

Session 6.1: Trainee Notes

Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods

Contents

1. Introduction to participatory appraisal
2. Core concepts and principles
3. Semi-structured checklist interviews
4. Observational techniques
5. Diagramming techniques
6. Ranking and scoring techniques
7. Lessons for undertaking participatory appraisal

Learning Objective

After completing this session, you will:

- Be able to identify and utilise different participatory appraisal techniques
- Understand and assess the best circumstances in which to use participatory techniques
- Appreciate the role of participatory appraisal techniques in undertaking transport research
- Be conversant with the features and benefits of semi-structured checklist interviews and how they can be used to consult with various stakeholder groups and key informants.

1. Introduction to Participatory Appraisal

A participatory approach to research emerged following disillusionment with the deductionist development paradigms of the 1960s and 1970s during which time the conception was top-down, with governments imposing development on the poor and basing development decisions on assumptions and quantification, leading to ineffective judgements and wasteful interventions. A participatory approach to development was popularised by Gordon Conway and Robert Chambers in the 1980s with the emergence of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which emphasise local knowledge and enable local people to make their own appraisal, analysis and evaluation (Mikkelsen, 1995).

Participatory appraisal (PA) came into being as a challenge to the assumptions and practices of what Chambers called 'normal professionalism' (Cornwall and Pratt, 2002). Participatory appraisal concepts emanated from the practice of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) in the late 1970s and 1980s (Chambers, 2003). The aim of PA was to:

- Accelerate rural change
- Recognise 'us' and our confidence in our knowledge as much of the problem, and 'them' and their knowledge as much of the solution
- Avoid survey slavery, epitomised by questionnaire surveys which took a lot of time, misled and were wasteful
- Be cost-effective, recognising trade-offs between depth, breadth, accuracy, and timeliness, assessing actual beneficial use of information against the costs of obtaining it.

Participatory *Rural* Appraisal, a confluence of approaches and methods, values empowerment, and applies social anthropology, agroecosystem analysis, farming systems research and participatory action research to provide a 'repertoire of new methods with visuals' (Chambers, 2003).

Community participation has evolved in a wide range of sectors and contexts as a result of a long-term decline in people's engagement in civil society and through the continuing exclusion of some social groups from decision making and subsequently from beneficial outcomes (Pretty and Hine, 1999). Indeed, there is now sufficient evidence to suggest that interactive participation can lead to improvements in performance and outcomes, including increased cohesiveness amongst and between social and cultural groups, greater capacity to negotiate with external bodies and agencies and decision making capabilities.

However, while participatory appraisal emerged from a revolt against 'survey slavery' it is not a methodological panacea. In fact, as Chambers (2003) points out, there has been a mass of bad practice with PRA 'experts' abusing the use of participatory tools, which by their nature are intended to be a learning experience for both participant and facilitator. He cites 'Quick and dirty' practises that are undertaken rapidly without due consideration for cultural nuances, and applied routinely by lecturing participants and raising expectations.

Similarly, in their critique of participatory development, Cooke and Kothari (2001) explain that “participatory development’s tyrannical potential is systemic, and not merely a matter of how the practitioner operates or the specificities of the techniques and tools employed...(rather, it is how) the discourse itself, and not just the practice, embodies the potential for unjustified exercise of power.” Their collection of *internal critiques* serve to demonstrate how participatory development facilitates “the illegitimate and/or unjust exercise of power”, described here as ‘tyranny’.

There are clearly concerns over the quality of participatory appraisal, which has become a popular technique amongst practitioners across *all* sectors, and has come to be applied by anyone, to just about anything (Cornwall and Pratt, 2002). Nevertheless, PA continues to be a flexible, people-centred approach that facilitates learning and sharing experiences, such that local people can be empowered to influence investment and policy decisions undertaken at the macro level.

