustain community participation in the development process. By giving people a voice, participatory media can nurture the confidence to speak out on issues that might otherwise remain unaddressed. This provides a valuable means of communication within and beyond the community that is in itself empowering.

- **Using the creative potential of the arts**

In this issue, contributors explore the ways in which the creative potential of the arts can be used as part of a participatory process and, in particular, how PRA practitioners might benefit from integrating performative and artistic media into the PRA process. Contributors explore:

- the use of participatory theatre to articulate and express the issues that affect people and to work towards solutions (see Harding, Jackson, Mbowa, de Koning, this issue);
- the use of the language of theatre in participatory monitoring and evaluation (Mavrocordatos, this issue);
- using 'legislative theatre' for policy research (Jackson, this issue);
- using theatre in a participatory educational process (see Ogolla, Norris, this issue);
- the use of other creative media in participatory work, including the use of visual and verbal art and video (see Gould, van der Wijk, Lloyd Laney, Johannson, Smithies, this issue);
- intersections between theatre and PRA, in community-based analysis and in workshops (see Smith et al., Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, van der Wijk, Gould, Gordon, this issue); and,
- using drama in PRA training (Neefjes, Pat Norrish, Gelpke in Tips for Trainers, this issue).

These articles offer food for thought, raising a number of interesting questions about the possibilities that performative media offer PRA practitioners.

• **Creativity and empowerment**

One of the most powerful contributions that arts can make to the development process is to unleash - and provide fora for the expression of - creativity. By representing and owning their own dilemmas, participants engage with the process of finding solutions not only on an abstract level through discussions and analysis, but also by immersing themselves in the emotions and real-life reactions that these dilemmas provoke. This process can empower those whose views and experiences often remain unsolicited and unheard (see Mbowa and van der Wijk).

Theatre provides the most immediate forum for this kind of involvement. But other art forms can equally - and in some contexts or for some people, more appropriately - stimulate engagement and reflection (see Gould)

PRA is generally regarded as a means to achieving particular ends: as a way of stimulating community involvement, enabling community people to do their own research, creating partnerships and so on. It is less often talked about as a *creative* process. Whether they are sketches hastily drawn in the sand or elaborately constructed models, the process of creating a visual representation draws on the creativity of those who make it. The PRA process harnesses this creativity to create visual outputs which then become the objects of discussion: moving from an *expressive* to an *analytic* mode.

As Gould notes, in many development situations art forms evolve by accident rather than design. While the use of art forms may be intended as functional, to regard their creation as merely the production of practical outputs would miss important dimensions of the process. Outputs from PRA activities can equally be regarded as works of art. And while the finished product is fixed in time, the process through which it is created is like a performance - a dynamic interaction between people that flows from one act to the next. Captured on video and played back, this process can form the basis for further analysis with the community; used as part of participatory video activities the recording and re-presenting of PRA activities can enhance the depth of analysis (Su Braden, pers. comm.).

Where PRA, as an analytic activity, is allied with the use of techniques that expand its expressive and creative potential, the process can generate further insights and possibilities. It can also serve as a mode of self-expression that can increase participants' confidence (see Smith et al., Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, Gordon and van der Wijk).

• **Rehearsing for action**

Performing and visual arts can serve as a therapeutic medium, providing a way of releasing and exploring feelings. Plays, for example, can be a vehicle for people to vent their frustrations; poems and drawings can enable people to express their feelings in ways that they might not be able to in everyday communication (see van der Wijk, de Koning and Gould).

While there is undoubtedly an important role for activities such as these, they may not help people to move beyond current realities and to imagine new possibilities. By engaging people's imaginations and harnessing their creativity in a process that moves away from a description of how things are to an analysis of that situation and of possibilities for change, the arts can also be used as medium for exploring solutions and rehearsing for action (see Jackson, Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, and Mbowa).

As used in participatory development work, the creation of performative or visual images is a starting point rather than a finished product. It serves as a basis from which to begin to unravel and analyse the underlying issues and to work together to find solutions. Getting communities to make up plays or draw pictures is not enough. As Zakes Mda (1993) argues, community members may participate fully in creating and performing a play, but this is not to say that they become critically aware as part of the process. Without intervention by a skilled facilitator, plays - like the visual representations of PRA - can merely confirm, rather than challenge or offer alternatives to, current realities.

Here, the dilemma arises as to *whose* artistic forms are used in this process. Verbal art, plays and songs are often part of the rich cultural life of communities: in rites and rituals, or in other forms of traditional ceremony or celebration. These 'indigenous cultural forms' offer, it would seem, an appropriate cultural medium for participatory activities (see Mavrocordatos and Harding). Yet it needs to be remembered that in some contexts traditional stories and songs serve to reinforce the existing order. Playing with these forms might not only rob them of their cultural meaning, but may also be counter-productive.

Introducing new and different forms departs from the familiar and may seem artificial. There is also a danger that introduced formulas become mechanical and unrelated to how people in that community express themselves. PRA practitioners have seen how easily this happens. New forms may, however, offer a more neutral framework for expression and analysis. Appropriateness is a matter of

context: what works in one settings might not automatically work in another.

• Performance and PRA

If the use of performative media in a participatory process is to sustain local rehearsals for action and lead to actual change taking place, it needs to be rooted in local realities and not merely imposed in one-off, outsider-driven exercises. This is a challenge that PRA practitioners face and one in which the use of performative media familiar to communities may prove useful.

Theatre for development

Like PRA, Theatre for Development (TfD) has its roots in the philosophy of empowerment. Like PRA, TfD uses local materials and enables local analysts to make use of the tools it offers to make sense of, and change, their realities. However, while PRA tends to focus on the material aspects of people's lives and limits social analysis to exploring institutions or differentiation, TfD provides a means of exploring - and addressing - dynamic relations between people. So while PRA visualisation starts with *what* exists to focus discussions of what needs to change, TfD offers a means of visualising *why* and *how* changes might be necessary and might come about.

As with PRA, the practice of TfD depends on the skill and motivation of the facilitator(s). Just as PRA can be used as part of top-down development projects to achieve notional 'community participation', TfD can be used in message-oriented theatre that seeks to 'facipulate' (Jenks Okwerri, pers. comm.) rather than to genuinely empower people.

Understandings of what TfD is about, or for, vary widely. Among practitioners, there is a continuum from those who focus on using community-based research to create fairly polished performances to be staged by experienced actors and used as a basis for discussions, through to those who focus more on the process of theatre-making in the enactment of everyday dilemmas and solutions to them by those who experience them (see, for example, Harding, Mbowa Ogolla and Mavrocordatos).

TfD has a range of possible applications. How theatre is used depends on the context. Within a workshop and in initial work with communities, acting skills are almost irrelevant: what matters is the process. Simple techniques (see, for example, Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, Pat Norrish, de Koning, Neefjes) can be used by facilitators with no previous experience in theatre work. But once process begins to move towards the creation of a product, either as part of ongoing theatre work in one community (see Mavrocordatos) or where community groups perform for others, the quality of performances begins to matter more and the kind of facilitation needed also changes.

A number of models of TfD practice currently exist. Two examples are detailed in Boxes 1 and 2.

Like PRA, how and for what (as well as by whom) these approaches are used depends on the agenda(s) of the facilitators. And like PRA methods, such models offer frameworks for theatre-making within the context of participatory learning and action. Often, these frameworks are used to explore specific *issues*, in contrast to a more open-ended approach in which the community establish their own performative language through which to communicate unsolicited concerns (Mavrocordatos, pers. comm.).

BOX 1

**PARTICIPATORY EDUCATIONAL THEATRE
(PET)**

PET is a participatory educational theatre methodology. It aims to develop an understanding of the inter-connected nature of social problems through interactive drama. Participatory techniques are used to create short problem-posing scenes and to enable the audience to probe, reflect on and respond to issues of concern to them provoked by the drama. This approach poses questions and problems, rather than supplying answers and solutions, in order to bring about change in the community's perception of the world and themselves as individuals within it: allowing the community to examine their attitudes towards the unresolved dilemmas presented in the drama that reflects their lives.

PET performances consist of a series of free-standing scenes, each of which makes sense in its own right. A question is chosen for each section that provokes discussion. A theme and a question relating to each scene are visually displayed using a symbolic design on a storyboard. After the first scene is performed, the audience chooses from the storyboard which scene should come next. At the end of each scene, the audience can ask the central character(s) questions which they answer in role, or come forward to take up the part of a character to try out solutions. The facilitator thus encourages the audience to participate to help solve the dilemmas presented in each scene (see Ogolla).

Adapted from: Chamberlain, Chillery, Ogolla and Wandera (1995)

BOX 2

**AUGUSTO BOAL'S
THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED**

Augusto Boal talks of his Theatre of the Oppressed as a 'rehearsal for action' and argues that theatre is a weapon that people can use to empower themselves to take action (Boal, 1979 and 1992). More recently, Boal has developed the use of participatory theatre to enable ordinary people in low-income neighbourhoods to engage in the process of making the rules and regulations that govern their lives in what he calls 'legislative theatre' (see Jackson). Boal's methods include:

- *Invisible Theatre*: This theatrical form is a variant of guerilla theatre and agit-prop street theatre. In an everyday context like a market, a restaurant or a bus stop, 'invisible' actors act out a controversial situation to stimulate reflection and discussion, and participation, among people in that situation - without letting people realise that they are actors (see Norris);
- *Image Theatre*: Actors use their bodies to portray - as snapshots or freeze-frames - images of situations, concepts or experiences, participants generate images that are used in a number of ways for analysis. These images can be 'dynamised' - brought to life - and developed into scenarios for further analysis (see Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish);
- *Forum Theatre*. A short skit is used to generate interventions from an audience whose role changes from passive spectators to active 'spect-actors' (Boal, 1979). The skit is performed, then replayed and the audience are offered opportunities to intervene to change the action (see Jackson, Norris and Pat Norrish)

Participatory video and PRA

Video is increasingly being used to document the PRA process and as a tool for advocacy. In this sense, the use of video is no different than in conventional documentary film-making, just on less grand a scale. The possibilities that video offers when used as part of a

participatory process are more in tune with the principles of PRA: local people choose their own 'shots', edit them together with a skilled technician and have a voice in deciding to whom and where the finished product should be shown.

As Johansson and de Waal's article illustrates, participatory video making can have powerful results. Transferring what has become an increasingly simple technology into the hands of communities offers enormous potential for advocacy, participatory policy research, communication between communities, conflict resolution and community-based planning (see also Lloyd Laney and Smithies).

Usually the outputs from PRA exercises need to be translated into the kind of prose that decision-makers are more familiar with. Videos made with communities, which may feature PRA exercises in context, are a much more powerful and immediate medium for communication. Documenting PRA exercises on video is just the start. The clips can be replayed to different groups within the community and used as the basis for planning further video filming or for analysis and discussion. The emphasis throughout is on the process, rather than on the product.

Video also offers a valuable resource for training PRA facilitators. Showbacks can underline the importance of behaviour and attitudes in fieldwork. Capturing revealing incidents from fieldwork can serve more forcefully than any spoken feedback to remind trainees of the need to reflect on and modify their behaviour (Mallika Samaranayake, pers. comm.). Similarly, by capturing the context in which PRA work takes place, video can provide a record for more detailed process analysis (Carolyn Jones and Nicola Frost, pers. comm.).

Complementarities and possibilities

TfD gives participants a chance to try things out before doing them for real and a language through which to express their concerns. As such, TfD not only complements PRA but extends its possibilities. Participatory video offers participants opportunities for communication that may ordinarily be denied to them, as well as a medium that can be used

to reflect on the process as well as the products of PRA. Verbal art, song, dance and other artistic and expressive forms in communities can serve to provide a cultural context for further activities, one that builds on existing cultural resources.

There are many further possibilities for drawing on the strengths of performative work as part of the PRA process, as for using PRA in TfD and participatory arts work. For example:

- virtually any PRA diagramming method can be used as a starting point for group analysis of issues, which are then turned into story-lines that reflect real-life experiences and made into skits or role-plays (see Mbowa and Smith et al.); these can be videoed and played back, or played to different groups to stimulate discussion and analysis (see Smithies);
- short plays based on events in communities can be used to generate suggestions from the audience as to how things might have happened differently, where members of the audience take on roles in the drama and act out solutions (see Gordon). These solutions can then be ranked, using matrix ranking or scoring, to explore their pros and cons and to analyse the criteria that matter to community people; solutions might be videoed and played back to the group to reflect on or used as the basis for further skit-making and interventions;
- 'group mapping' (see Mavrocordatos) can be used as a physical version of the more static visual PRA techniques of network or social mapping. These help us to explore how people perceive their relationships with each other and, by dynamising and changing the representation, how they might change; video can be used to capture these movements and as a tool to deepen analysis;
- diagramming exercises, such as flow charts or impact diagrams, can be brought to life with the acting out of scenes arising at each stage, which in turn can prompt further diagramming (see Gordon); and,
- Venn diagrams of institutional relationships can be facilitated before, or after, exercises where people act out these relationships or create silent images of

them, which are brought to life (see Smith et al.). Moving from what exists now and how things might be, both these mini-scenarios and Venn diagrams can be used to improvise changes that might be desired or needed.

• Conclusion

Performance is and always has been part of participatory work, but is not often celebrated as such. Recognising the performative potential of PRA and bringing into our practice some of the tools that the performative and visual arts have to offer can enrich the quality of what we do as PRA practitioners - livening up a dull discussion, bringing to life dry diagramming exercises and offering the opportunity for participants to express themselves in their own ways and to have fun in the process. We hope that you enjoy this special issue and look forward to hearing from you about your experiences.

• **Andrea Cornwall, c/o IIED.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This special issue arose from two workshops at IDS, funded by the Swiss Development Corporation (SDC), to familiarise PRA practitioners with TfD and to bring PRA and TfD practitioners together to explore complementarities between these approaches. Thanks go to Robert Chambers and the SDC for supporting this work. I am also very grateful to Alex Mavrocordatos for his comments on this overview.

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6

Theatre for development, participatory monitoring and cultural feedback

Alex Mavrocordatos

'The prodigal returns' or 'how to bring up your children'

Resplendent in city clothes and wearing sunglasses (props made from millet stalks), a village youth struts home from his adventures in town. He even has a radio. He bears no substantial gifts for his parents who had waited so long for his return. They had laid curses on him and used the same magic to bring him back, but they were not pleased. They fell to fighting with one another. The man accused the woman of being soft: 'Whenever I tried to beat him you never let me, that's why he went away' and the woman countered with 'it was you who let him go to school, that's where he went astray!' The play ended with the prodigal's tears.

'The Food Aid Play'

A happy village. There is music and dance, there is rain and a promising millet crop (represented by reeds stuck into the sand of the village yard where the performers are dancing). Everyone is looking forward to a fat year - until the rains fail. The reeds are laid down and the music stops. In despair, the farmers ask the audience what to do. They are told to approach the district commandant to seek food aid. The play ended with the arrival of sacks of rice to fill the empty millet granaries.

• Beginnings

The performers of these spontaneous improvised plays were Bobo youths in the East of Mali during the early days of their

partnership with SOS Sahel's Community Environment Project. The Bobo are an isolated minority group, threatened by declining crop yields and creeping desertification. Literacy is low and clinics far away. The SOS project offers technical support with particular expertise in soil and water conservation and agroforestry. As part of that project, SOS Sahel set up a drama unit to explore the use of Theatre for Development (TFD) as a way to listen to the village performers and monitor the mood and views of the community. The TFD provided an ongoing feedback system.

The process is rooted in the assumption that two way communication is inherently developmental and that any dialogue between project and partner will lead to new action and any confidence to a new relationship of increased trust and co-operation. We have left behind the traditional perception of theatre as a handy tool for the transmission of development messages in top-down communication with a 'target' group. This Theatre for Development is concerned not with didactic accounts of how water should be boiled, or trees planted, but with the social constraints that interfere with the implementation of change.

Neither the content nor theme of these plays was solicited by project staff. Theatre was treated as a language to be shared with the community performers who, as artists, could use it to express whatever they wished. Outside forms of theatre were not imported, the performers with the TFD facilitators evolved a culture-specific form of theatre based on local performance practices.

The returning prodigal was a very early theatrical exploration. It spoke about the rural exodus and the elders' fears on that score. However it also showed that in spite of the elders' agreement that their children should attend the not-so-nearby school in another village, they viewed the imposition of 'modern' education with mistrust.

The 'Granary Play' was their first real use of the language of theatre to explore serious issues, signalling their perceived helplessness in the face of the drought and their preferred solution - food-aid. Between the lines, however, we could read a deeper reality.

During the performance the audience was asked what the actors should do about the dying crops. It was the audience that sent them to the authorities. When asked later, in an after-show discussion, whether the Commandant's offer of grain was realistic, actors and audience alike agreed that it was not. Challenged as to whether they would still recommend the same action they replied 'What else can we do? We can do nothing for ourselves.' Yet this was the same community, and among them the same individuals, who had been sweating in the fields. They had dug two hundred-odd crescent-shaped basins - anti-erosion measures - designed to catch rain and save precious topsoil, allowing at least some millet to grow in those arid fields.

Neither performers nor audience referred to the anti-erosion measures as something they could 'do'. Instead they asked for emergency grain, food-aid. Digging basins was somehow for the project, it was not 'owned' by the community. It was early days in the project, so this ambivalence was not surprising, but the play gave material to the field-workers to address the situation in subsequent discussion. Later on, other plays could be solicited to monitor progress in this respect. Through spontaneous improvisations like these, attitudes are revealed which may not feature in the polite formality of village meetings.

As they became more comfortable with the TFD (performance) programme, they had courage enough to complain, through their plays about the oppressive, paramilitary forestry service and even aspects of the SOS project itself.

'The driver and the sheep'

This play portrayed the demise of a villager's sheep under the wheels of a passing vehicle. The driver is shown to get out and far from apologising or offering to make amends, he does not even seek out the owner of the sheep or the Chief of the village. Instead he proceeds to give a lecture against free ranging livestock, blaming the community for the mishap. Then he climbs back into his vehicle and storms off in a cloud of dust. This outburst is delivered in the Bambara language, the language of the ruling majority in Mali, whereas these villagers are part of the tiny, marginalised Bobo minority.

It turned out that one of the project's drivers had been involved in such an accident. He had been conveying a local government official on an urgent mission in the region. By taking the trouble to speak the driver's part in Bambara, the players were also pointing out that there was a further dimension to the breach of protocol. Expression of this grievance through theatre allowed it to be aired and subsequently laid to rest by the field-workers. The project gave an assurance that the driver had been cautioned and would no longer be speeding recklessly along the bush tracks.

Ownership from the start of both the form and content helped the players to explore themes of their own selection. Sometimes frivolous and sometimes serious, almost all of the plays reflected current community concerns and attitudes. The Drama Unit within the SOS Sahel programme was set to last the duration of the project. The early plays monitored and amplified base line information (that may already have been gathered using more conventional means) about the community and in some cases gave a handy metaphor for field workers wishing to refer to topics aired in this way. Later on, when the performers became proficient in improvised performance, field-workers could solicit plays about particular themes. In the spirit of dialogue, the content of these plays would always be provided by the performers. The project listened to their opinions and responded.

• Solicited themes and feedback

I borrow the term 'feedback' from the terminology of electronics: Collins dictionary defines it as 'information in response to an enquiry, experiment etc.', and more specifically as 'the return of part of the output of an electronic circuit .. to its input, *so modifying its characteristics*'. Without constructive response from the project workers, it would not be true feedback but merely the collection of more colourful data than conventional enquiry may reveal.

The authors of the Food Aid Play went on to do well with their erosion control work. However in the second year of the project, their participation in the second round of diggings was grinding to a halt. We asked them to show us, in performance, what could be holding them back, given that they still pledged their support verbally. The play they produced showed how they had to struggle to make ends meet, to pay their taxes and the inordinate fines imposed upon them by the paramilitary forestry service. They had to make artefacts to be sold in the market and could not afford the extra time.

We asked another community, with similar problems, about their situation. They also produced a play about the forestry service, signalling their (real) fear about a (hypothetical) danger.

'The forestry plays'

Some village women are in the forest gathering wood when they catch sight of a pair of forestry agents coming their way. They hide behind a baobab tree and watch as the Agents deliberately set fire to the dry grasses. Later, the agents turn up in the village, feigning anger, demanding to know who broke the law by lighting forest fires. They fine the protesting villagers. Since there are witnesses, the courageous villagers refuse to pay and are taken before the Forestry Chief. The agents are fired and the Chief exhorts the villagers to report any such cases.

Happily, when we told the real Forestry Chief about these plays, his reaction was positive. He made a visit to the village, referring to the SOS methodology as a move away from

repressive measures. This in turn made an impression on the village who said afterwards that they had never had anything but punitive visits from the Forestry Department. On the basis of this, the project management and Foresters came to an arrangement whereby the Forestry officers would stay away from those villages who were working with SOS Sahel and exploring a participatory approach to Development.

