

Linking PRA and PV Methodologies: A List of Tools and their Applications

This table seeks to consolidate sixteen Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques within the context of the research currently being pursued¹. It seeks to highlight, first, the nature of the tool, and second, both a standard and applied description of how the tool will be used in this research².

Of particular note here is the intersection between PRA and the use of digital video (DV) as a research tool. There are two streams within which DV will be used here. First, Participatory Video (PV) methodologies will be incorporated into certain PRA techniques. Second, as the researcher is also making a documentary, PRA techniques such as informal interviews and focus group sessions will also serve as content for future editing purposes. This distinction is made within the “present application” column where applicable.

In terms of adhering to PRA techniques, the research team will be comprised of the researcher (a social scientist) and an assistant (a natural scientist)³. While PRA techniques generally call for a team comprised of a variety of disciplines to ensure triangulation, such a large team is not feasible due to financial logistics (i.e. the ability of the researcher to financially reward additional team members). That said, the nature of engagement with farmers that is a hallmark of PV will address this by incorporating farmers within the research process, and by ensuring that the outputs are cross checked and validated by the community itself, particularly in the context of more visual tools (i.e. diagrams and video).

Finally, a note about PRA and PV in this context: the researcher feels that there are many intersecting points between the two bodies of literature and practice, but little (if any) documentation of how the two can be used together. This research seeks to address this methodological disconnect, in the hopes of presenting evidence of how these two sets of tools complement each other and can (should) be used in tandem.

¹ Refer to <http://rana.lilypadresources.com/research/ros.pdf> for the research outline that illustrates this research.

² This list of PRA techniques (i.e. the first and second columns) has been adapted from a manual made available from GTZ, and can be accessed at http://www.spc.int/lrd/Publications/Fat/PRA_Manuals/PGRFP_PRAMan_0106_lowres.pdf.

³ An individual working with YUVA, Dr. Banwari Lal, will be working with the researcher as an assistant.

METHOD	DESCRIPTION	APPLICATION OF METHODS	PRESENT APPLICATION
1. Direct observation	This helps identify different zones within appraisal area, economic activities, key indicators of conditions, new topics or issues for discussion, besides helping in the assessment of differences between reported conditions and real conditions. These observations cannot be assumed to be anything other than a starting point but will give the outsider a useful reference point for explorations during the appraisal exercises.	Direct observations help the researchers in understanding the interface between the users, i.e. villagers, and the natural resources, to assess extraction and utilization patterns, and to appraise opportunities for more sustainable resource utilization, alternate income generation within and outside the particular resource sector, etc.	I plan to stay within one village in Wardha district within Vidharba. Doing so will allow for a series of opportunities to observe over time. The precise logistics of where will be addressed next week through consultations with YUVA in Nagpur.
2. Do It Yourself	The researcher tries to assimilate into the milieu in which research is to be done, and the target groups are encouraged to teach the researcher how to do various activities 'their way. The researcher will learn how much skill and strength are required to do day-to-day rural activities, gaining an insider's perspective on a situation.	This gives an understanding of the dynamics of different resource management systems. The researchers get to understand the villagers' perceptions of resource management, location of resources, climatic and environmental conditions and sustainable livelihoods. The researchers obtain an idea of the gaps in information related to indigenous systems of resource utilization and resource management.	This element will be applied during the harvest season, to allow the research to distinguish between different viruses, pests, and boll sizes via working with farmers.
3. Informal Interviews	The informal interview is perhaps the most widespread method of RRA. It needs careful handling, striking a sensitive balance between open-endedness and directed enquiry. Much information can be generated this way, but care is needed to weed out the useless information, and in validating much of the generated data. Interviewees can be typically key individuals, focus groups or mixed groups. Chains of interviews between the different key individuals, groups and specialists can be a useful sequencing of data collection.	This provides an insight to the researchers into the livelihood strategies of villagers, information on the changes in the resources over time, villagers' perceptions of what causes resource declines and how resources can be more sustainably utilized.	These will be conducted on the basis of first, initially meeting those living in the community, and second, the more sustained relationships that will occur due to the longer time frame within which this visit will occur within. To date, this has already been done in a number of communities during the initial phase of the farm-level fieldwork in discussing the notions of risk, uncertainty, and regulation. This next phase will be more precise and rigorous due the ability to stay for a sustained duration of time, and the fact that these interactions will be captured on