2. Core Concepts and Principles

“Qualitative research does not seek to establish absolute values for the things that it investigates; its aim is to build up an accurate interpretation of what is being researched through triangulation of many different descriptive sources.” (DFID, 2001)

The term ‘Participatory Appraisal’ (PA) is one that is frequently used interchangeably with ‘Participatory Learning and Action’ (PLA), ‘Participatory Rural Appraisal’ (PRA), ‘Rapid Rural Appraisal’ (RRA), and ‘Participatory Urban Analysis’ (PUA).

Participatory approaches to development were popularised by Gordon Conway and Robert Chambers in the 1980s with the emergence of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). PRA emphasises local knowledge and enables local people to make their own appraisal, analysis and evaluation.

Participatory Appraisal methods are described as:

“...a growing family of approaches, methods, attitudes and behaviours that enable people to express and analyse the realities of their lives and conditions, to plan themselves what action to take, and to monitor and evaluate the results and reflect.” (Chambers, 2003).

The key principles of PA include:

- Offsetting biases (spatial, project, person, gender, income, seasonal)
- Progressive learning – flexible, exploratory, interactive, participative
- Triangulation – using different methods, sources and disciplines, and a range of informants in different locations, to cross-check and validate data
- A culture of sharing – of information, of methods, of food, of field experiences

- Commitment to equity – empowering those who are marginalised, deprived, and excluded, including women, children, the very poor, elderly and disabled

A prerequisite of PA is that data collection and analysis are undertaken by local people, with outsiders facilitating rather than controlling. Outcomes of the participatory process are referred back to the community in a process of learning and reflection.

Participatory tools are extremely diverse and should in no way be applied as a blueprint for community development. Rather, they can inform the learning and reflective process and help respondents to visualise both problems and solutions.

Participatory Appraisal is not a data collection tool traditionally used in the transport sector, although it has been adopted in some transport research projects. Most notably the following DFID funded research projects, conducted by TRL, used PA for data collection in combination with more conventional questionnaire surveys:

- *Activity Patterns, Transport and Policies for the Urban Poor* project undertaken in Sri Lanka, Ghana and Zimbabwe
- *Policy Toolkit for Increased Rural Mobility* project undertaken in Zambia and Cameroon.

In both these research projects, PA was used to provide a link between the production and sharing of knowledge about transport and livelihoods by operators, regulators and other road users.

In the context of undertaking transport research, participatory tools can be used to engage people in discussions to:

- Consider, organise, analyse and describe transport and livelihood related issues in ways that enable information to be examined and debated by all stakeholders
- Develop approaches that present and rank issues of concern, enabling policy relevant information to reach transport regulators, and issues relating to transport service provision to reach operators.

3. Semi-Structured Checklist Interviews

Features and benefits of checklist interviews (and related qualitative research approaches):

- Can be used to explore issues in much greater depth than with survey questionnaires.
- Can be used to explore 'multiple realities' – i.e issues where there is no one right answer, but where different people have different ideas and perspectives.
- Are more amenable to participatory approaches, since research ideas can be generated from the research process, rather than being set from the outset by external 'experts'.

- Can be used as a stand-alone technique but also offer a valuable base for subsequent survey questionnaire design i.e. a Mixed Methods approach.

Qualitative research is good for uncovering why things happen and understanding people's own understandings of their situation, so it provides a very useful starting point in a research project.

Undertaking some preliminary checklist interviews with key informants can be very helpful for sorting out the important questions to ask in a subsequent survey – i.e. this may ultimately save time and money.

The checklist interview may offer a good opportunity to introduce a new project, its goals etc. to local residents, and to answer their questions, as well as collecting information for triangulation with other data sources.

Getting diverse perspectives: This set of notes focuses principally on key informants such as administrators, health workers, teachers, transport operators and traders. However, in a checklist study exploring rural access issues, efforts should be made to include interviews with people of varying ages, both sexes, diverse ethnic background, disability, etc., not just key informants. N.B. Children and young people and older people are often excluded from access surveys but access to key services is extremely important for their lives and wellbeing. It is important to explore perceptions of their needs in direct interviews as well as with key informants.