• Group mapping and other TFD workshop processes

Working in a later project with RISE Namibia and OXFAM, circumstances led to the evolution of further evaluative processes within the TFD methodology. The youth group in Berseba, with whom we were working, was experiencing internal conflicts which threatened the continuation of their garden-project activity.

It should be stressed that all of the cases described in this paper were not drama groups as such, but activity groups who were using TFD as part of their own process. Much of the work in Namibia was rooted in the workshop process itself, while their (interactive) performances were less regular and tended to be on a regional rather than local level.

We imported an exercise from psychodrama. Since it bears some similarities with PRA exercises, I have called it 'group mapping'. Workshop members are asked to position themselves around a set of objects (in this case garden tools), symbolising the centre of the group. The position they settle into must indicate their relationship, not only with the centre, but also with one another. This may take some time as all positions are relative to each other. There is some jostling for position and moving around as a result of each person's adopted pose.

Once positions are established, the group is invited to take stock of where they have ended up, or they may go on to a next step, which is to vocalise their feelings in that position. 'In this position I feel' and 'where I would like to be is' or 'what I need is'. After this there may be some discussion, or the participants may be invited to try to move to where they would like to be and in what

position. Further verbalisation may be invited according to what has transpired thus far.

We saw the corporate expression of what informal chatting had led us to believe. The self appointed leaders had seized the centre position and had spoken of their (innocent) pride in having started up the group. They had not intended to exclude the others and now the effect of their assumed leadership was clear. In this case the exercise ended with a move towards the centre, with all hands joined in ritual, and perhaps clichéd, expression of where they wanted to be.

There followed much discussion. Of course, nobody suggested that this nascent ritual was going to transform the group's nature, but those hidden attitudes had now been uncovered and explored. Reflection had laid the way for new action.

A similar problem of internal group conflict within the Gibeon Youth Group, also in Namibia, led to a workshop under the trees at Vrystaat, a piece of land that the group had annexed for their communal farm. The group had not met for some time. Together with Johannes Jansen, we adapted a word game. A group of people speak one word at a time, in turn. They string... sentences.. and.. can.. formulate.. composite .. ideas.. together. If these thoughts are expressed in answer to judicious questions, then the group may begin to reveal some of its suppressed opinions.

After setting up the game with random questions, we asked 'What should the group do now?' The answer they constructed recommended a play about a chicken farm - the chosen activity for some of the members in Vrystaat. Jansen and I then also formed a team and began to construct questions for the rest of the group. We aimed to reveal what could get in the way of the success of such a project. The group constructed their answers in response to our constructed questions.

We found that it was allegations of isolation, unfairness and even dishonesty that began to surface. No one person had made any personal allegations, but the thrust of the content was accepted and the group sat down to discuss and resolve their differences. At least, they resolved to make a contract with one another

to work together and not destroy what they had built.

• **The PRA connection**

Community artists should always be free to create works on whatever topic interests them. Random monitoring is essential, reviving issues the project may have forgotten, pointing out grievances and enriching the base-line data. If used in conjunction with PRA techniques, the feedback system can be made more focused. TFD scenarios can be solicited to add colour and tone to the potentially dry PRA findings. This may also be reversed with PRA exercises being brought into post performance discussions, amplifying and verifying information touched on by qualitative references and signals within the performance.

• **TFD feedback works alongside formal monitoring**

In another project in Mali, an initial topic led to a series of plays on a theme, evolving the discourse across several performances. Alternatively two groups, either from the same community performing group, or from two separate communities, could be invited to prepare a play on the same theme and based on the findings from PRA or any other facilitation method. In this way, a dialectic would be created offering two (or more) points of view on the same issue. Synthesis could be sought either within the same workshop for presentation to the community audience and further exploration in discussion. Alternatively, synthesis could be achieved by bringing the performers from the one community into the other to perform their piece.

All of the TFD processes described here depend largely upon the presentation of scenarios by the village performers in an ongoing and regular participatory performance programme. It cannot offer the rigour of formal monitoring, but it can fill in the gaps with a colour and subtlety that politeness and formality may miss.

• Conclusion

This form of TFD or Listening Theatre (as it was called by OXFAM when they supported the RISE Namibia project) is not the dominant model. It's rationale is that constructive dialogue leads to action. This parallels the dictum of the late Paulo Freire, that action should lead to reflection which is then followed by a new action. This is the feedback system envisaged in this approach to Theatre for Development.

- **Alex Mavrocordatos**, Centre for Development Communications, King Alfred's College, Winchester, Hants, UK.

NOTES

SOS Sahel's Drama Unit was established with the support of the European Commission and Comic Relief.

A fuller account of the Drama Unit's work may be found in:

Mavrocordatos, A. & Martin, P. (1995) 'Theatre for Development: Listening to the Community', in *Power and Participatory Development*, edited by Nelson, N. & Wright, S. London: IT Pubs.

Mavrocordatos, A. (1997) 'Tied up in a Rope of Sand. TFD: Cultural action or Development Utility', in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Harwood Academic Publishers, Spring 1997.

7

Drama as a discussion starter in research and education

Korrie de Koning

• Introduction

Throughout history, theatre has been used to entertain, to comment on existing situations, and to communicate cultural traditions and stories. Most people are familiar with drama through watching plays in a theatre, on television, in a community hall or in the playground. As with stories, plays which are well made can make us laugh, or be sad or angry, because we recognise ourselves and people we know. A play gives us a picture of a situation and the people in it. It shows their feelings and actions and how they interact with each other.

Drama is a well known instrument in education to explore behaviour, intentions and interactions between people, and is gaining importance in qualitative and participatory research. For example role-plays staged by traditional birth attendants (TBAs) have been used to document the practices of TBAs during deliveries. In health education and community development, short plays or skits are a well known medium to convey messages, to provide information, and to enable people to reflect on their own situation.

The combined effect of visual image, action and the acting out of feelings and intentions offers us a powerful opportunity to learn and explore our own and others' realities. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) involves the investigation of a situation and learning from this investigation to improve our lives. Drama has many potential uses as part of the PRA process. It can act as a trigger for discussion to enable people to reflect on and to investigate their own situation:

- it enables people to look critically at the world in which they live and the factors which influence the way they feel about themselves and how they live their lives;
- it gets groups actively involved;
- it raises self esteem and self confidence; and,
- it stimulates hope for change and breaks through apathy.

Drama offers an opportunity for integrating these elements into the educational activities of health educators, community development workers and trainers. It can encourage communities to explore their own situation, or workers to explore issues and problems in their work.

Preparing a play

In drama both the process and the product provide opportunities for exploring issues. The process includes identifying an issue to look at, experimenting with roles and stories, practising in front of others, and reaching a final product, the play. The process is a learning experience for all involved.

Identifying the issue

When using Freire's methods, the first step is to find out what the group feels strongly about from representatives of the group with which you work. What do people talk about? What makes them emotional? What worries them? Conversations with individuals, group discussions, walking around and listening to what people talk about in the shop or at the clinic are useful methods to find the important issues. Brainstorming can also generate important themes or problem areas. Choose one issue which seems to be of most importance to present in a play.

Often the work context will limit the issues that can be explored. You may have to work on a specific topic such as health, family planning, nutrition, or a subject area in the curriculum. But you can find out from the group which aspects of the topic are most important to them. For example, while exploring issues about family planning with young people in India, one of the first issues to arise was fear of infertility and concerns about irregular periods. Usually a play will change during the experimental period, or new issues and themes will emerge.

Developing a play

To make a role-play realistic, the players have to show the feelings and typical ways of behaving that have been identified as important. To help players use their body in an expressive and creative way, it is useful to start with some introductory exercises. In his book 'Games for Actors and Non-Actors' (1992), Augusto Boal gives a range of useful exercises. The first step in developing a play is to look at the situation you want to discuss. With the group, identify the issues that you will include.

Here are some guidelines which may help you to develop a play:

1. What is happening? Develop a storyline based on a real story which shows the theme and issue to be discussed. Then change the story until everybody feels that this is the best way to trigger the discussion.
2. Pay attention to feelings and the interactions between the players. The best way to do this is to start experimenting and try out any new ideas in the play. There should be a facilitator, whose role is to make sure that all that happens has meaning, and to clarify the ideas people come up with by asking questions. What goes into the play and how it is presented is decided by the representatives of the group who are going to discuss the play.

A play becomes more interesting if the heart of the play produces excitement, such as a conflict, a sad moment, a

moment of great turmoil. If a problem is presented, never include suggestions for a solution. The play should help people to analyse the situation in the play, relate it to their own situation and come up with suggestions for change themselves.

3. What is the setting for the play? It may be in a classroom, a house, at the market or a clinic. It is useful to actually create a space where the play is set using whatever materials are available. Make sure that everything in the scene has a function or meaning.

For example, an empty chair can mean that somebody is absent but expected. This might trigger a discussion about who the expected person is and why they are absent. It may be that a meal is ready, the children are crying and a mother is getting more and more frantic. This might lead to a discussion about why the father is late, what it means to the family and the position of the man in the family.

4. Who are the people involved in the play? Include only the roles which have meaning for the discussion. For example, the role of the cleaner can be important to trigger a discussion about the hierarchy and relationships between people in the workplace. Why do the players act as they do? What is their motivation? People's lives are never simple and straightforward, but include contradictory thoughts and feelings. To make a play interesting and realistic, it is important to include these contradictions.

For example, in a play made with a group of young people in Papua New Guinea (see Box 1), a wife was opposing her husband. Her feelings were a mixture of anger, fear and wanting to show him she disagreed. All three aspects needed to be expressed. This was important to trigger a discussion about the position of wives in the family. The play reflected how the women felt about disagreeing with their husbands. They discussed why the woman felt fear, and why she still went into conflict.

BOX 1

AN EXAMPLE FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA

A group of young men and women were coming to a nutrition and community development centre for literacy classes. They would often talk about things like the changing society they lived in and conflicts with their parents. They wanted to explore their own situation further and to learn how to act and make theatre plays. They were asked to exchange stories and choose one which dealt with the most important things in their lives. The men and the women had to choose their own stories, and use each other to make a play from it. One of the plays they made shows a wife asking her husband for some money to buy food. The husband holds the cash earned from selling coffee, but refuses to give her any because it is her task to produce the food. When she in turn refuses to cook for him, her husband beats her.

The facilitator started to ask the young women in the group how they felt about the play. At this stage it became clear that the women felt very uncomfortable discussing this issue with the young men. They then decided to come together in a separate group. The women used the play to analyse their situation. They were able to discuss together many of the issues which were most important in their lives. These included the relationships between men and women, what was expected of women in marriage, and customs and practices to do with childbirth and women's work. The women decided to discuss these issues with the young men in the group. They also talked to their parents about some of the issues to do with marriage. They decided to continue meeting together as a women's group. The play also provided an excellent insight in the young women's and men's feelings about marriage, traditional practices, perceptions of adolescents about relationships, gender roles and identified entry point for change which was implemented by the young people themselves.

How to facilitate the discussion

The play should not be longer than five, or at the very most, ten minutes. The group should be small, with around ten to fifteen participants. Make sure that the audience can see all the players clearly during the play. After the play, the players stay in their last position to keep a visual picture during the first phase of the analysis. They do not get involved in the discussion at this stage. A volunteer takes notes of the session to record what was discussed or a tape recorder is used to transcribe the discussion verbatim. The facilitator should encourage the whole group to take part. The facilitator might ask these questions:

- Describe the play
- What did you see happening?
- What happened in the beginning?
- What happened then?
- Who was involved?
- How did the play end?
- Analyse the play
- What were the different people in the play feeling?
- Why did they feel this way?

- What were they doing?
- Why did they do that?
- Relate the play to real life
- Do you recognise this situation?
- Have you been in similar situations?
- What are the similarities?
- How did you feel?
- What did you do?

Now ask the players to join the discussion. Ask them how they felt in their role. What happened to them? If this input is given too early, the players might impose the meaning they wanted to give to the play on the group of viewers. Ask the players to get out of their role. Sometimes players get totally involved in the role they play and keep emotions from the play with them. Players may actually need to say out loud: 'I have stopped being as in the play. I am', and give their own name. This also signals back to the group the difference between the actor and the real person.

Further probing can explore the following:

- Place the play in the broader context
- Does this situation happen in other areas of our life?
- How are they similar?

- Analyse causes
- Why is this happening?
- What can we do to change this situation?

Making the play is an enormous learning experience for the players. The situation needs to be analysed in detail. Players need to explore the feelings and attitudes they will portray, the reasons for them, and how they will express them in action. This helps them to understand the position and feelings of others and themselves. It is not always necessary for the players to perform the play they have created to others outside the group. The group will benefit from going through the process of preparing and developing the play, even if they do not perform it for others.

• Drama and participation

The audience may just watch the play, or they may discuss it; they may start acting to change the play and/or be involved in producing it. When a play is made just to pass on a message, the content is mostly decided by professionals. They want to make people aware of a problem or new technologies and to advise them about how they can prevent the problem and use new ideas. The audience is seen as a group that needs to be informed of an issue that is seen as important by the makers.

The drama is presented but there is no chance to reflect on it or act to change the presented situation. For example, a play might make people aware that a new disease such as AIDS is around and that they can be at risk of getting it. They might be asked to discuss, for example, the feasibility of using condoms, what they like and dislike about it, where condoms are available etc. However, the choice of situation and topics of discussion might differ very much from the questions viewers have, or the situation they experience. When drama, as with pictures or other media is

used in this way, the audience is seen by the makers as passive receivers of the message.

Involving people actively in the sharing of knowledge, analysis of their own situation and decision making about what should change and how, demands a different style of working. In this approach, drama is used to start a discussion, enabling people to reflect on a situation which is important to them.

Whatever the situation, facilitators need to be aware of the powerful ability of drama to recreate strong emotions of past experiences. It is therefore important to ensure that players do not act out their own experience and that support is provided when strong emotions emerge.

- **Korrie de Koning**, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, 3 Pembroke Place, Liverpool, UK.

NOTES

Part of this article was published in Learning for Health, issue 6, Sept 1994-Jan 1995, Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

FURTHER READING

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Activities to explore: using drama in AIDS and family planning work (1991) by E Lynch and G Gordon, AIDS Prevention Unit, International Planned Parenthood Federation, PO Box 759, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4LQ, UK.

Games for actors and non-actors (1992) by Augusto Boal (translated from the French by Adrian Jackson), Routledge, 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE, UK.

8

Theatre and video for development

Frances Harding

• Introduction

Within development, there is increasing recognition of the need to hear the opinion of the people who are most affected by development. One response to this is 'Theatre for Development' which is a technique of performance and drama-building. It rests on an interaction between people who are in the flight path of development projects and those agencies who initiate them.

Theatre for development as a tool

Theatre for Development aims to provide a means of articulating and analysing issues of concern to specific communities by:

- setting up safe parameters for the discussion of local issues;
- interacting with the community in ways which they identify as their primary forms of private and public communication. This includes: talking, song, dance, storytelling, and dramatising; and,
- developing this interaction and the forms discussed or displayed to create a dialogue drama.

Thus, Theatre for Development is a practice which enables communities, as stake holders in development, to participate by outlining their fears, needs and aspirations. The process defines a new system in which the voices of development beneficiaries speak. This is important as there is increasing awareness of the need to hear the voices of those whom development affects and to listen to their fears and hopes.

However, traditionally trained development practitioners face a number of dilemmas in turning this awareness into action. Where should such activities take place and how? The 'where' should be the community's own space and not that of the authority. The 'how' should be the community's own forms of articulation that are used in everyday communication. It should be those that they use and choose for themselves. Theatre for Development attempts to integrate both the 'where' and 'how' for effective communication and exchange.

Logistics and methods

Theatre for Development workshops are set up in co-operation with local government agencies, international aid or development agencies and last between 8 and 14 days, or as required. The duration, cost and 'follow-up' are important concerns in practice. Having already established a base within a community, through a local agency, Theatre for Development operates through a series of six simple principles.

1. Recognising people's existing skills in performance, analysis and articulation

This first stage is the start of a process of building up respect and confidence between the in-comers and the local community. For example, young girls in one community did a dance-song-game for which the lyrics were: 'if you have a headache, you need to gather x leaves; if you have stomach ache, you need to take y leaves' and so on. The dance-song-game was a learned, and learning, articulation of local herbal medical practice. This provided an opportunity to discuss the content of performance and to focus the topic of the

workshop. In this instance, the workshop was focused on increasing desertification in the area and its effects on the health of women and children.

2. Enabling a storyline to be created from within the local community

The storyline comes from the experiences of the people within the community where it is being created. It usually focuses on a specific area of daily life, such as water supplies, an aspect of health, pollution etc.. At this stage, respect for, and interest in, the concerns of the community are paramount. Integrity is essential if an honest relationship is to develop which will be useful to the host community.

3. Fictionalise an issue

At this stage, the characters are introduced. The fictionalisation ensures that no-one is compromised by being personally named or identified. The move from discussion to dramatisation takes place in a number of ways and depends on how the specific community engages with the techniques of representation. Comedy or a comic style is often the catalyst in representational forms.

4. Identify performers from within the community

People volunteer to play parts. People generally volunteer very readily and then develop a more complex character and storyline. Exactly who the performers are depends on local factors, such as the theme of the workshop, and the content of the drama.

For example young men may play important roles in a drama about migration and women may be key in a play about childbirth. The intended audience, such as men, women, local authorities, elders or aid agencies, will influence the production (see below). Competitive approaches, such as an established reputation as a performer, or a deep-felt conviction about the issue under discussion are amongst the stimuli which prompt people to perform.

Techniques can be used which enable more than one plot to develop or more than one

'ending' to be envisaged. This stimulates the appearance of more relevant information and a deeper analysis of the real-life situation.

5. The audience is defined by the community

The makers of the drama must define and know for whom they will play. The aim is not a finished product, but a dramatic and dramatised account locally recognisable issues, such that community can act upon them.

6. The drama should not propose ways of resolving a crisis, rather the crisis in the drama interacts directly with the community

The rationale for Theatre for Development is that the community perceives the dilemma in the drama, recognises its familiarity in real life and then identifies the difficulties of, and possibilities for, resolution. This open-ended aspect of the drama, relating it to real life, is a vital part of the process. Recently, Hajiya Miriam Musa, an extension worker was asked if drama worked because it showed a fictional situation. She replied that, on the contrary, it was effective because it 'showed reality'.

• Reflections on using video in theatre for development work

Video recording is familiar to many people, even those in rural areas, and is often associated with prestige. Women - and men - usually feel happy to use video in recording the proceedings throughout a workshop and share in the task of videoing.

What are the advantages to the community of using video? There is a great deal of opportunity for development of this field. The ability to transfer information into a visual, moving image means that those who never venture out into villages can be brought face-to-face with realities they might otherwise choose not to confront.

However, the use of video raises some ethical issues. For example, should the video be shown to anyone other than the community

themselves? One response is that the video must be owned by those who are in the image, not the 'holder' of the camera.

- **Conclusion**

Theatre for Development shows 'reality' within a safe environment that appears to be 'fictional'. At the same time, it offers an opportunity to 'rehearse' means of resolving real difficulties. This 'fictionalised reality' makes Theatre for Development a unique method of interactive development.

- **Frances Harding**, Lecturer in African Drama, Department of African Languages and Cultures, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, UK.

9

A day in the village with "positive people" or "*nenojoma nigi kute ayaki*"

Lenin Ogolla

• Introduction

The account that follows draws on experiences with the Apondo Youth Group near rural Ahero. This is part of CARE Kenya's CRUSH -Communication Resources for Under 18s on STDs and HIV - project on HIV/AIDS in Kisumu District, Kenya.

Dramatic action

The scene opens with twelve HIV-positive people who are at an HIV/AIDS counselling centre. Members of the community take roles as their counsellors. The project uses familiar, traditional story-telling techniques. The people choose whose story they want to hear first and whom they want to counsel first. It is a 'battle' as the facilitator mediates the different groups that want to hear different stories.

The central questions on the storyboard highlight each character's dilemma. These reflect the dilemmas of particular people in the community who seek and insist on investigating these particular characters. They begin to lay on the table their own personal feelings, prejudices, fears and hopes for investigation within the safety of their role-play as counsellors.

A sceptical old man who does not believe in the existence of AIDS suddenly clears his throat. He can neither read nor write. He is attracted to the storyboard symbols representing the story of the village carpenter who, on his elder brother's death, is forced by the elders to inherit the widow.

A sudden hush falls on the 400 members of the community who are present. Here is a village sage, whose word on custom and tradition is faultless and is revered to the point of becoming law. He explains the philosophy behind wife inheritance slowly but firmly, citing from a wealth of ageless ancestral wisdom that no man or woman present dare dispute.

His peers nod knowingly, as the younger men in the audience look at him in awe and amazement. The women sit passively. No expression of any sort is shown on their faces: their "proper" place is defined by marriage. This makes them communal property to be passed over to the next man, together with cows, land and houses. The old man sits down after 20 minutes and there is no doubt in the minds of the people that wife inheritance is blameless, as far as AIDS is concerned.