			video for eventual documentary production.
4. Group Meetings	Group meetings will be one of the most important tools for community information gathering, and communication of information. They can help communities give and receive information, discuss issues of relevance, gain a consensus on an issue; identify problems and solutions; plan activities and negotiate conflicts, and validate interpretations of evaluation results and formulate recommendations.	They help the research team to establish rapport with the villagers, and lay the ground for problem identification - i.e., declines in resources, and work out a possible research methodology incorporating indigenous knowledge systems. They also cast light on the dynamics of the group that can assist in researching community institutions.	Group meetings in this context will occur in two contexts: First, in the context of training those living in the communities on how to use digital video, using a participatory methodology adopted from both the researcher's past experience as a trainer as well as techniques adopted from Insight. This process will serve as a platform for farmers to interact with one another, and will further serve to familiarize these individuals with the dynamic that occurs when a decentralized tool for capturing information (i.e. the camera) is used. Second, when farmers capture content, they will then screen this content back to farmers in a community context. This will serve to facilitate a "feedback loop" whereby other farmers can listen and watch the responses of a wider variety of farmers and respond to them.
5. Focus Group Interviews	Established groups of fishers, or people using the same resource are interviewed together. This technique can help identify collective problems affecting a particular group of stakeholders and solutions.	They help identify problems associated with access to resources by different stakeholder groups – in traditional, modern and industrial resource utilization etc. – and opportunities to overcome imbalances in accessing resources.	Focus group interviews will be captured to video for the purposes of creating the documentary piece on the one hand, and for the purposes of recording responses for future analysis on the other. These interviews will also play a role in the screenings detailed in 4.
6. Semi Structured Interviews	Semi-structured interviews use some predetermined questions and topics but allows new topics to be pursued as the interview develops. The interviews are informal and conversational but carefully controlled. The facilitator not only has to be an effective communicator but also a	They help in studying the villagers' perceptions of resource management, changes in the resource systems and trends in resource utilization. They help in deciding how indigenous and 'traditional research methods can fit into a common framework and mutually support each other in	This is the basis of the one-on-one and small group interviews conducted to date on video, and the interviews that will be conducted and taped in the future. The primary aim of this exercise (apart from the obvious research oriented objectives) is to get content for eventual documentary

	good listener and quick thinker.	implementing the research. Also this allows quieter/shyer individuals to voice their opinion, which is not possible in groups.	production (See 3), but also to allow farmers to construct questions themselves by allowing them to capture content (see 7).
7. Local researchers and village analysis	With some training, local people can conduct the research process. Ad hoc investigations by local residents can be extremely valuable. A person who has links with an area can be not just a key informant but also a key researcher, able to find out very quickly and efficiently what needs to be known, and in validating the data.	Villagers can assist in collection of research samples, providing the vehicle for research purposes, regular data collection, and providing/gathering information on socioeconomic issues related to their lives, and institutional information on traditional resource management.	PV plays a central role here, by allowing the community members themselves to ask questions via the medium of digital video. The aim is to remove (to a certain degree) the role of the researcher in asking questions, and to allow the community members themselves to take the role of the interviewer. The objective is to allow the community to frame the questions, with the risk being that questions may not be “relevant” to this particular research exercise. That said, the exercise may result in questions that yield interesting responses that would otherwise not be elicited.
8. Folklore, songs, poetry and dance	Local folklore, songs, dance, and poetry are analyzed to provide insight into values, history, practices, and beliefs.	This helps to understand the needs and aspirations of the communities, and to build up rapport between the outside researchers and communities.	The purpose of considering these elements is to determine whether or not they can provide some background towards explaining how community members understand the three core terms of the research: risk, uncertainty, and regulation. To elicit responses, farmers may be motivated to capture performances of folklore, songs, poetry or dance on tape, but this will be left to the discretion of the farmers themselves.
9. Intriguing practices and beliefs	Indigenous practices and beliefs are noted, even if they are based on myth and superstition. Even practices that are unusual or don’t fit in with conventional scientific thinking are worth exploring because they are meaningful to local people.	These help the researchers to understand how some of the traditional management measures - such as resource holidays, rotation systems of resource gathering, etc. - came to be effectively implemented.	See 8.