Flexibility is key to using checklists: It is not necessary to discuss every theme on the check sheet with every key informant: if the respondent is only willing to give limited time, obtain the basic information you need, then focus on questions where the person concerned may have key knowledge. If an area of new information/insights opens up that looks promising, then explore this, even if it means omitting some other issues. It is better to make sure that you give the informant enough time to respond fully to your questions, and to make sure you understand the responses fully, rather than try to rush through to fit everything in. *It is NOT necessary to stick to a rigid schedule.* Write two to three sentences after the interview about how this interview takes forward our ideas about rural access and raises new questions. Add any new issues to the checklist.

Language: Interviews are best conducted in the language with which the informant seems most comfortable. Responses of informants should be reported as far as possible in full. Please give a direct English translation of their words, even if their responses seem self-evident, irrelevant or wrong. For important terms where there is no direct English translation, use the local term but provide an explanation in a note at the end of the interview sheet.

Note-taking and recording: Take as full notes as possible during the interview, probing where appropriate to get more detail. However, do not prompt unless it is necessary. If you don't manage to write down

everything the respondent says, leave space for additional detail then review and revise as necessary, immediately after the interview and before you start the next interview. If you wish to tape record qualitative interviews then that can be helpful, but given the time that tape transcription requires [6-8 hours per 1 hour interview] it is generally advisable that tape recording is used principally as a back-up to check on specific points made. Recording the interview can sometimes raise respondent concerns and limit their responses.

- A hardback bound notebook will make interview note-taking easier and looks less formal than a clip-board.

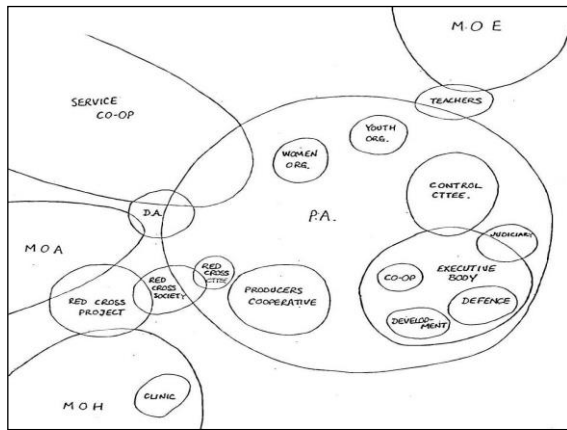
Accompanied walks: the mobile checklist interview

Walking (or travel e.g. on public transport) with your informant can be a particularly effective way to learn about their journeys and mobility and access constraints e.g. walking with a child to school, an elderly person to the clinic, or travelling with a trader to market. Travelling along the route often triggers important thoughts and ideas which may be forgotten in a formal stationary interview. As you travel, let the respondent talk through how they experience the journey, and issues relating to the space you are travelling through. Take notes as and when you can during the journey and add further information at the end of the journey.

Map drawing as a base for interview discussions:

If it isn't feasible to travel with the respondent, asking the respondent to draw a rough sketch map of routes that they travel regularly can be helpful for identifying mobility constraints, transport hazards etc. This can also be used as a base for discussions about transport mode, seasonal travel variations etc. Take detailed notes of the discussion during the mapping process.

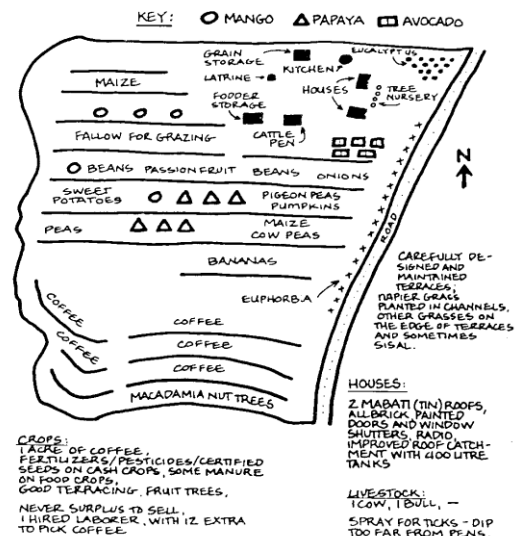
4. Participatory Appraisal Techniques



Source: Ethiopian Red Cross Society (1988)

Venn diagrams: depict key institutions, organisations and individuals, and their interaction with the local community. Key players in decision making are shown, and institutions analysed can be both local ones internal to the community, and external ones that have a local influence. Each institution is usually represented by a circle. The size of the circle represents the importance, significance or power of that institution, and the degree of overlap between the circles represents the level of interaction that occurs. In the rural transport context, Venn diagrams can be used to demonstrate the interaction between local villagers, transport operators and local government.