The carpenter begins to tell his story to the keen and curious community. There is nothing unusual in his life. His story is the community's story. But then he narrates how he discovered that his elder brother, whose wife the elders forced him to inherit, actually committed suicide after he was diagnosed to be positive with AIDS. Without pathos, he declared that he has since tested positive, together with his first wife, their last born baby, and the second wife he inherited from his late brother.

Nobody speaks for a long time, until a teenage schoolboy begins to point out the contradictions in the practice of wife inheritance. For the next half hour, the debate is tossed backwards and forwards between the youth and the elders. What was accepted

before the drama as wise judgement is slowly reconstructed in the light of HIV/AIDS.

There seems to be an impasse until a woman coyly steps forward. The facilitator is quick to notice her, for rarely do women stand to give their opinions in such weighty matters in this village. She brings a different angle to the stand-off between youth and elders. She challenges the assumptions of tradition and custom about the place of a woman in a marriage, in society. AIDS is for a moment, but only for a moment, put on one side, as the spotlight is turned full glare onto the rights of women to inherit property, including land.

A fourth school of thought quickly establishes itself. This is presented by middle-aged practising and retired professionals. They attempt to reconcile 'tradition' with the harsh realities of existing with AIDS. People listen, people argue, people venture into the performing area to wear the caps of different characters, as well as to wear the cap of the carpenter at the cross-roads of his life. Attempts are made at changing the outcome of events.

There is a moment of instantaneous applause when the elder who first opened the door on this Pandora's box declares he is convinced by a doctor (another member of the community in role) that AIDS does exist. The applause is like a signal from an invisible orchestral conductor. Fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, the young, the middle-aged and the elderly call out to each other. An elder moves to a corner that is predominantly occupied by middle-aged women. Three youths engage their school teacher in animated dialogue, challenging him, teasing him. They say things to him things that would earn them immediate expulsion if they were said in a classroom. At the far end, a red-eyed youth asks a bemused village chief to immediately arrest all wife-inheritors!

• Reflections

In six months, no single performance has been like the other. The audience is always bringing into the dramatic situations new and exciting possibilities. This gives them a feeling of strength and success where they previously felt powerless and confused.

The programmes do not present a particular point of view. Initially, some sections of the community, after many hours of reflection and practical action in the drama, would turn to the facilitator for his opinion. This is a legacy of traditional teaching systems and uninformed, individualistic theatre. Only when the value of the doubt and confusion has been pointed out to them by their neighbours, do they seek out friends, neighbours, or family in the audience to slowly start their short journey home. Others stay to chat with the actors/teachers, helping to bring down the set and load it onto the waiting vehicle.

- **Lenin Ogolla** c/o The British Council, P.O. Box 454, Kisumu, Kenya.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article first appeared in *Drama and Theatre: Communication in Development: Experiences in Western Kenya*, eds. Loukie Levert and Opiyo Mumma, Kenya Drama/Theatre and Education Association, 1995. Grateful thanks are extended to Opiyo Mumma for giving us permission to reprint an edited version of this article.

FURTHER READING

Chamberlain, Roger, Mindy Chillery, Lenin Ogolla and Ochieng Wandera (1995) 'Participatory Educational Theatre for HIV/AIDS Awareness in Kenya', PLA Notes 23.

10

Rehearsing for reality: using role-play to transform attitudes and behaviour

Rose Mbowa

· Introduction

This article is based on an interview with Professor Rose Mbowa, Director of the Department of Music, Dance and Drama, Makerere University, Kampala.

Background

Professor Rose Mbowa has many years of experience of the power of drama and role-play in community development. Its capacity to enable people to challenge their present situation in a safe, practice setting and to think of ways to change their behaviour is clear. But it is hard to find a more pressing challenge than attitudes towards, and behaviour around, sex. Over the last four years Rose Mbowa has been involved in the development of a training package called *Stepping Stones*, which aims to enable people to do just this.

What is Stepping Stones?

Stepping Stones is a training package on HIV/AIDS, gender issues, communication and relationship skills. Launched in December 1995, it is designed both for use in existing HIV/AIDS projects and in general development projects which plan to introduce an on-going AIDS component. It grew out of a need to address the vulnerability of women and young people in decision-making about sexual behaviour.

The package is designed to enable women and men of all ages to explore their social, sexual and psychological needs, to analyse the

communication blocks they face and to practise different ways of addressing their relationships. The workshop aims to enable individuals, their peers and their communities to change their behaviour - individually and together - through the 'stepping stones' discussion and role-play exercises which the various sessions provide.

All sessions use a participatory approach of adult learning through shared discussions. All exercises are based on people's own experiences. Role play and drawing exercises enable everyone to take part. No literacy is needed. Participants discuss their experiences, act them out, analyse them, consider alternative outcomes and then rehearse these together in a safe, supportive group. People feel safe because most sessions take place in groups of their own gender and age, with a facilitator of the same gender and, ideally, a similar age.

Experiences with Stepping Stones

In this interview, Rose Mbowa speaks of her experience of a recent training course in Entebbe and describes some of the issues that arose as part of the fieldwork.

Q: How many groups did you have [who were being trained]?

RM: We had five groups. There were three women's groups; one for the youngest ladies, who objected to being called little girls or babies and were between 10 and 13. The next female group was for kids about 14-16. Then there was the older women's group and of course, their ages varied. Some were teachers in their 30s. There were also two young girls

in that group, who found they could not fit in with the 14-16s because they were two working girls, working with their mothers in the shops. And then we had also the young men's group which was about 13-17 years old. And the old men's group which was not really old because they were in their thirties.

I think everything was arranged by the political mobiliser, the Resistance Committee mobilising lady. I think she mobilised her fellow women, a group of women she is close to. We found that the medium girls and the youngest all came from the same voluntary school which is run by these women.

Young women's dilemmas

Q: Could you tell us a bit about the background of some of these girls, the young women in the older group?

RM: The majority among the 10-13 and the 14-16 year olds are orphans, staying with maybe their auntie or their sisters, some with friends. That's why they have this voluntary school at the Entebbe centre which is run by these women. There's a town council that is trying to support these women. I think they give them only 10,000 shillings a month, to give these girls some education. To many of them, these teachers are the only people that they can go to who can give them some kind of guidance in life. One of the problems that came out, both with the little ones and the middle girls is that they did not have anybody to communicate with. They never had, they have not been at all counselled in life, on how to get on, especially in the midst of this HIV/AIDS problem and many other problems.

There is one girl, for example, who said when she had her period for the first time she was so scared, she did not know what it was all about. She had never had anybody to talk to. When she saw blood, it was quite a scare. So this workshop was a big opportunity for them; to have people whom they were relating to all the time and being able to examine their concerns, to talk about themselves, to share their needs, their problems.

Q: And do these young girls already have boyfriends, or are they already involved in sexual relations?

RM: Those of the 14-16 year olds seem to have all been sexually abused, not that they have boyfriends, but they have all been abused.

Q: By whom?

RM: By men in society, in their community. Because for most of them, for all of them, they have to do something to ... add to their living. When they go home at the end of the school, they are given maybe some cooked food or some raw food to take to the markets and sometimes it's late by the time they return. Even if it's not late, somehow, somewhere men get out to attack them on the way.

At the time we were in Entebbe a little child had been sent to a shop in one of the little trading centres where some of these people came from. A man jumped on her as she was going to the shops. Fortunately the girl gave an alarm and she was rescued by another man who had taken out his goods early. This man, at the time of our 'final community meeting' (part of the Stepping Stones workshop), was being taken to the police station. So this was just one example of the things they had been talking about, which was happening to all of them.

Now, this little girl was going to the shop once. But most of these girls have to go to the markets every day, to take food from their homes to go and sell, so they can have some money to help them towards their books and so on, towards their needs. When they made their 'community request' (part of the Stepping Stones workshop), these middle girls requested their parents, their guardians to give them enough to meet their needs.

Using drama to communicate needs

Q: How did they make this request to the community?

RM: Through drama. It was a drama in which these girls showed themselves meeting with the sugar daddies who were giving them

money. The sugar daddies found them easy prey ... They fell in with the sugar daddies because they could meet their needs, then they got into problems. At 'the final community meeting' (part of the Stepping Stones workshop, where each group of participants presents its special request back to the rest of their own community), there were some women and men in the audience who had not been involved in the workshop, but who were invited to this meeting to see what everyone had been doing. So they discussed all this problem there and then.

Now one of the girls who was present had been in the workshop to start with, but eventually she started not coming regularly. She had always been saying: 'even if they give us that, will that be enough?'. She was saying that even if the parents or the guardians were able to give you something, she thought that they did not have enough money to be able to meet every need that they wanted. So, I think her own solution was for them to work, to be able to work themselves.

But now in the working, they were meeting with problems too. The little ones' drama also showed the problems of working. In their drama, they showed how the children were at the house with their mother, but one of the children did not belong to this lady so she was always made to work and work and was not given enough food, so she was easy prey for the man who turned up She was just isolated, so exposed to the danger. So the request from the little ones is to be loved, and at the same time not to be exposed to any sex, because they and their bodies were not ready yet for sex.

Negotiating change through drama

So the mayor and his officials committed themselves to strengthening the probation office in town, where the problems of the children could be addressed. This office over the years, did not have staff, and was not well run. So at this 'final community meeting' he committed himself to strengthening it, to putting in the manpower that was required, because there were all these problems in the community of girls being sexually abused and the children themselves not having their

immediate needs met. In this way, there would be a place where they could go to with their problems.

Q: And were the mayor and the town clerk and other people already aware of these problems for the young women in the community?

RM: The other people were aware. You know, this official person just turns up to make a statement, so we don't know what he already knew or didn't. But what amazed him was that all the children, even these young children, were able to identify their own problems and articulate them and generate them at this level. The forum that was used, this 'final community meeting' was good in that it enabled little ones, these 10-13 year olds, to take full part. It actually amazed him, that what they were talking about was the reality: everything he saw was the truth.

The young boys, their request was that the girls should not put on mini-skirts, because when they put on mini-skirts, they excited them and got them to start desiring to have sex with them. So that was discussed and of course the girls were encouraged not to put on mini-skirts to wear everywhere, but of course to see occasions maybe when it was appropriate for them and to know the risks they were taking.

Q: But then isn't that rather like the boys saying 'it's the girls' fault, it's not our problem'?

RM: What the boys are saying is that any boy seeing a beautiful girl would be excited, would be attracted to that girl, but the mini-skirt exposes so much of them that they find that they want to see more of the girls! That was their request. But then the community said of course, that there is freedom, freedom of what people can do: but that the young girls should know, they should not jump on any fashion that comes, they should know the risks they are taking in putting on things like that. Especially knowing what they had shown in their dramas, even the little girls, with the problems they were having being sexually abused in the community. If girls met these people who were already off their heads and they find them in a mini-skirt, they would just jump onto them.

Women's requests

The women's request (at 'the final community meeting') was that their husbands come back early and be faithful, not go running off with other women. In their drama they showed a woman who was neglected at home, she was always there, working a lot and of course as they work, they start getting old. So the man goes and brings some other woman home, with whom he goes off into the room. So what she does is says she should also get another one. So she goes and gets a man and they stay in the sitting room while the husband is in the bedroom. When the husband comes out and finds her with this man, in fact they are not even started getting together, he is so furious, there is fighting and so on. So that whole issue was discussed also.

Older men's perspectives

Q: What was the older men's request?

RM: The older men's request was for the women to be faithful. This is an urban situation, and one of the problems we found out about early on in Entebbe was that the man would come back and go to the beer place and drink. The woman, of course, being neglected at home would walk out and go to another place to drink and the children would be left alone. One of the women's dramas showed that one of the boys became a drug addict, the girl got pregnant and the parents had to resolve all the problems by getting back together.

Reflections on Stepping Stones

Q: So, what's your overall impression of Stepping Stones?

RM: 'Of Stepping Stones? Powerful. It's a powerful tool... Basic work which inspires communities to look at their needs and really get together and discuss their problems. It's very, very empowering to the community. It has helped, it has changed the community in Masaka, (where we ran the very first workshop) and I think even in Entebbe it has. For example, one married girl who came to the workshop said 'I'm going to try this'. She listened from her fellow women about some possible solutions to the problems she had

with her husband in bed and so on. She tried it, it helped her. Then she went and tried the condom. When she asked the husband, the husband said 'eh? Where did you get this?', she said 'in Stepping Stones' and the man said 'I learnt about it a long time ago, but I was afraid to tell you because I knew you would say maybe I'd been sleeping around. That's why I have never bought the condom'. So they went straight to their neighbour who had them, they gave them some condoms, they tried them and now they're using them.

So it's kind of transforming attitudes and so on. It's very good ... And it can work in any community, because it makes people address their own individual reality so it's not limited to any particular context. I think one can enter into any community, be it children, be it women, be it prisoners, be it I don't know what, and it will help them. Even if it's European, Indian, African, I don't know what. I'm enjoying it because it's also helping me enormously. One thing I learnt, I've never listened to people. It made me realise I'm a bad listener, it has tended to help me check on that. And as a facilitator, it is important that my listening becomes very, very powerful. It helped me enormously to improve relationships between me and my son. We listen to each other a lot now.'

• Changing vision, changing behaviour

This interview with Rose Mbowa was conducted shortly after the training workshop in Entebbe had taken place. But as we all know, people can be fired up with good intentions of change during a workshop, only for great plans to flounder subsequently.

Early feedback from people in Entebbe who attended the Stepping Stones workshop is encouraging in that their comments are largely focused on a shift in vision - a personal and group-wide awareness of possible ways of behaving which are different from what they have themselves done previously. Because old and young, male and female have all been equally involved in the workshop, there has not been a sense of the women ganging up on the men, or of the needs of the young superseding the needs of the old. Instead, there

has been a community-wide development of awareness of and respect for the needs of others in their community.

Shifts in attitude have indeed been translated into action, such as the couple who can now use condoms, the men who have decided to stay with one partner, the young girls who are now able to develop relationships with boys based on friendship, rather than sex. The fact that such issues, based on the needs of more vulnerable members of the community, and not just those of the leaders, can even be aired and discussed in public is pretty astounding. And the very process of publicly acknowledging and accepting them reinforces the possibility of the behaviour change taking place amongst these people themselves and others in this community.

Change doesn't happen overnight. Such a workshop should only be seen as a small beginning in a long-term process. But it is important for us as development workers to work with the community members, in order to enable them to translate their hopes into actions. Rehearsing for reality is a great way to begin. Sustaining that reality is the next challenge.

- **Rose Mbowa**, Director of the Department of Music, Dance and Drama, Makerere University, Kampala.

NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The training workshop in Entebbe was conducted by Professor Rose Mbowa with Baron Oron. The workshop was funded by Redd Barna Uganda and organised by ACTIONAID Uganda. With many thanks also to the members of the community in Entebbe who took part in the workshop and follow-up meeting; and to Lauren Oliver who transcribed the interview with Rose Mbowa and conducted a preliminary edit of its contents.

The interview was conducted by Alice Welbourn.

Stepping Stones is available from TALC, PO Box 49, St. Albans, Herts., AL1 5TX, UK. Telephone: (+44) 1727 846852. Fax: (+44) 1727 853869.

11

From acting to taking action: forum and legislative theatre

Adrian Jackson

• Introduction

Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed provides a number of useful techniques for working in development situations. This article attempts to give a very brief glimpse of two linked techniques.

• Forum theatre

The best known of these is Forum Theatre, in which the audience from a particular community is shown a play which illustrates a problem of concern to that community; this could be anything from how to limit the spread of the HIV virus by practising safer sex to how to combat racism. The play is devised in consultation with the people themselves and ideally will be performed by them. Many different techniques exist to establish what the issue to be treated will be; one way of starting this debate is to encourage participants to make images using their bodies, to show what oppressions they are facing (see also Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, this issue).

The play shown first is called 'the model': it shows a central character failing to overcome whatever oppression he or she faces and failing to solve the problem. The model is a provocation, an invitation to disrupt the play and to change the outcome. The showing of this play is a way of asking a question: 'What can we do about this?'

In the second part of a Forum Theatre presentation, the model is shown again, slightly speeded up and whenever members of the audience feel that the central character

might pursue a different course of action, they are invited to shout 'Stop!', come on stage, take the character's place and show what they might do if they were in that situation. When a Forum Theatre piece is well chosen, it will usually be the case that many people in the audience are in a similar situation to the central character, so they have a direct interest in solving the problem.

Through the Forum session, many people will come on stage and show their ideas. These will be tested in the context of the play, as the other characters on stage will make it difficult for the ideas to succeed (just as in real life it is not easy to solve problems, it is not easy to overcome oppression). But by the end of the session, hopefully lots of different ideas, tactics and strategies will have been played out and the community will have more potential solutions to their problems. Sometimes a single clear solution will emerge; more often lots of different ideas will each offer a piece of the jigsaw and, at the very least, we will have a better understanding of the problem.

This technique can be used as 'a rehearsal for real life', so that after the Forum Theatre show, the community can get right down to putting the suggested solutions into practice.

• Legislative theatre

Augusto Boal's most recent work focuses on devising and changing laws. This new stage in the Theatre of the Oppressed is called 'Legislative Theatre'. In Rio, where Boal lives, he was elected to the powerful regional council as a *vereador*, a legislator. He immediately set up a number of small local theatre companies which used Forum Theatre as a way of asking

people what laws they would like invented and/or changed. A number of laws which were arrived at by this method have now been passed by the council - small but significant laws, such as guaranteeing disabled people certain rights of access or building platforms under phone booths so that blind people won't bump into them.

Can we use Legislative Theatre even if we don't have a co-operative member of the government on our side? Yes, though maybe on a more local level. In Britain I did a project with people with learning difficulties and/or mental illness. The project was commissioned by a local housing association which provided supported housing for a number of people. What they wanted to know, the question they were asking, was 'what sort of policy should we have for making complaints?'. So the play showed one of the residents unhappy with his treatment and the audience's interventions showed ways of complaining to the housing association. After the production had played in a few venues to some very creative audiences of people, who were themselves living in supported accommodation, the housing association drew up a complaints policy to reflect everything they had learnt from the Forum Theatre pieces.

The same technique might easily be used by a development group or charity, for instance trying to establish what a particular community's priority needs were, or where workers should concentrate their efforts. After showing a play which perhaps might involve some development workers going in heavy-handedly and enacting their own priorities without proper consultation, the audience might be invited to show how such an organisation might more usefully go about consultation. This way, the community takes charge of its own affairs and the development group gets the best possible information directly from the people with whom it is going to work.

The only difference between Forum Theatre and Legislative Theatre is that at the end of the latter, the audience is invited to suggest rules or laws or guidelines which have arisen naturally during the performance. There must be someone whose job it is to transcribe these suggestions and set them out clearly; ideally,

once this has been done, the group would go back to the community responsible for the ideas and make sure that its version of the suggestions put forward (and now translated into policy) is acceptable to the originating community.

The advantages of such a technique are obvious. Not least among them is ownership. If a community has made suggestions which are then enacted in policy, it is much more likely to work whole-heartedly for the success of the policy - it is their policy, it came from their ideas. Another advantage is that local people know much better what their problems are (and possibly how to solve them) than outsiders coming in with good intentions. This century is littered with examples of well-intentioned but misplaced development projects inflicted on communities. This method avoids such pitfalls.

- Conclusion

Theatre can involve people who might otherwise steer clear of involvement in local issues through more conventional means (like discussions or questionnaires). Forum Theatre has the great advantage that it enables us to try things out for ourselves, to see that we can change things ourselves - within a format that is provocative, entertaining and FUN! We are all actors, we all act our parts in daily life - but few of us get the chance to act, to take action on a larger stage, at a decision-making level which can affect our and others' lives. Legislative Theatre gives us this opportunity: the opportunity for genuine, creative, participative democracy.

Try it!

- **Adrian Jackson**, Associate Director, London Bubble Theatre Company, 5 Elephant Lane, London SE16 4JD. E-mail: londonbubble@gn.apc.org

12

'Asylum' - theatre for development in Oxford

Alison Norris

• Introduction

On the outskirts of Oxford is Campsfield Detention Centre which holds people seeking 'Asylum' in Britain. Many locals do not realise that Campsfield exists. 'Asylum' was a Forum Theatre partnership between a small NGO (Oxford Development Education Centre) and an amateur theatre company, financed by an EC grant channelled through Oxfam. Our aim was public education about forced migration and claiming 'Asylum' and hoped to spur audiences into taking action.

Making connections, sharing experiences

The heart of Forum (see Overview) is people's daily experience. We had no direct experience of claiming 'Asylum', so our first hurdle was involving ex-detainees. No-one wanted to risk deportation by being associated with what could be seen as a political protest. We met campaign and welfare groups who support 'Asylum' seekers who put us in touch with ex-detainees.

Ex-detainees did not want to perform, but three people agreed to rehearse with us. Two became very committed to the project. We were a mixed group of about fifteen people: Black and White; aged from thirteen to mid forties; coming from a range of different Asian, West African and European countries and backgrounds.