10. Ethno-biographies	Local histories of a crop, an animal, a tree, a pest, a weed etc.,	The ethnobiographies can help to understand the history of local resource species from the villagers, to relate the biology of different species to the utilization patterns in the traditional systems, etc.	The particular application of this tool will be to focus on cotton, as it has historically been the primary crop grown in Vidharba (See 14). PV will be utilized as a means for farmers to elicit responses from other farmers regarding their own understanding of the local histories of cotton cultivation.
11. Participatory diagramming	People are encouraged to display their knowledge on pie and bar charts and flow diagrams. Diagrams can give clearer and more precise information, especially with less articulate individuals. One important feature of diagramming is that it can be conducted with people who are illiterate or semi-literate.	This can be useful in getting the villagers' knowledge and impressions on the distribution of resources, and in identifying how conflicts could evolve between the different resource users, and in exploring conflict avoidance systems.	This exercise will be directed towards ascertaining how many people in the community are cultivating Bt Cotton, and how these practices have changed over the last five years (See 13).
12. Venn Diagrams	Used to depict the participants' sense of relations between local groups and organizations. Overlapping circles are used to represent people, villages, or institutions indicating the degree of interrelationship between the different decision makers in the village; lines are added to reflect inputs and outputs.	Venn diagrams are useful in understanding the usage of the resource environment by multiple users, and the interactions between different user groups. This facilitates the optimization, and a rational exploitation of the resources for different uses.	Venn diagrams will be used to ascertain farming communities perceptions of the interlinkages between four groups: farmers, government officials, scientists, and civil society. Two other possible parties would be other neighbouring farming communities and seed sellers.
13. Diagrams exhibition	Diagrams, maps, charts, and photos of the research activity are displayed in a public place to share information, facilitate discussions, and provide an additional crosschecking device. The exhibition can inspire more villagers to take part in research activities.	This helps in taking the information generated on natural resources to a higher level, and acts both as a triangulation (validation) procedure to cross check all significant information, as well as to add more information as it comes from other sources.	Diagrams in this context will primarily be focused on a mapping exercise; to diagrammatically represent where plots are in the community, and which plots grow cotton or other crops (See 11). However, the key element of this exercise will be the validation of it with other members of the community (See 16).
14. Timelines	A very simple means of establishing the chronological sequence and relative importance of events is through the	This explains the changes in the availability of different resources down the years, and the villagers' responses to the changes in the	This will be used to trace the history of cotton cultivation within the community. While 11 focuses on post 2002 cultivation

	<p>creation of a 'time line' with the important events reported by local people being shown in chronological order along a single line. Major historical community events and changes are dated and listed. Understanding the cycles of change can help communities focus on future actions and information requirements.</p>	<p>resource composition and quantity. This helps in forecasting the likely changes in the availability and usage of the resource, and the potential implications for resource development.</p>	<p>(or whenever Bt Cotton was first introduced if unauthorized varieties were sown), this exercise will focus on a more historical tracing of cotton cultivation in the community (i.e. past generations and the practices passed down).</p>
15. Seasonal Calendars	<p>All the major changes that occur within the rural year are represented including those concerned with climate, cropping patterns, livestock and labor demand, etc. There should be room on the calendar to include the types of problems and constraints and point out opportunities.</p>	<p>Availability and abundance of different resource species in a year can be understood, as also the possible breeding/regeneration periods for different species. Periods of non-activity and migration to other areas can be identified.</p>	<p>This exercise will be used to trace the seasons that the community adheres to in terms of farming practice. Beyond that, it will also be used to trace when people leave their communities to seek other work (i.e. farm/non-farm labour) and how these migration patterns mesh with the changing seasons.</p>
16. Wealth and well being rankings	<p>Wealth ranking is a simple socio-economic study technique by which researchers, planners and rural development workers can learn the ways in which people's wealth or well-being differs from one another. People are asked to sort cards representing individuals or households from rich to poor or from sick to healthy. This technique can be used for crosschecking information and for initiating discussions on a specific topic.</p>	<p>Ranking and scoring help the researchers in understanding the relative access of different resources to different sections of the society, in terms of technology and reach, depending on their social standing and wealth, and the impact of any measures at conservation on different segments ranging from the poor to the wealthy.</p>	<p>To do this successfully, a survey of all those living in the village will have to be undertaken first, so as to identify how many cards will be required to represent each household. The primary aim of this is to ascertain what linkages exist between income and other parameters such as land size, crops cultivated, and debt. To do this, farmers could go from household to household and conduct quick interviews with members, but to maintain an awareness of gender dynamics, it would be women who would undertake this exercise.</p>