Apart from the ex-detainees, people knew little about the issues. The communication problems were potentially tremendous. What saved us was Boal's image work. Rather than words we

used physical images. Our bodies symbolised our feelings about freedom and prison. We gently modelled each other to make more complex, silent tableaux, then animated these.

We struggled to understand what being held in Campsfield was like, until the ex-detainees made a series of tableaux taking us through a typical day. Everyone in the group started to make connections with each other. People collected newspaper articles and requested more information; a lawyer came to visit; an ex-prisoner in the group added his experience.

As trust grew we explored the racism bound up in the issues. We began to get a shared understanding of what we were trying to challenge. We realised one key need was to get our audiences to see 'Asylum' seekers as people.

Creating a forum theatre performance

A story evolved of a West African forced to flee after printing political posters who claims 'Asylum' at Heathrow airport and is detained at Campsfield. We wanted to show what he was losing by fleeing. For African participants, song and dance was an inevitable part of this, but Europeans worried about confirming Western prejudices. We quickly learned how vital traditional dance and music was, giving individuals a chance to improvise but binding everyone in a shared understanding of their situation. We realised the forms expressed a kind of community Westerners have largely lost, and we grew more confident.

We combined animated tableaux of village life with protest songs. These techniques took us a long way, but then we hit a block. The 'Asylum' seeker was the central character. We wanted to make more realistic scenes of his

struggle for the audience to join and change. But, the situation was so grave there was little room for action. Most of the audience would not have similar experiences on which they could draw.

Two professionals helped, a Nigerian playwright and a European director. They tightened up the Forum and got us to think again about our audience. We split the performance into two halves, one about the 'Asylum' seeker and one about 'Concerned of Oxford', a person responding to the plight of 'Asylum' seekers. The audience would get a chance to replace 'Concerned'.

We made one scene but felt we needed more. This had to be a fiction grounded in reality if it was going to be a useful educational tool, so we decided to use Invisible Theatre (see Overview) to get the material we needed.

Using invisible theatre

Three of us visited a local supermarket. One played a newly released 'Asylum' seeker, supported by 'Concerned', the third a prejudiced character. We got a few cheap goods and queued at the checkout. The ex-detainee realised she couldn't buy everything and 'Concerned' offered to lend her money. The third character, also queuing, overheard and protested. They argued as they waited. 'Concerned' said her friend had to flee and couldn't work, the other countered 'she's left her people in the lurch, we can't afford to take in everyone....'. The ex-detainee urged quiet, she didn't want trouble. The scene generated a lot of interest. No-one from the public joined in but a small group gathered and listened intently.

Reactions from other activists were strong and mixed. Some thought it was a wonderful way to give the issues an airing. Others felt furious that people had been manipulated like this. Were we just confirming people's prejudices? For those who took part it was a chance to speak out about something hidden. It did make a good Forum scene in 'Asylum'. One audience intervention had the three characters going for a coffee to discuss the issues.

Performing 'asylum'

We did six performances of 'Asylum', one as a workshop for educators in Birmingham, one for a Ghanaian and European group in Milton Keynes, the rest public performances in Oxford. Audiences were hard to attract and quite small (between six and thirty) but those who came joined in, stayed talking long after the performance and requested more information. We took publicity from local refugee support groups to all the performances and raised a little money.

I feel that this approach is powerful and worth developing. The ex-detainees found telling their stories surprisingly therapeutic. The theatre company now makes a monthly visit to Campsfield to play drama games with detainees, using techniques that helped us communicate during the project.

• Conclusion

Development is not just about material or attitudinal change. It should release the power of our hearts and spirits. I think participatory theatre is one of the most powerful tools we have for sharing experiences that might otherwise isolate and divide us.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alison Norris, c/o Oxford Development Education Centre, East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street, Oxford UK. |
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13

There's more than one art to creative PRA**Helen Gould****· Introduction**

Think of participatory development, for one moment, as an orchestra. It would be inconceivable to use just one instrument. With PRA, as with orchestras, you need a balance of skills, a range of instruments and players, performing in concert. This analogy fits in well with the historical development of PRA as a family of tools which complement each other.

More recently, creative activities are being included in the tool kit of PRA. This is an exciting development but one worrying aspect is the increasing dominance of theatre within this group of creative tools. Creativity is a core language of human expression in participatory development, but just as the orchestra, there is a variety of instruments which help a community verbalise their needs and solutions creatively. It would be a dull world indeed if acting was our only form of self-expression. What, then, of our poets, painters and craft makers, our musicians and dancers?

Art in development

When I researched the role of art in development during 1995, (*The Art of Survival*, published by Comedia in 1996) I found that a wide range of art forms were used across a broad spectrum of projects, from structural development programmes to health awareness and post-emergency situations. They included: circus on the Bosnian front line, puppetry in mines awareness, dance with youths in a disadvantaged area of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, visual arts and creative writing in refugee camps, craft-making for income generation with homeless people in

Los Angeles. Furthermore, drama, music and a whole clutch of media tools - video, radio, television, film and photography were used.

As part of this research exercise, Oxfam kindly let me explore its database. Over a period of the previous three years, it had funded some 74 development projects with creative elements (that we could trace) to the tune of at least £600,000. These broke down into the following categories: projects using drama (45%), visual arts (22%), music (12%), pottery (6%), textiles (6%), and dance (5%). As a general observation, it seemed that performing and visual arts were used for education and communication, while crafts and textiles were useful for skills training and income generation. It was interesting to note that in the majority of development situations, the art forms used evolved by accident rather than design. These art forms were not needs-driven, but used primarily because the facilitators were most skilled in them.

This need not always be the case. Consider the following examples: a gender law and rights programme which resulted in a folk song book about women's rights; media training to enable a community to produce a newsletter to spread good practice among farmers; street performance being used to spread the message to street kids about AIDS and HIV. Clearly these are cases in which the forms used were highly appropriate, driven by needs and not whims.

The limitations of drama and role-play

In a community where drama and role-play are part of the language of self- or community expression (and, admittedly, there are very few where it does not), then participatory theatre is entirely appropriate. However, in instances

where the capacity for role-play is limited, where one might be dealing with a group of individuals who are uncomfortable with, or incapable of, performing, other forms of self-expression may be more appropriate.

One example of this comes from the work of two British arts therapists and development workers, Debra Kalmanowitz and Olivia Lloyd. They have spent time working with Bosnian children in refugee camps in Slovenia and Croatia. Primarily they have worked through the medium of visual arts. A painting by a child who has witnessed so much in his/her short life can probably paint a thousand words of drama: roofs of neat, naively drawn houses are pierced by mortar shells while matchstick men lie bleeding. But Lloyd and Kalmanowitz have not just focused on a child's visual capacities. Their sessions can often include play - building houses or community dens - and creative writing.

One work, which I treasure for inspiration, was written by a Bosnian teenager, Lucija Tokmic, in one such session in a camp in Hrastnik, Slovenia, (see Box 1). All credit should go to the Bosnia Support Group for publishing it.

BOX 1

'Happiness is may be blue,
Happiness is may be green.
But happiness is always big,
Even when it is small.
Happiness is having eyes
Because eyes can see - woods, sky and
clouds
And the road you are travelling.
Happiness is having ears
Because ears hear everything - whispers,
rustling
The river flowing, silence and thunder,
Happiness is having hands.
With hands you embrace,
With hands you love,
And you go to a far away world.
Happiness may be blue,
Happiness may be green,
But it is always big, even when it is small.'

I doubt that any theatre practitioner could have got either of these young people to verbalise both their anguish and serenity in any other way. Painting and creative writing was the perfect instrument of their expression.

Learning through creativity

One example of a project which has these values close at heart is Katha, a literacy development project. This works with some 10,000 families in one of the largest slums in New Delhi, India.

Katha was set up by author Geeta Dharmarajan in 1988, initially as a health and environmental education project. It is now an integrated development project, which specialises in teaching LIFE skills (literacy and lifelong learning, income generation skills, family well-being and empowerment). It uses an enormous range of activities to spread the joys of books and reading, to empower women and children, break down gender and social barriers, and to encourage learning through creativity.

The Indian literacy tradition spans a continuum from the spoken word - storytelling and performance - to written texts. Thus, as part of this legacy, Katha uses all the creative tools at its disposal - theatre, storytelling, writing and film, cartoons and magazine publishing - to 'make an impact, ...to motivate and excite many, many people in a myriad of ways'.

In Zimbabwe's Masvingo province, drought forced farming communities off the land and into other forms of employment. Many fell back on traditional craft skills, such as crochet work, basketry, wood and stone carving to earn their living. Some 41 groups applied for assistance to market their new craft businesses in this area in 1992 alone.

Traditional creative skills, this time, local song and dance, were used in the southern area of the Punjab in Pakistan to prepare and mitigate against floods in riverside communities.

In Santiago, Chile, a project with the migrant Mapuche people delved back into its culture, history and language in a programme of cultural training courses and events designed to help strengthen and empower these fractured communities.

Another example is Raw Material, a music and multi-media development project, based in Kings Cross in the heart of London. It uses

video, dance and street music; - the language of urban youth - to get its participants to express their needs, to discuss and debate drug culture, violence, HIV and other important youth issues. It works, and young people flock to this hive of creative self-expression, because it uses their language.

• **Conclusion**

We can all easily grasp the lessons from these examples. If the true values of participation are carried through into the creative areas of development, then the democratic process should allow participants to choose the form of expression with which they feel most comfortable. It follows, therefore, that one either uses multi-skilled specialists to facilitate these participatory processes, or a range of specialists working in concert - much like that orchestra analogy described earlier.

Perhaps there has been some tendency for arts development practitioners to lead the donors through the nose. In the absence of any real expertise in the cultural field, the donors have listened to the experts. If the experts use theatre, then theatre it is.

But given the rapid evolution of this field, there is now an argument for a more inquisitive attitude. The question most donors should be prepared to ask is why one art form

before another? What is the cultural justification? And where is the need?

A conductor may not be an expert in every instrument, but s/he must be able to conduct players and instruments in concert and harmony. Similarly, a PRA facilitator should be prepared to mix and match a range of tools to suit the development environment and objectives. S/he should have the capacity to use the right creative tools for the right cultural environment and objectives.

• **Helen G. Gould**, 18 Percy Road, Leytonstone, London E11 1AJ, UK. Email: hgould@gn.apc.org

NOTES

Helen Gould is co-ordinator of the Creative Rights Forum. This is a new international network for organisations and individuals using the arts in development.

For further information, contact the CRF, 18 Percy Road, London, E11 1AJ, email: creativerf@gn.apc.org, tel: + 44 (0)181 532 8870. Alternatively, details of the CRF can be found on the Internet web site: <http://www.gn.apc.org/creative forum>.

14

Using participatory group activities to understand psycho-social strategies for coping with conflict

Dieneke van der Wijk

• Introduction

In one resettlement village in Sri Lanka, where Oxfam UK/I worked, women heads of households requested that I talk to them about their problems and worries in life. But it was difficult for them to reflect on their situation and therefore participative group techniques were introduced to create a relaxed atmosphere in which women's emotions could be expressed in different ways. By encouraging women to share experiences and talk to each other, opportunities arose for greater reflection. From these initial experiences in Sri Lanka, the study that is described here was developed. It was carried out from August 1996 to April 1997.

This study is a qualitative, comparative study of the coping and survival strategies adopted by poor women in Sri Lanka and Cambodia during periods of armed conflict. All of the women are heads of households. How do they decide on and adopt survival strategies? How do they cope with their personal feelings of trauma? This study attempts to identify the changes that conflict has on daily life and family structures and how women experience these changes.

The study was carried out in Trincomalee District in North East Sri Lanka and Battambang Province in North West Cambodia, both unstable security situations.

Four villages were chosen where Oxfam was well known to many of the women. Thus, a good rapport had been established before the research started. Some of the activities that are described below were recorded on video. This

was played back to the women some months later in a follow up workshop.

• Methodology

The study looked at survival strategies as seen through women's eyes. The data were collected by working with, and listening to, groups of women. The participatory group activities followed a sequence which started with general issues, such as history and government services. We then moved on to discuss work-related issues and finally more personal and sensitive issues, such as conflict, late husbands and personal feelings.

PRA activities were adapted for the group work and included: drawings, role plays and discussions. Local women added singing and dancing to the programme. Large group activities were followed by individual or small group discussions. The diversity of fora enabled background data to be collected, findings to be verified and particular themes to be discussed in more detail.

The process

The type of activities and the content of the meetings emerged as a natural process which followed the contributions made by the women. The depth and speed of the debate was determined by the women themselves. Planned activities, such as drawings and role plays, provided a starting point for opening up discussions and created a relaxed atmosphere. Discussion of individual issues depended on women's memories, but also on the strength they gained by finding shared experiences. Women showed emotion: they laughed, were serious, showed tears and enjoyment. The

discussion provided an outlet for them to show their frustration and anger about their degraded status and their fear of conflict, violence and pain. Throughout this process, women's emotional reactions were reflected on. Some activities, such as the role plays and body maps of feelings, were a new experience for some of the women. It was often the first time that they had expressed feelings, shared incidents and felt recognised as individuals.

Role plays

The women gradually opened up and their role plays showed their strategies and experiences. These included their feelings of humiliation when passing security checkpoints, their memories of their husbands being taken away from home at night and killed, and how their husbands had beaten them. Women wanted to show us exactly how their husbands were taken away, and performed with great seriousness. They found it difficult to explain in words how they felt about these experiences. Women who watched reacted with a sense of shared recognition. After the

role plays, women initiated song and dance activities, possibly as an outlet for tension and excitement. In both countries, the women used the space provided in the discussions to sing songs and grieve about their late husbands and personal feelings.

Using drawings

The women drew the 'perfect woman of the village' and the 'widow of the village'. This enabled them to reflect on the work, thoughts and feelings of these different characters. It opened up a range of discussion points including that of the degraded status of a widow in society. While drawing pictures of their late husbands, women explained their physical and personal characteristics. They extracted the main 'roles' that spouses perform and ranked them. In three of the four villages, being 'a lover' was the most important role, followed by being 'the decision-maker'. While drawing pictures, women laughed about the products, but also corrected each others' and sought acknowledgement about their husbands' physical appearance.

Figure 1. Cheap drew this picture to describe how her brother (centre) was taken away by Khmer Rouge soldiers



Bodymaps

Women showed their different feelings in body maps. They identified anger as their strongest feeling, followed by fear. Happiness was experienced the least. Anger is shown as a feeling in the arms, legs and mouth, as the women wanted to kick and hit, but are not allowed to. Fear is shown as beating of the heart, shaking of arms and the inability to walk. Many of the reactions and emotions were similar in the four villages.

• Coping strategies

Women coped with their traumas in two main ways. First, they shared and talked about their experiences and second, they found space to relax. Women said that during the exercises, they began to understand their own complicated situation and unravel the different aspects to their changed lives. Their many roles included that of mother, income earner and decision maker. They reflected on their position in society and how they needed to be able to cope with violence and death.

Talking with other, like-minded women provided them with a feeling of recognition and strength. Women started to use the space that was provided by chewing and sharing betel in Sri Lanka, and by smoking cigars and giving each other massages in Cambodia. This provided a natural and temporary relief. Other support systems were said to be their children, religion, family and neighbours.

Evaluation of the process by women heads of households

The work was evaluated immediately after the process and discussed again three months later. Women were very positive about the process. Although it had brought bad memories to the surface, the women did not have bad feelings about the activities. They felt it had brought 'a lot of good things and worked as a medicine'. As expressed by one woman: 'I opened my heart and showed my wound inside; after doing all the exercises I feel that the heavy thing in my heart has gone.'

Women said that this was the first time anybody had asked them about their lives and sad stories. They expressed strongly the need for someone to listen to their experiences. Their depression, mental agony and grief decreased with the chance to talk and the space provided in which to relax. The women felt the process had resulted in a clearness of mind.

Women increased their understanding of the situation they live in and gained insight in to their problems relating to their life before, during and after the conflict.

The Cambodian women released worries and gained insight into the hardship and pressure caused by violence and the social problems of their husbands. By talking about this, they gained awareness of their own rights as women. In one of the villages in Sri Lanka, where there were many illiterate women, they said they felt empowered, had lost their shyness to talk and had learned to write their names.

By participating in a group, women shared and recognised each others' mental grief. Three months after the process, the groups felt more united and as a result, discussed, helped and shared more with each other. The trust which has been built up among women is something which they now enjoy and are happy about.

The process built women's self-confidence and gave the women a feeling of strength. Before the meetings, women felt sorry for themselves, but during the meetings, they learnt to forget their worries. They said that they feel more able to face any difficulty, such as the gossip in the community which used to trouble them.

The attitude of the facilitator was crucial to the process. Women opened up, as this was the first time that anybody had asked and had taken an interest in their feelings and sad stories. There was sympathy for the women and they felt 'free' with the facilitator. By this, the women meant that the facilitator was not authoritarian. She did not position herself at a higher status, but was an 'equal'.

Sri Lankan women felt they needed mental and financial support from the groups in the future. In Cambodia, the women said that they wanted to participate in future action research, even

without tangible, financial assistance because they wanted to talk about women's issues: 'We liked the meetings and that is why we came'.

• **Conclusions**

- Participatory activities enable women to share the reality of their lives. They are a valuable entry point for further understanding. We should realise that the information provided is the reality of the moment, and that this reality is very complex.
- The process with the women heads of households has empowered them, to a certain degree. This is reflected in their ability to articulate their needs, including financial requirements.
- It is important to recognise that the facilitator will have an impact on the process itself. How can we measure the influence of the facilitator on the process and on the response of women? We should be vigilant about our own assumptions and biases, and also be aware that different people will have different interpretations of the same situation.
- Certainly, the process provided insights into the feelings of the women, into the violence of the events they recollected and incurred and some understanding of their own self-esteem.
- Rebuilding people's lives during and after conflict should be carried out in an holistic way, stressing gender relationships and embracing the economic, social, and psychological/emotional environment.
- Participatory techniques for research or needs assessment can contribute to people's awareness and empowerment. The people are actively involved in defining the depth and content of the information that is shared and have an opportunity to change direction, reflect and come back to certain issues.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dieneke van der Wijk, Gender and Learning Team, Oxfam UK/I, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 7DZ, UK. |
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15

Giving people a voice rather than a message

Lars Johansson and Dominick de Waal

• Introduction

Video and TV will soon reach the remotest villages. It is easy to see how it can spread ideas from the dominating centres of the world, but can it also be used the other way around? Consider the following example of when world systems suddenly become vulnerable to authoritative arguments made by local people, who have never before been asked for their opinion on matters of policy and planning.

The scene is a local primary school crowded with serious-looking Maasai men. A traditional meeting, an Enkgwana, has been organised by the local leaders to voice people's concerns over a management plan for the Ngorogoro conservation area. S. holds the stick to which the microphone is attached and looks straight into the lens with wide-open eyes. He is seizing an opportunity to address that other world directly. He knows he will be translated and that he will be seen saying this:

'One thing amazes me. It seems to me the whole world is lacking sense and there's no-one to point it out. Just look around - the parts of the world left with wildlife have pastoral people. Why do the 'experts' and the 'guardians of the wild' come here after having failed to conserve trees and wildlife in their own places of origin? They come here to support themselves.

'Which world in the whole universe was created without trees or wild animals? Why should we, who have always had everything, be shown how to conserve? There is no need to pay government employees to protect this land. It is the residents themselves who are

most capable. All this money could have been used to help the rest of the world.

'The world should know that we are not people who eat the soil until it is finished. The world should learn from us how we Maasai manage our lands'.

Six months later, a threatened international conservation establishment is still struggling to explain away these allegations. The local authorities have prohibited the Maasai from using video in the conservation area. The Ministry has withdrawn approval of the management plan. Letters are written to FAO in Rome to make them stop the distribution of the video. But it is the Maasai participants in these meetings who own it and they do with it as they wish. They intend to show it to the president who is planning to visit the area.

Who is involving who in whose projects?

The dominant approach to video in development has been as a development mass-media. Video has been used mainly for educating people in the modernisation process, for disseminating messages that are formulated by experts and designed by professional producers. During the same period of time, but on a much smaller scale, video has also been used in a totally different way: for giving people a voice rather than a message.

Communities have made their own video to help themselves and their neighbours to understand and build self-determination. Projects have tried to use video to get into a communications loop with local people. The case narrated above is an example from the Forest, Trees and People Programme.

Integrated rural development

The Rural Integrated Project Support (RIPS) is a Finnish initiative for integrated rural development in Tanzania. When the RIPS programme was reviewed during 1993-4, the notion had been established, at least at a rhetorical level, that rural development should build on local resources and grow from the bottom up, rather than from state-led implementation of centralised plans. Instead of providing packaged knowledge and ready-made solutions for passive target groups, extension agents were required to facilitate local processes of learning between different stakeholders. Projects were seen as negotiated undertakings based on mutual learning followed by collaborative action for change.

Methods for participatory learning, such as PRA, that draw on visualisation, dialogue and group dynamics, were employed. But the initiative to change still came from above. RIPS was a contradiction: a donor-led programme that tried to impose a shift from a top-down interventionist approach to a learning process approach. It worked against the entrenched tradition in which development projects belong to systems of institutionalised patronage. But when working groups, trained in PRA, started to prepare new projects, coalitions began to emerge between consultants, government officers, field staff and rural people which promised more space for local initiatives.

Video was introduced to such working groups when we found that we were unable to communicate the outcomes of participatory, experiential learning. Face-to-face communication draws on vast resources of tacit knowledge, metaphors, performative and narrative forms that cannot be captured in written reports and plans. The officers' reports didn't capture the knowledge that was produced in the field. The contrast and dialogue between different perceptions didn't come through. We couldn't share the experiences that lead to learning, either with the neighbouring village or with the ministry or donor staff in the capitals.

The coastal livelihoods project became a test of how to use video. The working group

arranged a week-long workshop in Sudi village with invited fishermen from the entire coast, from Kilwa to Mtwara. In the past we had tried to keep cameras in the background. If we were recording PRA work on video, we would ask people to try not to take any notice of the camcorder. In the Sudi workshop, we put the camcorder and a microphone with a long extension cable in the centre. We banned notebooks and said that we should only do things that could be communicated on video.

Everything that was recorded in the day was played back to the whole Sudi village community in the evening. It didn't take long for the workshop participants to discover how they could control the process and after two days they already had a clear idea of what could be communicated on video. The roles of the villagers and 'outsiders' changed dramatically compared to similar exercises that had been documented on paper.

After the Sudi workshop, six of the participants took part in editing and toured with the video to forty villages along the coast. They kept on recording additional material, that, thanks to the digital technology, could subsequently be incorporated in the video. They went to Dar Es Salaam, showed what the people were saying to several ministers, and recorded their comments for incorporation in the video that was, again, played back in the villages.

The project became a group narrative, and telling the story became the very action that led to change. At one point in the process, fishermen, village women and officers gathered around the editing computer to build a web of images and narratives. Thus, very local and private experiences were being connected to national and official issues in a way that we had never experienced before. An interactive communication loop was established between micro and macro levels. A connection between the agency of local individuals and the anonymous structural forces behind development became clearer.

Video and conflict: the ability to reconstruct someone else's reality

In the beginning we thought, naively, that video would help to build consensus on issues. Not so. It turned out that participatory video reveals conflict like no other medium. It does so by contrasting local perceptions with 'official truth'.

There is a consistent pattern in our experiences. Local people first of all use the opportunity to make themselves heard in order to raise bitter complaints about government institutions and projects. In Tanzania they often do so in a very outspoken manner, seemingly without fear for the consequences. In some cases, government officials and donor representatives have received such complaints with an open and constructive attitude that has led to mutual learning and conflict resolution. In other cases, authorities have denied that there is conflict and have questioned the motives behind recording such complaints.

In Ngorogoro, video led to a crisis in the relationship between local people and government authorities and donors. A draft management plan had been prepared for the area by the conservation area authority (NCAA). Planners reported that the Maasai had participated in the planning and agreed to the plan. A video of six Maasai traditional meetings in which the draft plan was discussed told a different story. The Maasai did not understand the document. Although they were consulted, they did not feel they were given a fair chance to contribute. They claimed their views were severely misrepresented in the plan. Some fear that the plan secretly aims to force them to leave the highlands, just as they were once evicted from the Serengeti.

The video of the six community meetings was used to communicate a reply to the NCAA. A group of elders, one from each meeting, was to deliver the tape to the NCAA board. But neither the NCAA nor IUCN, who acted as consultant in the planning, could accept the allegations raised in the video. They denied the authenticity of the tape, as if the participants had been actors. They tried to convince FPPP not to distribute it and

prohibited the Maasai from video recording meetings in future.

Some lessons for video-makers stand out for reflection

When people express themselves in their own language through their customary institutions, they easily come to produce representations of reality that are incompatible with assumptions on which development projects build their legitimacy. The Ngorogoro video mercilessly revealed that the management plan was built on a lie about people's participation. The planners had no way of handling this insight with their positivist professionalism and instrumentalist toolkit. Therefore they reacted by discrediting the video as being 'wrong', 'biased', 'unbalanced' and not 'true' (in contrast to their own representation, the plan, understood to be 'objective' and 'impartial'). The plan was ready, their job done. The communication problem had been reduced to the pedagogical problem of how best to get the message across to the other parties.

But the Maasai used the video for a different purpose. In the videotaped meetings, they were constantly pulling the planners into the picture as stakeholders, asking questions about which values and interests guided them. They saw the planning process as a power struggle and were ready to turn every exercise of fact finding or extension into a negotiation process.

The polarisation of the conflict marginalised us, the providers of the video facilities. We felt responsibility for continuing the process, but we couldn't find a way. The residents were prohibited not only from showing the video, but also from continuing to record. We offered to support NCAA to produce their own video in the Maa language, through which they could explain their arguments, but they were not interested. They thought our real interest was to discredit them. Instead of seeing the video as an opportunity for dialogue with residents, they sought to minimise the damage done to their reputation.

Video as process

Sikai Ole Sereb, a traditional Maasai leader, says in the Ngorogoro video:

'All of us are blind. The only people who now have open eyes are you sons who went to school. When some of us look at this document, it's like a nightmare. I participated in this since we took part in NCAA meetings. They took our voices, our words and our pictures. We are given this document but we can't tell what is in it. The only thing I can understand is my own photograph. Since we are illiterate we cannot see any tricks that might be there.'

The Ngorogoro case illustrates how project coalitions can use video to get involved in local processes of negotiation and extend that process over space and time. Video allows for different actors to negotiate issues in a much more equal way than through written language. The outcomes can be verified by all stakeholders and communicated even to illiterate people. As digital technology simplifies production and reduces costs, new ways of replacing printed media with video throughout the projects cycle can be conceived. By shifting the focus from the product to the process - from the film to the making of it - we can avoid slipping into sending messages and give people a voice.

- **Lars Johansson**, Ysätervägen 2, S-182 63 Djursholm, Sweden, e-mail: lars.johansson@pi.se and **Dominick de Waal**, Mtwara Media Centre, RIPS, PO Box 113, Mtwara, Tanzania. email: Dominick@freemail.nl

NOTE

This is an abridged version of a paper that was originally presented at a workshop entitled 'Engaging Participation: The Use of Video as a Tool in Rural Development', in Bagamoyo, Tanzania in May 1996.

16

Video: a tool for participation**Megan Lloyd Laney**

- **Community video in Zimbabwe**

In Zimbabwe, a community of workers calling themselves *Masimanyane* (Ndebele for 'Let us Unite') are using video to break out of their cycle of despondency and hopelessness. The workers are employed by poor, small-scale farmers in one of the poorest parts of Matabeleland where few development organisations are active. The farmers have been given basic video training and the necessary equipment by FARMESA, a new, regional FAO programme which dedicates itself to finding more participative ways of working with poor farmers.

Video has been introduced by FARMESA to facilitate exchange between farmers. This enables them to put more pressure on researchers and policy makers. It provides them with a tool to make themselves heard by the authorities.

At the beginning, the community could find nothing positive to say about itself or its location. However, a small group of six representatives have unearthed a list of hopeful and innovative activities which are alive on their own doorsteps. The group have tried to discover what the community considers to be its strengths and weaknesses. Armed with the means to communicate messages to the outside world, the group have not stopped interviewing, filming, and questioning their own community since the initial training workshop was held one month ago.

FARMESA is working alongside the members to help them identify the story they want to tell and to whom. Through workshops and practical training, FARMESA hopes to

construct a participative monitoring system in which the community uses video to detect ways in which the video process is changing their lives.

Members of the community are currently writing scripts for dramas. These allow them to explore sensitive issues which they could never previously discuss. By taping these dramas they hope to stimulate discussions wider in the community.

Examples abound of video projects in which the control is with those who own and manage the equipment. In most cases the controllers are film producers, sometimes development specialists but rarely the community themselves. The FARMESA project is a strategic effort to explore the potential of this one medium for engaging participation and ensuring that 'control' is exerted within the community.

The project is being chronicled on video and through the written word, using interviews with project staff and those with whom they work. This ensures that whatever the effectiveness of this approach, it can be shared with other practitioners.

Participative video can have advantages over PRA because it is comprised of both 'process' and 'output' components. In PRA, the community can be left with little to show for their participation in the visualisation exercises. They should, of course, be given copies of the diagrams they have constructed, but this does not always happen. But after the process of video production, the community has a tangible product - the video. This reminds them that they are articulate and persuasive people with a case to make to the outside world.

The community can also use the video independently of the FARMESA project. They can use the video to convince other intermediaries that they understand their problems and can identify what assistance they might need from other service providers. Participative video also presents the opportunity to have fun: it encourages bonding across community groups which we hope will outlast the project itself.

• **Steps taken**

The community chose six people to be trained in all aspects of video production: four men and two women. To provide the community with a framework of progress, FARMESA identified the project steps to be followed.

Step One: Facilitated discussions were used to find out what kind of story the community wanted to tell, and who they want to reach. Perhaps they want to reach out to other communities similar to themselves and tell them about their work, or they may want to approach legislators about issues concerning them, such as land rights. It is up to the community themselves to decide. Several meetings are required to build consensus on the video topics.

Step Two: The community was given a one week training in basic video camera work, including picture composition, lighting and sound. They were also given the chance to see the editing process.

Step Three: The community begins recording the images and sound. We found that it was helpful to play back the videos that had been made to the community and outside advisors at regular intervals. This promoted discussion and ensured progressive learning in the technical aspects of filming. It also enabled the group to identify people with particularly good skills needed for managing sound production (to listen; to keep background noise to a minimum; turning on the microphone) and controlling the camera (an eye for an interesting frame; steady hand), who could then be used as resource people for the wider group. Filming lasted about 3 weeks in each community.

Step Four: The captured images are edited. This was done by a few community representatives, together with a professional video editor. This took about one week.

Step Five: Screening and distribution. The community stated that they wanted the video to be shown to donors because they believed that the donors would respect the fact 'that the community can do something'. Thus, along with the community itself, donors are to be a key audience of the finished product.

• **Lessons learned**

Hours of footage have been shot since the first training workshops, two months ago. FARMESA project staff are currently reviewing with the community what they have produced to date, and what product they think they can make out of it. A promise has already been made for the final video to be broadcast nationally on television by a cameraman who has taken a personal interest in participating in the project. Other NGOs are also expressing interest in the methodology. Plans have been made for FARMESA to write up the process in a practical handbook for use by all of the southern African countries participating in the regional programme.

Practical problems have not been absent: the most talented camera person of the group, who received extra training in the hope that his skills could be used by the project and by other NGOs, has taken casual work on a construction site because he needs the cash. This brings close to home the reality of development work: it may be a full time job for the project practitioners involved, but the people who are participating in the projects have also to make a living of their own, outside of the project, if they are to survive.

• **Megan Lloyd-Laney**, CommsConsult, PO Box 465, Kopje, Harare, Zimbabwe.

For more information about the project, contact Katja Jassey or Margaret Zunguze, FARMESA, P O Box 3730, Harare, Zimbabwe. email: fspzim@harare.iafrica.com

17

Video and PRA in Eastern Burkina Faso

Eleanor Smithies

• Introduction

L'Association d'Appui et de Promotion Rurale du Gulmu (APRG) is a national NGO which has been working since 1988 with 70 farmer groups and associations across 3 eastern provinces of Burkina Faso. It has been promoting self-help development, through activities determined and managed by village groups. APRG employs field staff to work with these groups to identify needs, facilitate training and initiate projects in the areas of rural credit, soil and water conservation, literacy and small businesses.

I started working with APRG in 1993, initially to support and advise their Animation and Training Office. Since then, APRG has gone on to support video productions with village groups and use video and PRA to explore local concerns.

Village video

There was great interest in using video to support the training of village groups, disseminate information, promote discussion and facilitate exchange between village groups. Six of the ten field staff were trained in basic video techniques, using simple lightweight equipment. APRG's video team quickly set to work, producing their own short training videos in the local language, with rural partners. These have included:

- women of Bilan-Yanga, Gnagna Province, explain how they have managed and maintained their grain mill and how they have coped with various challenges. The video has been shown to other women's groups who are thinking of buying a mill

or who are experiencing problems managing their own mills;

- farmers in Piela, Gnagna Province, show other farmers how to build rock bunds to encourage soil and water conservation and increase crop yields; and,
- participants from four villages involved in APRG's Gender Project, take part in Forum Theatre activities. This enabled other villagers, who were unable to participate in the event, to view the videos at a later stage.

Producing videos locally, in local languages and with rural partners encourages viewers in neighbouring villages and across the provinces. The videos are fun to make and, after the initial investment in equipment, are quite cheap.

Integrating video and PRA

APRG went on to explore the use of video with PRA. A two week video and PRA training was held in Fada N'Gourma, facilitated by Su Braden of Southampton University and supported by UNAIS and CAFOD. The training was aimed at fieldworkers and included local NGOs and government field workers. The fieldwork was carried out in Koulpissi, a rural village some 60km from Fada N'Gourma, the regional capital.

After initial workshop sessions on PRA and video, the teams began work in Koulpissi. In three teams of four people, the group began by learning about the village. One team, for example, went to farmers' fields to help with the millet harvest. Following this, the team began to plan PRA work in the village. They discussed appropriate methods for exploring specific themes.

Each group started with maps and went on to work with other methods with different groups. All the activities were recorded on video. To begin with, two teams had a strong presence with the camera. One team maintained this, but the other learnt to be 'invisible' as their confidence grew and rapport was established.

The mapping exercise proved particularly interesting. APRG learned how their previous work with the village 'groupement' had been limited to one 'quartier' and that another 'quartier', previously thought to be a neighbouring village, considered itself to be the ancestral 'heart'. The growing rapport and acceptance of the camera allowed for some rich historical profiles from both men and women to develop. Through this, APRG gained a clearer idea of the differing visions within the community.

'Playbacks' were organised for each 'quartier' in the evening. We soon realised the importance of lightweight, portable material, such as a small monitor, to ease transportation and facilitate playbacks in small groups, even in farm compounds. The turnout for each event was impressive, but discussions afterwards sometimes proved to be difficult. This was due to a number of factors, including the number of people who attended, the presence of the chief and the tiredness of the participants. After each showback session, villagers suggested further issues and themes which were incorporated into the plans for the next day.

After five days, the teams edited the material they had to date and showed it to a large audience. Unfortunately, the playback discussion was cut short due to the chief's presence. Once he had spoken, people were unable to contradict him or continue the discussion. Instead, discussions were organised in smaller groups in the different 'quartiers' for the following day.

The two final days were spent synthesising the information with farmers in each of the 'quartiers'. By this point, each team had facilitated different activities. For example, one group decided to explore the problem of finding water in the village through a small drama. This was rehearsed, recorded and

played back in one day. It proved a popular, animated and fun activity to pursue for both the women and men in the 'quartier'.

Participants' reactions

Participants were very positive about using this approach in their work. One participant reflected:

'Until now, these concepts [PRA] for me were fiction due to the fact that I've never known the foundations... In a technical way, [the seminar] enabled us not only to discover PRA but also, and especially, to associate it with the use of the camera; it improved our skills in camera work; it reinforced the partnership links with other organisations who took part; it opened up to the farmers a spirit of mental exercise and especially, of reflection and analysis of their daily life and aspects having reference to their environment; it enabled the farmers to familiarise themselves with audio-visual material; in a social way, the seminar revived relationships between the different quarters of Koulpissi (Lendi Daba, Animateur Diabo Zone, APRG)'

Using forum theatre for gender awareness

Theatre was also used by APRG in Koulpissi to raise awareness of the plight of women and introduce the concept of gender to APRG staff and village groups. L'Atelier Theatre Burkinabe was invited to facilitate performances in 4 villages involved in APRG's Gender Programme. L'ATB had already produced and performed a piece that was considered suitable for the Gender Programme: 'Mama est devenue folle' ('Mum's gone mad').

Prosper Kompaore, director of l'ATB, who also played the 'joker' for the forum performance, begins by introducing the group and the piece. He asks people if they would be willing to join in. The piece begins with the actors singing in proverbs about the plight of women. We see women arriving with water and wood, some of whom are pregnant. They are followed by their husbands. The action moves from a husband complaining about his wife, to scenes from family life, which show the inequalities of the gender division of

labour. The scenes gradually build up a picture of increasing conflict within the family, which concludes with the mother laughing to herself and her children crying 'Mama est devenue folle!'

The 'joker' then arrives to initiate participation. He begins by asking the villagers whom they thought to be the worst character and why. He asks if anyone will take on the role of the mother in the play. People are hesitant at first, but eventually the president of Koupissi's women's group volunteers. A scene is chosen to be replayed. The scene continues much as before, but at a crucial point the joker intervenes: 'can anyone help this woman?'. Another woman enters the action, followed by yet another. The three women then battle with the errant husband until he concedes.

Interventions continue, with three further scenes being re-enacted until everyone agrees with their outcomes. At the end, space is made for a discussion to explore the issues evoked and to clarify the aims of the Gender Programme.

Video was used to record the performance so that other villages who were unable to attend would have a chance to see and discuss the issues.

• **Reflections on using video, drama and PRA**

The enthusiasm with which participants took to the drama work has encouraged the use of drama in subsequent video work at APRG. A tale of a young couple's literacy training experience, directed by APRG's 'animatrice' and played by the people of Tangaye Village in Gourma Province, has been shown to over 30 other villages. It has been copied and distributed to 4 of APRG's national partners involved in a gender programme. A sequel was demanded - and subsequently made!

When APRG was asked by women in another village in Gnagna Province for support, the 'animatrice' facilitated, filmed and played back map making to understand the layout and resources of the village. They then went on to use a matrix. This enabled women considering small loans for income generation to work out

the most viable activities. During playbacks, the women were able to discuss their income generating activities and the 'animatrice' was able to show the material to other women's groups.

We plan to continue using video and PRA to identify needs for the next 4 year project plan. APRG has a small bank of footage which, it is hoped, will help villagers to: reflect on their vision and their changing needs, enable them to recall ideas and highlight priorities and challenges. Video should also make the information generated more accessible than that produced in fieldworker reports.

- **Eleanor Smithies**, Technical Assistant, UNAIS, BP 6143, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. Contact c/o Hunter House, 57 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LS, UK.

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The act of participation: a context for linking drama and PRA

Rachel Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish

• Introduction

Theatre is recognised in most cultures and communities as a form of cultural expression and communication. Although forms vary (for example, puppetry, mime, song), theatre is about the act of representation through live performance. Existing cultural forms become the medium through which people directly share and comment on their own lives. As such, theatre has a great deal to offer to dynamise some of the techniques of PRA and in the process, open channels for further insight, information sharing and learning.

In this article, we draw on our experience of experimenting with some ideas in workshops on theatre and PRA to explore the potential for overlap between theatre and PRA and to ask what shape or form these drama-based approaches might take.

Performers and performances

‘Theatre’ and ‘drama’ mean different things to different people. Academic debates on the distinction between these two terms are less at issue in the work we do than the uses to which dramatic and theatrical processes can be put. In our work we use the terms ‘theatre’ and ‘drama’ interchangeably, placing an emphasis on techniques and processes which are neither based on written scripts nor dependent on an external audience beyond the group themselves.

Although groups often include those who are natural ‘performers’, the workshops do not concentrate on formal acting techniques nor

on creating quality performances. Rather, the emphasis is on the issues being debated and on the dramatic techniques that can be used to explore these issues further. It is, therefore, of little concern to participants whether they are engaged in ‘theatre’ or ‘drama’. What becomes significant to them is that they are representing and analysing ideas through techniques that enable them to enact what they think, know or dream. They are *doing* rather than talking about doing.

Playing with ideas: dramatising PRA

PRA uses visual as well as verbal stimuli. To date, these have been two dimensional objects or symbols: beans, diagrams, maps. Drama can offer a three dimensional perspective, giving people the option of not only representing events, relationships, organisations etc., but also of actually dynamising them by bringing them to life. Participants are given the opportunity to play with and be inside some of their ideas, rather than just to objectify, rationalise or intellectualise them. And through the playing and interacting, further ideas and insights frequently come to light.

The process of drama can therefore offer a group a further form through which to communicate their knowledge, opinions and thoughts.

Communication using images

Communication through theatre is both verbal and non-verbal. This characteristic has great potential for PRA work. For example, PRA practitioners might use ranking and seasonality diagramming to ask about the health of a village at certain times of year. As well as, or instead of, diagramming, a group can be asked

to create together a still image of the health of the village, using their own bodies. There are many ways to facilitate this:

- ask one member of the group to 'sculpt' an image by giving verbal or non-verbal instructions to other group members or all group members to take on the role of sculptor in turn;
- ask one person to start the image by taking up a still position and invite others to place themselves in relation to it and so build up a collective image; and,
- count from 10 down to 1, during which time the group should have created an image collectively.

Working with small groups would generate a number of images. Each or any of the images can then be analysed by the group as a whole. Some options include:

- ask observers to describe what they actually see, without any interpretation;
- ask them to interpret the image, perhaps with a story about what it represents for them or how it makes them feel;
- ask the group to show us another image that represents the situation before or after this one; and,
- ask observers to replace original group members who can then reflect on the whole picture, as well as the picture from their original perspective.

Dynamising the image

'Dynamising' an image that would remain static in PRA, by bringing it to life, is a starting point for further analysis.

- ask the characters in the image to say one sentence that represents what they are saying or thinking in the image;
- ask observers to suggest things that those in the image might say to each other or be thinking; and,
- asking individual characters to repeat a single sound and gesture appropriate to that character, to depict them in that 'frozen' moment.

Through integrating words, movement and sound, other levels of expression and communication come into play. In the process,

more is revealed or discovered about interpretations of the original image and the situation it represents.

Playing with plays

Image work can be a useful basis from which to build scenes or plays to illustrate particular issues. In the PRA context the purpose of such dramas is to motivate group members to participate in the lives of the characters and the action of the play.

Asking participants to share stories of a common event or experience is a useful way of creating dramas. Plays are then improvised from this raw material. It is helpful to the process if the plays or scenes depict a clear story, with recognisable and believable characters. It is important, too, that there are places in which 'observers' can intervene. However, in order for 'observers' to be motivated to intervene, it is important that the situation of the play is recognisable to them: the content needs to relate to the lives of the whole group, not just those who devised the play.

Frameworks for Intervention

Much can be learnt about situations and social relations by watching the resulting plays. However, by engaging 'observers' in the action of the play - akin to the effect of dynamising images - alternative opinions or ideas can be explored by:

- allying teams of 'observers' with particular characters. Their job is to offer advice to their character at any time; and,
- inviting 'observers' to replace particular characters when they would behave differently at a certain moment. Previous image work can have alerted 'observers' as much to what characters are doing (communicated via body language, gesture and movement) as what they are saying. Silent interventions - those that do not involve spoken words - can be very powerful.

Such activities provide a wealth of material and information about a situation, community or project and the often complex relationships that impact, influence or are affected by it.

Questions of appropriateness

Playing and experimenting with such techniques raises the question of their 'appropriateness'. Certainly there is a role for drama within the context of training, but there is often caution about applying these techniques directly with a project or community.

Theatre can tap into levels of spontaneity that other research methods often do not excite in people. It invites both head and heart to be involved. Enacting a seasonal calendar will provide as much information about the feelings that various characters are experiencing as it will about the particular event, crop or institution under scrutiny. It is perhaps this that sometimes concerns those who have begun to explore these techniques in workshops: the fact that drama and theatre work at the level of our feelings as well as our thoughts. Worries arise like: 'but could this be too sensitive?' or 'but how do you use it with a community?'

Two dimensional techniques contain themselves within a written, symbolic or verbal form. Somehow this appears to be safer because participants are more likely to be 'reporting' events/opinions and their perspective may therefore be more detached. Also, more of the process of analysis and reflection may happen at a distance from a particular group or community. However, this idea of 'safety' may be somewhat superficial because it is based on the assumption that more 'cerebral' approaches are less inflammatory. In either the short term or the long term, how do we know this is the case? It's just that the tears, laughter or silence that a drama can create gives us a very immediate indication of what we are tapping into within a community.

The challenges of using drama in development work

Trying to apply drama techniques within the PRA process challenges us to consider our roles as development practitioners. The danger (to some) and the excitement (to others) of these approaches is that dialogue and analysis is really handed over to the group. The group becomes its own subject matter. And when that happens the nature of the process and any product is unpredictable.

Certainly elements of risk are involved. Drama confronts people with themselves and their own lives in a very immediate and tangible way. Certainly one needs to carry the conscience of 'what have I started?' or 'what expectations have I raised?' and certainly using these methods is not to be done without careful thought and preparation. But are these not questions we should be asking ourselves when entering any community to do any work? Maybe drama approaches just make these questions more explicit and therefore maybe harder to answer?

- **Rachel Searle-Mbullu**, 15 Connaught Road, Norwich NR2 3BP and **Kate Norrish**, Flat 3, 59 Netherwood Road, London W14 0BP.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We have been excited and influenced by the work of Augusto Boal, to whom we owe a debt. For further reference see:

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PRA and theatre for development in Southern India

Kirsty Smith, Susanna Wilford and Ruth O'Connell

• Introduction

Theatre which is fully participatory can significantly empower individuals and communities. It can be effective in highlighting important issues at grassroots level as well as re-establishing local art forms and traditional cultural practices that are so often lost through marginalisation and discrimination.

This article looks at the introduction of a new education scheme with a community in southern India in which PRA and practical drama activities were used. We consider whether PRA can be enhanced by integration with participatory theatre activities and what compromises may result from this synthesis.

• The project

As part of a post-graduate degree in Theatre for Development, we were invited by an Indian NGO, PREPARE, to run a series of theatre training sessions for a new project aimed at educating seven to fifteen-year-old Dalit girls in rural Tamil Nadu. PREPARE works to encourage Dalits to overcome political and cultural subordination and has set up a variety of community development projects such as credit, health and agricultural schemes.

A number of local women had been identified by PREPARE to be trained as informal educators. We were asked to work with these women to train them to promote the potential benefits of the scheme and to investigate possible

objections they might face during its promotion. In common with many development agencies, PREPARE's understanding of theatre was as a medium for the promotion of messages. We sought through this project to find ways of introducing a more participatory approach to the use of theatre in PREPARE's work and, as part of this, to experiment with the integration of Theatre for Development and PRA.

Using PRA with women educators

PREPARE provided us with the results of their investigation into how education for girls had been identified as a need in local Dalit villages. In order to complement this information, we set out to explore the perceptions and priorities of the women who had been trained as educators, through a collective visualisation activity. All of the group were literate and comfortable working with pens and paper.

We began with Venn diagramming. We divided the participants into two groups. One group was asked to create a diagram around the heading of 'benefits of education for girls'. The second group constructed a diagram around 'potential objections to girl-child education'. We asked the groups to concentrate on points that were contextually specific to girls from their own villages. As members of a minority of literate women in the local villages, participants were highly qualified to highlight the benefits and disapproval which they themselves had experienced or witnessed in their own villages. As issues were raised, they were written onto paper circles. Participants were then asked to prioritise them by placing the circles at varying distances to the subject, according both to their importance in everyday village

life and the frequency with which they might occur. For example, in the Venn diagram illustrating benefits, agriculture and health were identified as the most vital reasons for needing literacy and were placed adjacent to the subject.

Exploration of collective issues encouraged active discussion among group members. This became particularly energetic when the groups compared the results of the two diagrams.

Moving into theatre

We were aware that participants had had little or no experience of theatre-making. As an introduction, therefore, we began to work with activities which encouraged participants to improvise with objects and actions in a fun and non-threatening way. To build cohesion in the group, we encouraged women to draw on their personal experiences and knowledge to express themselves in a practical way and gain ownership of the material. Two exercises were chosen as tools for group building, raising confidence and as a way of revealing information that would not be immediately apparent to us. These were:

- *the object game*: one by one, participants passed around the circle an object with which they mimed an action, with the proviso that the mime had to be completely unrelated to the true function of the object. The rest of the group had to guess what the object might represent.
- *shape and mime*: this activity was similar to the first, but encouraged participants to improvise with body shapes rather than objects. Person A entered the circle and, for example, curled themselves up into a ball, sticking one arm in the air; person B entered the circle and observed the shape. They decided it reminded them of a waterpump and began to mime the appropriate action, using the body of Person A accordingly. Both actors continued until asked to freeze. Person A then left the circle and person C entered to use the shape person B had created, and so on. One person directed the action by calling stop and start so as to include all players.

Both of these activities were useful to focus the group. They also demonstrated how supportive the women were of each other. As facilitators, we also took part in the activity. These activities introduced the group to the rudiments of theatre-making, yet also had a purpose outside of theatre practice. The women became more confident and more relaxed as the session went on. The activities also acted as a research tool. Even though we were working with the women outside their village and domestic contexts, we were able to witness intimate elements of their lives that only intensive participant observation might otherwise have revealed. And as we were gaining insights into their worlds, they were gaining insights into ours.

These initial activities were more than the first stages in theatre. They offered information and insights that complemented what we had learnt in the Venn diagramming exercise, enhancing our understanding of the everyday lives of women in their communities. The theatre activities were enjoyable and stimulated participants' imaginations, which served not only as an ice-breaker but also as a change from the more cerebral PRA exercise.

Play-making

The group was asked to create a series of scenes to build a story about some of the key issues that had emerged from the Venn diagramming. The stories were to represent what happened to an illiterate family in a situation in which they had a problem concerning either health or agriculture, and what the consequences of such a problem might be. The plays that emerged further demonstrated issues facing the communities. These went beyond material concerns, such as clean water, to address issues such as family relationships, alcoholism and gender inequalities.

While some women were more active in the Venn diagramming discussions and left little space for others to contribute, the theatre work offered those participants who were less vocal the chance to express their views through their characters.

However, the form that women chose for their plays echoed familiar models in which messages were delivered to the audience. None explored the range of objections and benefits that had been raised in the Venn diagrams. The next step, then, was to develop simple dialogues that would encourage participants to develop their arguments in role. By posing problems rather than offering solutions, the aim was to encourage the audience to offer advice and explore the possible consequences of that advice.

Back to PRA: improvisations

Based on the information generated in the Venn diagram, participants worked in pairs to create an improvisation that illustrated one benefit and one objection. Each pair rehearsed a debate in which each individual was responsible for arguing a specific point. For example, one improvisation featured a father who felt that education was a wasted financial investment, since his daughter would soon leave the family and get married. The daughter, meanwhile, was keen to become literate to improve her chances of employment.

The aim of this exercise was to rehearse situations that might be incorporated into a play which would be taken around local villages. By finding new and persuasive arguments with which to confront their partner, participants introduced an element of conflict that offered interesting theatrical possibilities. The debating process also helped prepare the educators to respond with more confidence to any real life objections they might face in their villages.

During the improvisation process, participants reinforced their arguments by drawing on some of the other issues raised in the Venn diagramming exercise. When having to argue their point in character, participants identified interconnections between some of the issues that they had not previously highlighted. They also found that some issues which they had identified as quite important were difficult to maintain a strong argument for. The degree to which they were able to argue convincingly helped them to reassess their initial prioritisation. Equally, the debates which arose

around which arguments would and would not be used by women or men, provided insights into gender differentiation which the Venn diagram had not revealed.

The plays

Several plays were created and performed by the girl-child educators. They varied in style and emphasis. Only some of them, however, effectively integrated the information from the Venn diagram and the techniques of Theatre for Development.

The plays that resulted from the workshop process fused the information provided by the Venn diagramming exercise, which provided the content of the play, and some of the dramatic skills acquired during the improvised debates.

As facilitators of the rehearsal process, we were able to introduce a participatory approach known as *Forum Theatre*, in which members of the audience take an active part in determining the outcomes of the action. This new and unfamiliar style of drama challenged the more didactic style to which the participants were used. Because they retained ownership of the material, however, the actors were familiar and comfortable with the dramatic material, bringing many of the points raised during the improvisation to the attention of the audience.

The educators returned to their villages and created their own plays with local people as the cast, with no direct assistance from ourselves or the PREPARE staff. Although the women had access to the information in the Venn diagrams to inform these plays, their inexperience in theatre-making made it very hard for them to connect the two activities. The tendency was to revert to the traditional style of theatre in which any points to be made were highlighted in a monologue at the end of the performance.

The PREPARE staff also devised a play. But it did little to complement the participatory research process. Although the Venn diagrams were referred to for information, the staff members selected an issue to concentrate on which had been identified by themselves,

rather than the women, as a priority. They then devised the plot themselves and allocated parts to participants. The players did not therefore have real ownership of either the content or the process of play-making. As a consequence, the arguments that they put forward lacked both confidence and conviction.

• **Lessons learnt**

PRA and TFD provided complementary approaches to exploring the issues surrounding girl-child education in Tamil Nadu. While the Venn diagramming exercise highlighted the issues at stake and enabled participants to analyse their key concerns, theatre work deepened the analysis and provided a number of further insights. By taking on a role and arguing it out, participants were obliged to consider in greater depth the priorities they had arrived at earlier.

The introduction of Venn diagramming as a means of participatory analysis was completely new to participants. Theatre, however, was not. They had experience of the traditional performance form in this area of Tamil Nadu in which a monologue propounds a moralistic and didactic message. We made plays to address issues which touch on concerns about which there may be moralistic responses from people, or no response at all. Thus, it was hard for the participants to move away from the traditional medium and draw on the more unfamiliar forms of Theatre for Development.

Within a relatively short time-scale, insights were gleaned from the theatre and PRA work that offered the basis for further development. Progress in putting together the plays was, however, slow. This demonstrated the need for time to build participants' skills and confidence and to enable them to successfully use the techniques in their own work.

Even after so short a time, participants were more confident and able to find, and use, their voices. Where PRA highlights issues, the enhanced confidence that can come out of theatre work may empower individuals and collectives to address these issues, first by playing them out to explore what impact and potential repercussions they might have, then

taking action. Without a commitment to genuine participation and empowerment, however, theatre can become yet another way of telling people what they ought to do without engaging them in analysis or action.

- **Kirsty Smith, Susanna Wilford and Ruth O'Connell**, Centre for Development Communications, King Alfred's College, Winchester, Hants, UK.

Participatory approaches to the use of drama in sexual and reproductive health programmes

Gill Gordon

Introduction

Combining visualisation techniques with drama is a powerful approach for identifying concerns and visions for the future, analysing causes and effects, identifying solutions and planning action. It is also a powerful approach for education and advocacy. This article describes the use of drama techniques in relation to the three cornerstones of participatory learning: participatory methods and techniques; ensuring a participatory process, framework or approach; and the attitudes and behaviour of development workers.

Advantages and limitations of drama techniques

Drama techniques include role play, snapshots or tableaux, mime, story-telling, poetry and song. These techniques are helpful at all stages of a participatory process, where they can increase the choice of participatory methods and the potential for innovation and triangulation. For example, role plays by young people in South Africa (see Figure 1) revealed the following:

- Typical situations experienced by young people related to sexuality;
- Factors influencing sexual behaviour;
- Gender relations, power and decision-making;
- Communication in sexual relationships;
- Perceptions and use of contraceptives and safer sex; and,
- How and what support is given to young people around sexuality.

Advantages

A principle of participatory learning is that techniques should reflect local cultures and enable people to express themselves freely in their own terms. People may find it easier to express themselves through drama techniques than visualisation, because some people are uncomfortable with drawing. In some cultures, ideas are expressed through oral means rather than writing or drawing. The addition of drama techniques to visualisation greatly increases the potential for innovation in participation.

Figure 1. Sequence for PLA on adolescent sexual health in South Africa. Adapted from a training programme with Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa/Population Concern



People may find drama techniques more enjoyable and interesting. For example, in

rural Zambia, a group of elderly women were dozing off during a Nshima (Venn) diagram exercise. But when role play was suggested, they leapt to their feet and started working with animation. In Northern Nigeria, men were dominating a visualisation activity when a woman started to sing a song which questioned the men's analysis (Steve Abah pers. com.).

Drama techniques are particularly useful for exploring sexual and reproductive health for a number of reasons:

- Role plays can reveal issues of power and status in relationships through words and body language. These are key factors in gender relations, sexual decision-making and behaviour.
- Communication problems between partners is a major reason for risky sexual behaviour, even when people know the facts about preventive measures. Body language and voice, as well as words, reveal power and status, dominance and submission, aggressive, assertive or avoiding behaviour. Role play can not only raise awareness about the nature of communications, it can also enable people to rehearse new ways of communicating.
- Drama can reveal feelings, attitudes and values in a sophisticated way. These are key factors influencing sexual behaviour. Drama can give a holistic, three dimensional picture of a situation, providing a rich source of information for analysis.
- If drama is done with peer groups, people have the opportunity to role play characters of the opposite gender. This can be a powerful way of increasing empathy and understanding in gender relations.

Potential difficulties

Some groups may be uncomfortable with drama techniques and may feel inhibited to express their own issues through drama. For example, in one PRA training, older men did not feel able to role play sexual situations for men like themselves and diverted the dramas to address issues, either for young men or for complete outsiders.

Many people understand role play as performance and their desire to make good theatre can interfere with participatory objectives. This means that role plays show extreme situations for dramatic effect rather than more common reality. This can be useful for showing extremes but it can also be a way of evading recognition and exploration of the more usual situations which happen to those undertaking the PRA exercise. Acting out difficult situations can be traumatic for those involved. It is essential to de-role players and offer support if necessary.

There is no visual record of tableaux, role play and stories as there is in visualisation techniques, so learning can be transient unless ways are found to record it for further use. This might be done through video, photographs, tape-recording, drawing or note-taking.

Examples of drama and visualisation techniques used for different purposes

- Problem identification: role plays or stories of good and bad situations related to sexual or reproductive health. Drawing of individual lifelines showing the major sexually related events, followed by role plays of good and bad events.
- Causes and effects: Role plays of the circumstances leading up to a sexual encounter followed by analysis of positive and negative aspects, causes and effects and degree of control of each person involved. Visualisation techniques can be used to explore each factor in more depth. For example, impact diagrams can be used to look at the positive and negative effects of customs, income and expenditure trees or pie charts to explore economic factors.
- Objectives: Role plays of good sexual health; 'snapshots' or still tableaux, which show a situation at one point in time, of good and bad futures. (Snapshots can also show men's and women's perceptions of themselves and the opposite gender. For example, men in Pakistan depicted women in tableaux as gossips, whores and cooks. Women portrayed themselves as factory workers and nurses). Role plays of best and worst scenarios in marriage or relationships

to identify and negotiate objectives with the opposite sex or different generations.

- **Solutions:** Carousels; where people act as 'clients' seeking advice from those acting as 'consultants' on a problem, followed by brainstorming. Role plays and drama to rehearse and evaluate new ways of communicating about sexual matters, for example, saying no to sex or asking for condom use. Sharing successful strategies and offering support in changing their behaviour. Drama to predict the outcomes of a number of options.

For example, in Zambia, young women acted the effects of high bride price on their lives. They were seen as chattels and could not return to their parents' home, even if they were being abused, because the parents would not be able to afford to pay back the bride price. The young women then replayed the improved situation after an uncle had negotiated with the in-laws to pay a token amount for bride price.

- **Implementation:** Transform the drama, songs and stories into performance for education and advocacy work at community, district, regional and national level. For example, dramatic presentations on issues such as Female Genital Mutilation, polygamy and bride price can confront other groups with the causes and effects in a way that changes attitudes and develops the communication skills of those advocating change.

Video-tape local drama to show to planners and policy makers. Use the interactive drama techniques in schools or clinics, or in non-formal settings with peer groups. The techniques raise awareness, generate discussion and enable people to gain skills and change their attitudes. Create comic books based on the stories and dramas created as part of PRA activities.

- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Role plays and drama show progress towards objectives. For example, changes in communication between partners or young people and their parents or teachers, or cultural or structural changes and their effect on the community or changes in health worker behaviour.

Using participatory methods in drama in reproductive health programmes

Programmes can use drama techniques at all stages of planning and implementing sexual and reproductive health programmes. Sexual and reproductive health requires talking about sensitive and potentially dangerous issues. These can cause embarrassment and conflict in all societies. Role play, personal stories and other drama techniques must be used carefully because of their power and potential for embarrassment, distress or conflict. This requires that the process is managed carefully to allow those who do not normally have a voice or make decisions about sexuality to tell their stories and act their thoughts without harm.

Most programmes have found it helpful to work with peer groups based on age, gender and possibly marital status and parity initially. Local issues may include prohibitions on certain relatives talking together. Teachers and nurses may insist on joining a group of young people and totally inhibit the group.

PRA activities are usually public events and even if people divide into single sex or age groups, facilitators should make it clear that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group. Participants should be encouraged to tell stories or role play 'people like themselves' rather than disclosing personal details which could be damaging if they were disseminated outside the group.

When using these techniques:

- Encourage everyone to take part by dividing larger groups into groups of three or four, so that each small group prepares their role play simultaneously. Each small group then presents their role play to the whole group for further analysis. Never force anyone to role play in front of the group;
- De-role players by asking them to state their name and something about their family or work. A prop can be used to signify a character's identity;
- Make sure that people are clear about the purpose of the activity and agree on why they are doing it. Explain that it is not an acting competition;

- Encourage people to create their own role plays etc. on their own problems and dreams, causes and solutions. Avoid giving examples as much as possible because there is a risk that people will role play similar situations to your example;
- It is helpful to bring different peer groups together at appropriate times to share their deliberations and present their drama, songs and diagrams to each other. This increases understanding between men and women, young and old, and can break down communication barriers and increase empathy. It can also be empowering for the groups concerned to have the opportunity to voice their ideas, dreams and fears; and,
- After presentations, the community can discuss action plans and attempt to reach agreement on changes. However, some requests for change may be rejected by more powerful groups, and programme facilitators and the groups concerned would then have to decide how to respond - with more advocacy and work, adaptation of demands or shelving of this issue. The rights and needs of less powerful groups should not be sacrificed to the desire to reach community consensus and please the powerful.

Attitudes and behaviour

Changing the attitudes and behaviour of programme personnel is often the most important and difficult component of participatory learning. This is particularly true in relation to sexual and reproductive health. Judgmental attitudes and inhibitions about openly discussing sexuality are major constraints to effective work.

Added to this, some people may rightly feel anxious about their ability to facilitate the use of drama techniques in a helpful way. This implies that adequate and effective training and support for potential facilitators is essential. Here too, drama techniques have proved very useful for enabling trainees to practice communication and drama skills, experience the process for themselves, develop empathy and increase their awareness of their own sexuality and values.

Conclusion

Drama techniques offer creative tools for participatory interaction for sexual and reproductive health programmes. Practitioners can explore local modes of expression in different groups and build on these with community members. This creates techniques which enable people to voice their joys and pains, their dreams and fears in an area of life which is often hidden to the detriment of their health and happiness.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gill Gordon, Institute of Education, London WC1, UK. |
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Dramatic behaviour in participatory training

Koos Neefjes

• Introduction

Most practitioners of participatory learning agree that a key aspect of good PRA practice is something labelled *behaviour, attitude* or *body language*. In my experience, trainees usually not only agree on the importance of behaviour in facilitating dialogues, but also agree on what is seen to be *good* behaviour. In this paper I describe some ways of learning about these things with the aid of ideas and exercises from the world of drama and theatre.

Being able to articulate good behaviour in feedback sessions is different from putting it in practice. For example, one trainee who was extremely articulate in discussing good behaviour facilitated a large community meeting of war victims. The local people were sitting on the ground whilst he walked around the circle and directed closed questions at individuals with an interrogative tone in his voice. He carried a knife, probably inadvertently, during most of the meeting and pointed it at people when he asked questions.

This is an extreme example but demonstrates that the facilitator was unaware of what he was doing, of his posture, of the style of his questions, of the knife in his hand and that it was likely to inhibit people from answering or speaking spontaneously. Conversely, he seemed unaware that he was missing an opportunity to stimulate discussions through positive behaviour.

Participation centres on achieving 'shifts in behaviour', from being in control to being facilitative. Much of this relates to power differences between *outsiders* and *insiders*. Differences in authority and control are almost

always 'visible' through dress, behaviour, speech and attitude. Outsiders have to become increasingly aware of their own behaviour and learn how to 'manage authority'.

Drama techniques and approaches are particularly useful in PRA training to raise awareness of: posture, people's positioning, how power relationships are expressed in behaviour and ways of speaking and asking questions. I describe some of these approaches below (several of which are included in the *Trainer's Guide to Participatory Learning and Action*, Pretty et al. 1995).

Critical observation of behaviour

Good observation can be demonstrated with games such as 'Watch It'. In this game, participants form pairs and observe in details small changes in body posture.

In training sessions and work in communities, trainees are often divided into small groups for practising PRA methods, such as maps. An observer should be allocated to, and by, each group. It is good to give the observer a central role in feedback sessions. Ask them to describe aspects of the behaviour of the local *insiders* in order to start off a discussion about better, more facilitative behaviour of outsiders.

Studying photographs from interviews and community meetings is a good way of observing and analysing body language and behaviour too, as is the use of video.

Demonstration and imitation

Demonstrating someone's behaviour through imitation can be a lot of fun but can easily be offensive or embarrassing. However, with the right balance, it is a very powerful way of

getting a message across. The lead trainer or observers can imitate a mannerism or a way of sitting, standing or talking. Care has to be taken to avoid creating a strong insider-outsider divide and only those people who are present should be imitated.

Chairs, statues and role plays

The relationship between insiders and outsiders can be explored through 'the great game of power' (Boal 1992, p151). In this game, an imaginary space is created in the working room and the chairs and desks are positioned to illustrate human relationships. For example, chairs can be positioned to face a desk, with one chair behind it, as in a school class room. The idea is that trainees study the relationships expressed and start changing the setting: they can make it confrontational or relaxed. After a while, they can add themselves as statues to make it an even more exciting sequence of scenes of relationships of power. Those who stay outside the space discuss the changes.

Instead of discussing what good dialogues look like, it is interesting to request some trainees to be sculptors of other trainees (the statues) in order to show the others a 'good' or a 'bad' interviews or meetings. Being still and sculpted by others does not require any acting but it often happens that trainees turn the exercise into a role play.

In the case of a play of a community meeting, roles can include some community workers, a drunken elder or a distressed woman who comes late, a government official who wants to receive acknowledgement of his importance, etc. Sketches can be improvised immediately in this way. Alternatively a group can be asked to briefly prepare a performance of a good or bad, common or rare meeting or interview and then perform it. Feedback sessions are important in order to draw out the full potential of learning about behaviour, body language and good questions.

A role play of a wealth ranking exercise, using the trainers or trainees, can be used. I find this particularly good as an introduction to the behaviour aspects of PRA *and* the mechanics of PRA methods. It reduces the need for lecturing. The feedback to this session could

draw out a number of the key aspects of PRA, such as body language; the idea of 'good questions' and the functions of diagrams (to focus attention, recap and guide the discussion).

Song, dance and story telling

It often happens that during or after interviews and community meetings, people want to sing, dance or tell stories as a means of relaxation and entertainment. Story telling and singing (by insiders *and* outsiders) are very good ways of establishing rapport, and also for highlighting issues about which a substantial discussion may be organised on a later date.

On a recent trip to Angola, we were facilitating community meetings with men and women in separate groups. People were getting tired but all agreed that we needed to continue the meeting. So, the men spent half an hour telling short, funny (sometimes dirty) stories and the women clapped and sang. After a community meeting in Malawi, the women bid the visitors farewell with song and dance. And, several years ago, after a lengthy interview of some men in Sudan, they turned the tables and starting asking the questions, mainly because of the interest they had in how men from other cultures herd their cattle, treat their wives and live their lives. A great opportunity for further debate and learning was being created because these were issues we had not addressed with them.

Conclusion

There are no doubt many more ways and ideas in the world of drama and arts from which PRA practitioners can benefit in attempts to learn with and from others. I am keen to read the other articles in this special of PLA Notes!

- **Koos Neefjes**, Policy Advisor Environment Oxfam-UK&I, 274 Banbury Road, Oxford, OX2 7DZ, UK.

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Drama, PRA and the academic institution

Pat Norrish

· Introduction

Over the last 5 years, we (the AERDD¹ at the University of Reading) have used Forum Theatre as a regular part of a 4-week masters module on participatory approaches to extension and rural development. The approach to learning is experiential with students spending around half of the course carrying out a short PRA exercise.

The strong focus on participatory development means that there is pressure on many people to gain the skills and techniques which PRA employs. But an essential part of participatory work is the change in attitude which is required of professionals in 'handing over the stick'. The difficulty for both education and training situations is to provide experience in being 'handed the stick' for those who are to practice it. It is in this context that we have used Forum Theatre.

What is forum theatre

Forum Theatre is part of the 'theatre of the oppressed' of Augusto Boal, developed as one of a series of tools or 'weapons' (Boal 1979 pp ix) for political empowerment. It is continually being developed and tried in different contexts. It is a theatrical activity in which anyone can take part. It takes the form of an open ended play constructed

around a clear cut issue. It does not attempt to represent a finished product or to incorporate messages. It engages people as actors, directors and critics and enables them to analyse the situation of the play and to try out

¹ Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department.

alternatives to those presented (see Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, this issue). Its main aim is to change people from spectators (passive beings in the theatrical sense) into transformers of the dramatic action.

The theatre experience is grounded in the group as part of a process linking drama to critical discussion. Members of the audience can interrupt the drama and become actors themselves to change the direction of the drama as they analyse the situation unfolding before them. Through this process of changing and rechanging the drama, people can begin to see that reality can be changed and that action is possible.

Forum Theatre can be regarded as a theatrical game in which a protagonist is trying to win or succeed in a particular situation. The play is shown once and then it is shown a second time (usually slightly speeded up) and follows the same course until a member of the audience shouts 'stop', takes the place of the protagonist and tries to defeat the oppressor. Many different solutions may be enacted, resulting in a pooling of knowledge, tactics and experience and is also at the same time what Boal calls 'a rehearsal for reality' (Jackson in Boal, 1992, pp xxi). Like all games, it has rules which relate to the play itself and to the interaction between players and 'audience'.

Forum theatre in the Reading workshop

At Reading we use an adaptation of Forum Theatre designed by Rachel Searle-Mbullu and Kate Norrish, who act as facilitators, to fit into one day (Forum theatre usually takes place over several days). Like all Forum Theatre workshops, it begins with a series of exercises and games. These are designed to 'warm people up, help them to shed their inhibitions

and establish a form of theatrical communication between them' (Boal,1992 pp1-2). They also take them through sharing experiences, story telling, and improvisation.

All this activity is leading towards the improvisation of a piece of theatre around an issue. This is done in small groups. The improvisation piece has to conform to certain 'rules' of the game and the facilitators have devised a set of questions embodying the rules to help people in the construction of their piece. The questions they use are given below:

- Is the story clear? It is useful if the story centres around one main character (the protagonist who is attempting to deal with a particular problem). The story should show an unsatisfactory solution to the problem.
- Are the characters clear and recognisable? Do they reflect an attitude or ideology which resonates with the audience?
- Is it clear who is oppressed in the story? It is likely that the protagonist will be the most oppressed character, but the play can also reveal complex systems of oppression. If there are no clear cut solutions, this is perfectly acceptable, that is often how we experience life: the point is that we try and make changes.
- Are there places for possible interventions? It is important that there are moments in the play where the protagonist could have chosen a different path or reacted in a different way.
- Do we recognise the situation in the story? If the story is too far removed from the lives of the audience, they may feel discouraged from actively intervening. The play is designed to tempt people to try to rectify it.

Students in the department come almost entirely from countries in the South and constitute a community within the University. They are diverse in culture, language, age, education, work experience, financial resources etc., but they have one experience in common, that of being a foreign student in the UK. It is this experience which they usually focus on for their Forum Theatre and it has proved to be rich in stories.

In the afternoon each group has the opportunity to present its play in the forum and to be the audience for other plays and thus to be the interventionist. Once again there are rules for how this is done:

- The play is shown to the audience. The facilitator may fill in any necessary additional information between scenes (e.g. 'ten years later').
- The play is then performed for the second time. The facilitator explains to the audience that if at any point anyone wishes to intervene by replacing the protagonist they must shout 'stop' and raise their hand.
- The person who has made the intervention takes on the role of the protagonist (the original protagonist stands to one side of the action) and the scene is replaced according to how the interventionist sees it.
- It is helpful if the original protagonist can have an object or item of clothing (e.g. scarf, hat, bag) which can be handed to the spectator who has made the intervention.
- After an intervention, the facilitator may ask the interventionist the following questions: What were you trying to do? How do you think you did? Was it easy/hard? The audience may also have comments to make on the extent to which the interventionist was 'winning' or not. The member of the audience making the intervention can bring the intervention to a close whenever they wish. They may only have one line they wish to try out, or one physical action they wish to attempt. When the intervention is over, the interventionist leaves the playing area and the original actors resume from the moment of the intervention. This gives others the opportunity to intervene at the same point if they wish.
- An interventionist can stay on and try to change the original play if they are able.
- Interventions are accepted by the audience as possible or probable alternatives. If an intervention is highly unlikely e.g. the protagonist suddenly finds UK£1000 on the street, it can be treated as magic and therefore dismissed. But the interventionist is never-the-less acknowledged.

- There is no judgement by the facilitator or the audience as to whether interventions are good or bad. All are accepted and then debated.
- The other actors must resist all possible interventions within the limits of the character and situation. They must not make it easy for the interventionist.
- If necessary other scenes can be created through an intervention. A sudden crowd, for example, can be created with members of the audience.
- The play is not necessarily an attempt to change the world- rather it gives people an opportunity to debate and rehearse alternative approaches to dealing with a given situation.

Reflections

The workshop fulfils several purposes. It helps group formation and engenders trust. It enables students to see very quickly that a common experience can lead to very different points of view and it enables them to see that they can trust each other to come up with solutions to problems. They also recognise that

there is always more than one way to solve a problem.

We have found Forum Theatre an extremely powerful tool. It assumes equality amongst the participants and all have equal access to the 'stage'. It provides a safe, structured, sequential, experience. Everyone is involved in the same enterprise and this facilitates the generation of serious and fruitful discussion. Feedback over the years has shown that people find it an intense and liberating experience.

- **Pat Norrish**, Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department, (AERDD), University of Reading, Berkshire.

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Time, representation and feedback in participatory programme design

by Steve Evison

with a response from Meera Kaul Shah

Feedback is a forum for discussion in *PLA Notes*. It features articles which raise common concerns in fieldwork or training, together with a response from another PRA practitioner. Letters and articles are welcomed for this section, as are your comments on any of the issues raised by *Feedback*.

• Introduction

This article summarises a survey approach that was used in establishing a new programme for CONCERN Worldwide in Tanzania. The aim was to create a participatory programme and build on the ability of local people to achieve their own development. We planned to achieve this by transferring methods rather than messages, principles rather than precepts. These reflections are based on the first year of the project. It has now been running for 3.5 years.

Our first step was to carry out a participatory survey, which involved people in its design as well as implementation. The survey was seen as an important tool in involving and organising the community towards future development activities. This paper discusses the steps taken and how far our aim of a fully participatory survey was achieved.

• Developing the picture

Initially, the need for a programme was assessed using RRA. This provided us with a basic report on the area. The main question, however, was how to progress to a detailed proposal. The initial steps were taken by a project team of two expatriates and three

community development officers. We started by visiting the area to build rapport and held meetings with the village leaders. We also produced a short, illustrated handout to explain who we were and our belief in developing the programme with the people.

Building a fully participatory programme is a long process. Thus, we decided to use the survey to help increase awareness, motivation, commitment and understanding, as well as to simply fulfil information needs.

Preparation for the survey

We began with some basic training in PRA. We started with the Ward and Division level government representatives and extension staff. A second course was run for the Village Chairmen and Executive Officers. Through these courses, we were able to build up an understanding of the information that we needed, how we hoped to get it, how they would be involved and most importantly, why.

To get people involved in the survey planning and decision making, we needed to identify a willing and representative group. These would report back to the village and represent village views and feelings to us. It was decided that the Village Government (VG) whilst elected, were not appropriate. This is because:

- they tended to only represent the more powerful sector of the village;
- they had many other tasks and therefore had little available time;
- they were almost all male;
- the groups were often large and unwieldy;

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- the villagers expressed the view (informally) that they were not the best people for survey work; and,
- the villagers felt that the government had too many pre-set and hidden agendas.

Discussions with the VG suggested a Village Development Committee (VDC). This would operate through them, but work closely with us. This group would comprise one man and one woman elected from each of the sub-villages. The new VDC drew up a basic constitution for operation. The selection of people and the content of the constitutions were left to them. The purpose of the VDC was:

- to assist the village in the collection of information;
- to act as a link with CONCERN staff;
- to identify key informants; and,
- to work on specific development topics which could be reported to the VG.

First steps in the survey

Through discussion meetings with the VG and VDC, we identified the information needed, why we needed it and how to attain it. Very soon, it became obvious that there was still a lot of information missing, especially relating to villagers' perceptions and analysis of problems and opportunities. Further surveying was planned. To maximise the benefits from the more detailed survey, we first needed to collect some outstanding basic statistical background information. The following were therefore carried out:

- the VDC produced village maps from their sub-village maps;
- the VDC collected basic information, such as the number of people per household;
- the project team analysed all the information collected so far and identified gaps relevant to us; and,
- district and other outside specialist staff (from government and other CONCERN projects) were encouraged to visit and identify areas which may have been overlooked or be of wider relevance.

The basic information assisted us in deriving some possible hypotheses to test. The project

team put together a framework for the detailed survey, which focused on a 'links analysis' and the identification of possible solutions and implementation methods. This was intended as a tool to help facilitate more rapid progress and was not, therefore, as participatory as it could have been.

Running the intensive survey

The detailed survey was run in two blocks, with two weeks spent in lakeside villages and two weeks spent in five hill villages. The VDC was involved in the field survey work and plans on the day. But only the trained leaders helped to plan and assess the overall survey at workshops which were held before and after the field work.

The survey was initiated with a 2-day planning workshop. The Village Executive Officers (VEO), Ward Executive Officers (WEO) and Division Secretary (DS) were invited to assist. It was intended that they would represent the villagers and relay any plans and information to them. The workshop included: a review of the information gained so far, problem analysis, identification of gaps in our knowledge and methods of data collection.

The plans were intended to be flexible and to respond to field situations and developments. The VEOs were asked to report back to their villages on the outcomes of the workshop (through a VG and VDC joint meeting) and to prepare them for our visit. In reality, this did not happen at all in some cases, and only to tell villagers of our imminent arrival in most of the others.

The fieldwork survey ran according to a basic framework. We started with a pre-arranged meeting with the VDC, Village Chairman and VEO to reconfirm the aims and discuss places to visit. Subsequently, groups visited different sub-villages and used PRA to collect all the outstanding information. The team met for a brief discussion with villagers before leaving each village. Each evening, the team members wrote up their findings and met to reflect on the day.

After the fieldwork period, we had a further two day workshop with the DS, WEOs and VEOs. We went back through the findings and

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assessed our success at answering outstanding questions. The workshop ended with discussion amongst the village representatives of the best way of feeding back the findings to the villages. It was decided that the VEOs would hold a village meeting to inform the villagers about the survey and what had been achieved.

After the main survey

In reality, the VEOs never carried out the feedback meeting. Fortunately, we carried out village meetings ourselves to discuss the work to date. We also explained how the information had been used and produced a short written handout for distribution. While this was not ideal, it helped to overcome the problem created by the VEOs' lack of feedback. This had reduced villagers' involvement and encouraged a 'them' and 'us' (recipients and experts) situation.

The VDC continued to be involved in further stages of planning. It was intended that they would assist with explanations where there was confusion and provide feedback and maintain the village voice in all aspects of developing the plan. But there were time and practical constraints to writing a full proposal with the community. Eventually, the final ideas and proposal writing was done by the team and help was elicited as necessary from the VDC.

Finally, all the information was put into a Baseline Report to assist in on-going monitoring and evaluation. This is a major piece of work and it would be impractical to translate and give full copies of it to every village. Instead, it is intended to write a summary of the main findings and provide copies of some of the diagrams to each village.

Future developments

The survey was a first step and there is still a lot of further work needed to actually get started. However, it is felt that the methods used have:

- helped raise awareness;
- laid a foundation to help ensure some feeling of ownership;
- enabled us to collect more information than would have been possible by the team alone;
- started to develop the local structures for development;
- started to raise questions regarding the leadership's capacity for development; and,
- enabled people to be involved with the surveying and its planning.

Now we are continuing to work with the VDC, and others, to:

- identify further solutions;
- develop an implementation methodology; and,
- build a participatory monitoring and evaluation system (of which the baseline report forms the first step).

We hope that by their continued involvement in the project, the VDC will mature into an important part of the programme implementation system. It is also intended to run village meetings to discuss the VDC's role. This is to ensure that the VDC is representative and does not become just another group operating outside the real needs of the villagers.

Observations and problems identified

The two biggest problems faced were the time taken to carry out the survey and the difficulties of ensuring local representation. Whilst some village representatives were present for most of the components of the work, it did not follow that they were informing or even truly 'representing' others.

The team felt that problems of representation centred on the effectiveness of the committees, and to a lesser extent, peoples' attendance at meetings for planning and analysis of the information. Since PRA was used in surveying, it was felt that a good representation of opinion was gained, but that the analysis could have been more participatory. Some of the problems encountered during the survey are as follows:

- feedback was often not happening even though it was proposed by the representatives themselves. Perhaps the VEO was not a good choice because s/he is usually not local. Since they are employed by Government, they often see themselves as being superior and have different agendas

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to those of the villagers. They were keen to be involved with us, but showed no commitment to the villagers. Thus, activities, such as feedback meetings often failed;

- the selection of individuals for the VDC was left to the VG. In retrospect, it was felt that those chosen did not necessarily reflect the different interests of the village;
- due to time and staff constraints, we did not put sufficient effort into developing a VDC constitution, identifying roles and providing training;
- minority groups were under-represented on the VDC. As became apparent during later wealth ranking, poorer people tend not to join committees or attend meetings. Thus their representation on the VDC was low;
- co-ordination is very important (there is a lot of thinking on your feet);
- there is a fine balance between participation and implementation (sometimes decisions just have to be made). For example, due to time constraints, the analysis, the survey framework and project proposal compilation were largely done by the team; and,
- level and scale of participation. Whilst many of the villagers are literate and should have been more involved in the findings, write-up and analysis, meeting fatigue and time commitments meant that this did not happen. Whilst the concept is sound, achieving it in practice was highly problematic.

• **Conclusion**

We found the community self-survey was valuable, not only in terms of the amount of information collected, but also in terms of the benefits of increasing local ownership, understanding and awareness in the programme. It required a lot of flexibility and management from the programme team and funders, as well as a high level of staff competence. If not carefully managed, it can lead to raised expectations and false perceptions.

The main benefit in this approach was that the people are involved in the planning of the programme. Furthermore, because people

completed much of the survey themselves, more realistic results were obtained.

Finally I would add a note of caution. As with any exercise in 'participation', the result is greatly influenced by who participates, how, when, and where. Just because you talk to a group of women does not mean you will learn the problems of old women, poor women, etc.. Community self-survey does not produce a fail-safe plan and does not reduce the work in planning, organising, managing and analysing the results.

- **Steve Evison**, Lodge 2, Pimley Manor, Sundorne Road, Shrewsbury, SY4 4SA, UK.

• **Time, representation and feedback: a response by Meera Kaul Shah**

This experience of involving the community in designing a new programme in Tanzania provides an interesting example of the kind of problems that are faced as a participatory process evolves. The need to start with understanding the problems from the community's point of view is crucial. This not only establishes rapport, but also helps to initiate long-term sustainable efforts in response to people's felt needs and priorities. In this process, participatory appraisal is not just a means to answer some of 'our' questions, or to fill gaps in 'our' understanding of the situation, but is the first step taken by the community to appraise its own situation and prioritise its own problems. The analysis of the situation, and the prioritised list of problems along with the suggested solutions, have to be carried out by the community themselves.

Outsiders can only help the community as facilitators in this process. If the information continues to be controlled, analysed and used by the outsiders, even it is to plan development activities for the community, the process remains top-down. It also takes time for outsiders to try and analyse information for the community and draw conclusions from it. The process is more realistic when the analysis of the information is carried out by the community members during the appraisal

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itself. In this process, the participatory appraisal or survey cannot be separated from the planning process.

The problem of 'who to include in the appraisal?' arises when too much planning takes place outside the community and when the process is controlled from outside. As rightly pointed out by Evison, the VG or elected village representatives are usually not the most appropriate people to take charge of planning a participatory survey. In most cases, they tend to be the village elite and the most powerful. While it may be unavoidable to first enter a community without their involvement, the participatory appraisal process, should try and minimise their influence. This is where the role of facilitators is important: to understand whether the VDC is representative of the of all the different groups and whether they are acceptable to the community at large. This should become clear during the participatory appraisal process. Other 'leaders' and representatives can emerge, and should be encouraged, during the appraisal process. Clearly, the appraisal cannot be considered completed, unless all the different groups in the community are given a chance to voice their concerns.

Vesting too much responsibility in a VDC that is selected before the appraisal process starts, can be counter-productive in the long run. While they can be useful entry points into the community, the selection of representatives who will supervise the planning, implementation and monitoring of the development project in the community should be left till after the planning and appraisal process. Only after the community decides what they are going to do, and what is expected from their representatives, should they be selecting people appropriate for the task. This makes it easier for the community to detail the role of the VDC and to clarify their expectations from the selected representatives.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meera Kaul Shah, Centre for Supporting Local Initiatives, A-5, CEL Apartments, Vasundhara Enclave, Delhi -100 096, India. |
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Extracts

The need to cross-check the results of wealth ranking

by N. Narayanasamy & S. Manivel

Wealth or well-being ranking is a sensitive, but widely used, PRA method to identify poorer groups using locally evolved criteria. This exercise should only be undertaken if there is a real need to distinguish different social groups and only at a stage when adequate rapport and understanding has been built up between the villagers and outsiders.

Practitioners of PRA have evolved quite a number of wealth ranking methods. These include card sorting and social mapping. Whatever method is used, the results should be triangulated with different groups in the same village or community. The purpose of the paper is to share the experiences of the Ghandigram Rural Institute (GRI) in triangulating wealth ranking.

In Palampatty village, a wealth ranking exercise was conducted with a group of seven villagers, of whom five were men and two were women. They were aged between 18 and 55 years. The group has classified the families in the village into two categories using the following criteria:

Poor

- Owning less than one acre of land;
- Possession of milch animals; and,
- Security of access to food without much difficulty.

Very Poor

- Landless;
- Agricultural labourers; and,
- Dependent on agricultural wages for food.

A card sorting method was used to identify the poor and very poor households. 82 households were recorded and the group reported that 10 households had vacated their houses and permanently migrated to other places. Left with 72 households, the group identified 46 as very poor and 26 as poor households.

This exercise was repeated on the second day with a group of five villagers. All of them were under the age of 30 years. This group classified the households into three categories based on a newly evolved set of criteria. These were:

Poor:

- Owns land;
- Possession of milch animals; and,
- Manages food without many problems.

Very Poor:

- Landless agricultural labourers; and,
- Total dependence on agricultural wages for food.

Very Very Poor:

- Landless agricultural labourers;
- Houseless; and,
- Non-possession of milch animals and other properties.

Using the card sorting method, the group identified 3 households as very, very poor, 52 households as very poor and 21 households as poor. This group reported that only six families had permanently migrated to other villages.

The results of both exercises were presented in a plenary session. The findings were interesting because we realised that people had ranked households according to different levels of poverty, rather than wealth: no rich people were identified.

The facilitators discussed the causes for the difference in detail between the findings of the two groups. The most important factor seemed to be the composition of the groups which participated in the exercises. They differed in terms of the number of participants, their ages and gender balance.

The data and information gathered through PRA exercises should be robust. While recognising the need for 'appropriate imprecision', this exercise highlighted the importance of consulting with a range of people within the village. In this example, we would need to repeat the exercise again or undertake some focal group discussions to understand why people's categories of wealth and poverty differ.

We recommend the following precautionary measures for wealth ranking:

- rapport with a group is essential;
- wealth ranking should not be done in a hurry;
- the purpose of the exercise should be clearly spelt out; and,
- the composition of the group should be noted and the exercise must be repeated with different groups to ensure findings that we can trust.

- **N. Narayanasamy and S. Manivel**, PRA Team, Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul Mannar, Thirumalai District, Gandhigram, 624 302, Tamil Nadu, India.

Sexuality lifelines: - participatory assessment of reproductive health

F. McConville

Little is understood about the health needs of women in Myanmar. In 1995 the country was beginning to awaken from years of closure to

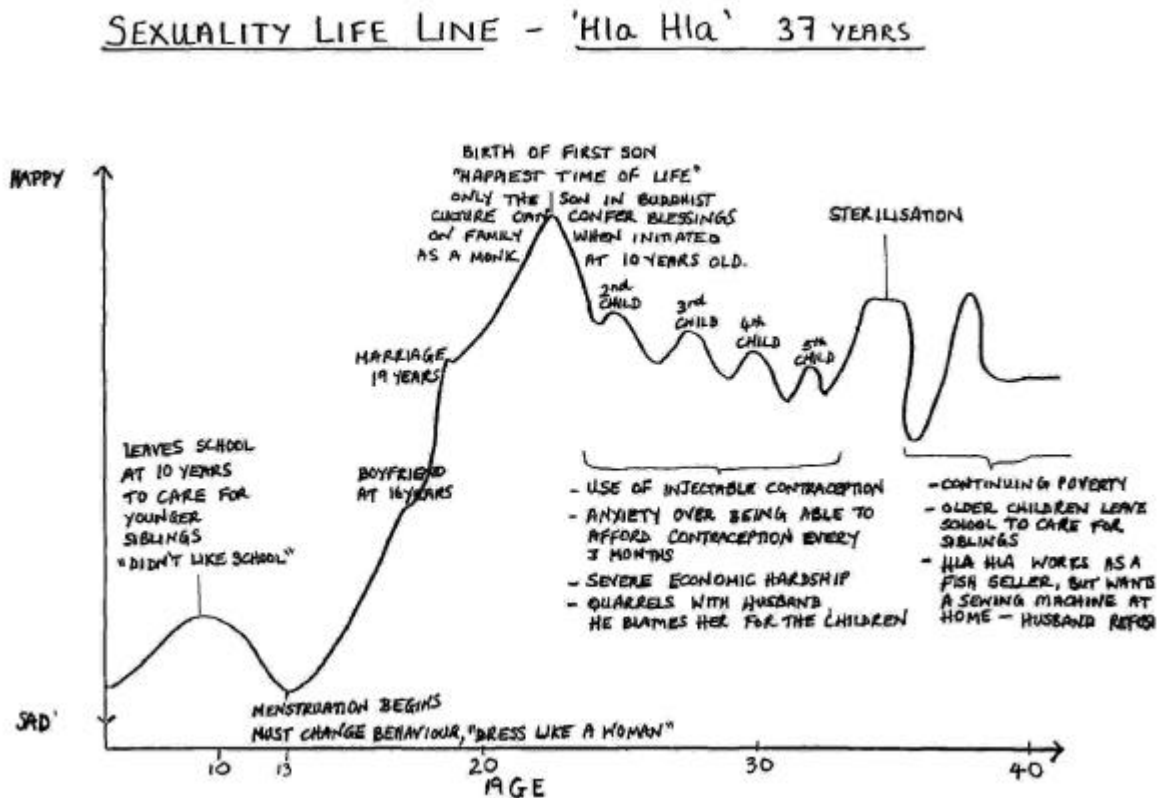
the outside world. NGO activity was negligible and access to people in many areas remained restricted due to political uncertainties. The concept of participation by the community, even in public meetings, remained an antithesis to the authority of the military regime. Regardless of these circumstances, there existed an enormous unmet need for health care.

World Vision Myanmar through their support of an Urban Integrated Health Programme had developed a constructive rapport with the Ministry of Health. They planned to expand their assistance to the communities of urban resettlement areas (slums) around Yangon. A 'Rapid Participatory Needs Assessment of the Health Needs of Women and their Children' was carried out in one urban poor area. Working in one of the resettlement areas, we used a combination of quantitative, and qualitative, PRA methods. The aim of the assessment was to enable 200 mothers with children under 5 years to express their unmet health needs.

A method was needed to help us understand how external factors, such as poverty, gender, culture, religion and education, influenced individual women's perceptions of their sexuality and their health. The use of sexuality lifelines proved to be an invaluable method. It promoted women's participation and provided a visual picture, or narrative, of the woman's life from her perspective.

The facilitator found a quiet space and asked one of the participants to draw a line on a simple graph, showing whether or not she had been 'happy' or 'sad' during the major events in her life that were associated with sexuality. The facilitator had key prompts on some of the key 'milestones, such as age at menarche, love, marriage, contraceptive use and childbirth etc. An example of a sexuality lifeline of one 37 year old woman, Hla Hla, is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Sexuality life line



It was found that women related the major events in their lives to economic issues, gender, religion and education. Through these lifelines, we identified that:

- in theory, gender equality existed in education and employment (a point frequently made by officials). But in practice, it is the girl child who leaves school to look after younger siblings, and boys who are favoured because only a boy can confer the blessing of Buddha on the family at the time of becoming a monk;
- a woman's first menstruation was associated with visible change in manner of dress (the wearing of the wrap around skirt instead of baggy trousers) and with a sense of 'becoming a woman';
- women expressed concern over long term use of injectable contraceptives and were concerned about secondary infertility; and,
- women related poverty and hardship to an increase in the number of children and times when children were born.

In summary, sexuality lifelines provided a rapid means of enabling individuals to represent pictorially what the reality of life is

really like (in this case, for poor women). However, they must be undertaken sensitively and used only where there is good rapport and sense of trust between 'insiders' and 'outsiders'.

The information gained in the Dawpon study challenges the assumptions previously made about gender, culture, poverty and education. It also raises issues directly related to health service provision, and in this example, strengthens the case for increased access to good quality reproductive health services.

- **Francis McConville**, 32 Kings Road, Mumbles, Swansea SA3 4AL, Wales.

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A brief guide to group dynamics and team building

This section of the *Notes* provides training materials for participatory learning, exploring a different theme in each issue¹. This issue explores how groups work. One of the key components of participatory methods is the emphasis on multidisciplinary teams of participants. By working as a group, the team members can approach a situation from different perspectives, carefully monitor each other's work, and carry out several tasks simultaneously. The training required for good participation is based on a thorough understanding of how groups perform.

Groups can be powerful and productive when they function well. The performance and output of the team is likely to be greater than the sum of its individual members, or as expressed in an African proverb: "Cross a river in a crowd and the crocodile won't eat you."



The life cycle of groups

When several people come together to work on a single initiative or project, they are not necessarily a productive team. Before a group of people can function well together, they have to pass through a series of stages (see Box 1). The challenge of every good trainer is to help their trainees move through the various phases of group formation until they reach the final stage.

¹ Taken from a *Trainers Guide for Participatory Learning and Action*. Published by IIED. Price £14.95 + postage and packing (25% UK & Europe, 35% airmail).

BOX 1

THE FOUR STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

In the early **forming** stage, the group is a collection of individuals, each with her/his own agenda and expertise and little or no shared experience.

As these individuals become more familiar with one another, they will almost certainly enter a **storming** phase where personal values and principles are challenged, roles and responsibilities are taken on and/or rejected, and the group's objectives and way of working together are defined.

At the **norming** stage, the group has settled down and developed a clear identity. The members have begun to understand their roles in relation to one another and establish a shared vision or goal. People know each other better, they have accepted the rules and probably developed little sub-groups.

Once these norms have been established, the group will be ready to focus on output and will enter the **performing** phase. It is in this phase that they will work most effectively as a team. The confidence level of the team will have reached the point where they are willing to take significant risks and try out new ideas on their own.

Groups generally produce fewer ideas than individuals working separately. However, they do produce better ideas as they are discussed more carefully and thought through more deeply.

Dealing with group conflict

Conflict is an inevitable part of working with groups of people who have different interests, backgrounds and experiences. Conflict need not be destructive if it is used constructively.

Even small conflicts should not be ignored by trainers as they may grow out of proportion and affect the entire group. There is no prescription for dealing with group conflict. It will depend on the people involved, culturally bound ways of expressing dissent and disagreement, and your own style as a trainer.

It is important to get a sense of the nature of the conflict. It may simply be a function of the group life cycle. A storming phase (which commonly occurs on the second or third day of a training programme) may have little to do with course content or you as a trainer, and much more to do with group dynamics. It may be that individuals have hidden agendas outside the workshop theme that may conflict with declared group objectives. In group work, there are always trade-offs between individual and group objectives. Accepting such trade-offs can only happen if participants trust one another to agree on common objectives.

Conflicts between groups or individuals in the training may be due to institutional affiliations, ideological or political alliances, religious or ethnic identification, professional relations or personality differences, about which you may know little. Raised voices, tense faces and nervous body language are all clear expressions of anger and conflict. Silence can also convey conflict, whether it is shown by the group, sub-group or an individual. While these symptoms may be relatively easy to observe, the root cause of the conflict may be harder to discover.

Box 2 suggests some ways of reducing or reconciling conflicts that may arise during training. Another way to help diffuse conflicts is to reply to negative statements using positive terms such as 'I respect ... and ...' or 'I agree ... and ...'. This tells the trainee that you acknowledge and appreciate their perspective. You are showing that there is room for multiple opinions, and that each person's contribution is valued and encouraged.

Words such as 'but' or 'however' are negative and can convey feelings of condescension. By saying 'I agree with you, but ...', you are actually implying that you really do not agree with the person and will soon show them why they are wrong. Remember that as a trainer you are in a powerful position. By making a

statement that appears to undervalue or belittle a comment made by a participant, you can create anxiety and resentment, and alienate people in the process.

BOX 2

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT INDIVIDUALS

- As soon as you see problems arise, take the opportunity to talk to the person individually. Sometimes disruptive people just want more individual attention.
- If there is somebody in the group who can act as an intermediary, ask that person to discuss the disruptive behaviour sympathetically with the person in question.
- Give the person a particular responsibility in the training that will focus their energies.
- Do an activity, such as a 'Suggestion Box', that allows complaints to be voiced and discussed anonymously.
- You can encourage participants to develop self-critical awareness about the quality and length of contributions to discussions, e.g. *Would anyone like to comment on that? What do other people think? Some of you have a special knowledge on this subject, would any of you like to say something on this?*
- Only deal with difficult individuals publicly in exceptional circumstances.

Group composition

Once the group is working together, it can achieve its common purpose. To do this it must have members with the necessary range of skills and abilities. The larger the size, the greater the diversity of talent, skills and knowledge likely to be present. Small groups may be less effective due to a limited range of knowledge. Yet if you make a group too large, then new learning constraints arise (see Box 3). Individuals are more likely to be inhibited in discussions and the more active group members may strongly influence the group. It takes far more courage to speak up in a large group than in a small one. A group of 5 - 7 team members usually works best for achieving optimum productivity and participation. There is, of course, no single ideal group because other factors, such as leadership, cohesiveness, and desire for consensus play an important role.

BOX 3

GROUP SIZE AND PARTICIPATION

- 3 - 6 people. Everyone speaks
- 7 - 10 people. Almost everyone speaks. Quieter people say less. One or two may not speak at all.
- 11 - 18 people. 5 or 6 people speak a lot, 3 or 4 others join in occasionally.
- 19 - 30 people. 3 or 4 people dominate.
- 30 + people. Little participation possible.

During training, you will need to form groups of different sizes and composition - for workshop sessions, for fieldwork, for discussion, and evaluation. You need to be aware of group dynamics when helping to form groups. The mix of participants will have an important bearing on how well the groups work together.

It is important to have a sense of existing hierarchies: putting junior staff with their seniors may mean that they never have a chance to speak. Gender and age may also influence the degree to which participants feel free to join in group work. There may be existing personality clashes. If possible, check with the organisers or other trusted participants whether they know of any particular problems.

Ranges of roles in groups

Management training research has shown that teams composed of the brightest individuals do not necessarily turn out to be the most productive. Specific functions are needed if a group is to realise its objectives. Trainers should be familiar with the range of roles required to make a group perform well enough to achieve its goals. These involve both task roles, those that help to achieve the goals of the group, and maintenance roles, those that help in the process of achieving these tasks.

Although formal job titles will have influenced the selection of participants for a team, the roles that individuals play within the team are more crucial to its success. For example, there may be individuals good at listening, others who are skilled at seeking information, or clarifying, organising, relieving tension,

setting standards, groups diplomacy or setting standards.

Nobody is perfect, and therefore each role or function is accompanied by an allowable weakness. Acknowledging these allowable weaknesses creates openness in the team. Individual team members feel more comfortable about not having to be perfect and feel free to concentrate on their strengths. The best teams are those which have a wide mix of roles and functions represented.

BOX 4

TRAINERS' CHECKLIST

- Are you clear about whether your own leadership style is laissez-faire, authoritarian or democratic?
- Does it need to be changed in anyway?
- Are you alert to the probable life cycle of your group: forming-storming-norming-performing?
- Which potential conflicts have you anticipated and how will you deal with them?
- Are the groups the optimum size for their various tasks?
- Is everyone participating actively in each session?

Next issue: Using exercises and games to enhance group dynamics.

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Tips for Trainers: using drama in PRA training

• 'Good' and 'bad' interviews

Begin by discussing what attitudes and behaviour towards community members should be. Generate from this a list of words or phrases that sum up appropriate and inappropriate attitudes and behaviour. Then use these as a basis for creating 'good' and 'bad' interviews. Divide the group into small groups of 4 - 6 members and give each group about 10 minutes to prepare a sketch. Half of the small groups are asked to prepare a 'good' interview, the other half a 'bad' interview. Ask the groups to perform each interview situation. After each performance, ask the group to comment on the behaviour of the interviewer(s) in the sketch.

Choose one 'good' and one 'bad' interview to work on further. Ask the actors in the 'bad' interview to play through their sketch again, but to stop when a member of the audience clap their hands. When someone claps to stop the action, they are then asked to step into the scene and improve the interview. At first, they can only change body language. After 5 - 10 minutes, the audience is allowed to change what is said, again by clapping to interrupt the drama. The 'bad' interview starts to look and sound a lot better. At different points, the process can be paused for discussions about what is happening and how this relates to the situations trainees may come across in the field.

Ask the actors in the 'good' interview to run through their sketch again. This time, the audience should be split into two groups: both groups can clap and stop the scene, but one group is asked only to speak with the interviewer(s) about how to respond and the other group speaks with the interviewees.

Both groups advise their actors through the interview, clapping to stop the action and consult as a 'team'. Once the sketch has been completed in a satisfactory way, end the session. This exercise demonstrates how a shift in behaviour on one side can be counter balanced by changes on the other side.

The two interview situations can become the basis for wider discussions about how to proceed with fieldwork and how to encourage the participation of community members.

Source: This exercise is adapted from materials sent in by Sarah Gelpke, Water Aid, 27 -29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7UB, UK.