SIMON MULE: ZONE II 3ADULTS, CHILDREN GROWN 6-7 ACRES



Source: National Environmental Secretariat (1990)

Social / Resource mapping: Maps can be used to identify the comparative location and importance of different resources within an area. Social maps can be used to locate land-use, houses, services and infrastructure within an area. Maps can be used as a visual stimulant, to identify the parameters faced by local people and to facilitate discussion about the importance people place on infrastructure and transport service provision etc.

Matrix Ranking

| | Egg Plant | lettuce | Tomato | Sweet | Round | Alma | Bitter | Water | Cassava | Okra | Onions | Cabbage | Hot | Mango | Sweet |
|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|--------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|---------|------|--------|---------|-----|-------|-------|
| More durable in terms of storage | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |
| More cash yielding | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |
| More blood giving | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |
| More energy giving | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |
| Consumed most | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |
| More marketable | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |
| Less water requirement | ••• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• | •• |

Source: ActionAid (1992)

Ranking and scoring techniques: Used to assess people's expectations, beliefs, attitudes, preferences and opinions. Ranking and scoring means placing something in order:

- Ranking: putting in order
- Scoring: weighting differences

A useful tool to be used in generating basic information which helps to focus further questioning. In a transport context, ranking and scoring techniques are useful for obtaining information such as journey origin and destination, journey mode, journey purpose, frequency and cost etc.

Matrix ranking: Matrix ranking involves listing key criteria (which have been predetermined by the community) down one side of a matrix table, and the measure by which they are judged, gained from informal discussion or pairwise ranking, across the top. Each element is then considered in terms of each criteria and a score is given on the basis of each criteria. This method can be undertaken to establish local perceptions of efficiency for different transport modes in relation to their cost, frequency, availability, energy and time consumption.

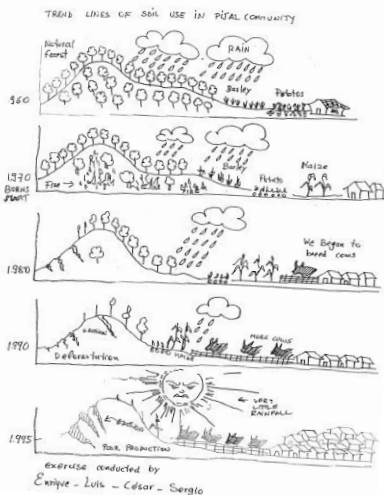
Wealth ranking: Wealth ranking enables villagers to divide households in the community according to economic and other 'well-being' categories including animal ownership, type of house, size of family, farm size and bicycle or ox-cart ownership etc. This helps identify target group members for projects, specifically the poorest sections of a society. Differences in wealth and well-being affect peoples perceptions and coping strategies. It is important to understand this prior to further appraisal or planning.

Pairwise Ranking

| Walking (Preference 1) | Bicycle (Preference 2) | Ox-cart (Preference 3) | Bus (Preference 4) | Car (Preference 5) | ITEM | SCORE | RANK |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-------|------|
| | Bicycle | Ox-cart | Bus | Car | Walking (Preference 1) | 0 | E |
| | | Ox-cart | Bicycle | Car | Bicycle (Preference 2) | 2 | C |
| | | | Ox-cart | Car | Ox-cart (Preference 3) | 3 | B |
| | | | | Car | Bus (Preference 4) | 1 | D |
| | | | | | Car (Preference 5) | 4 | A |

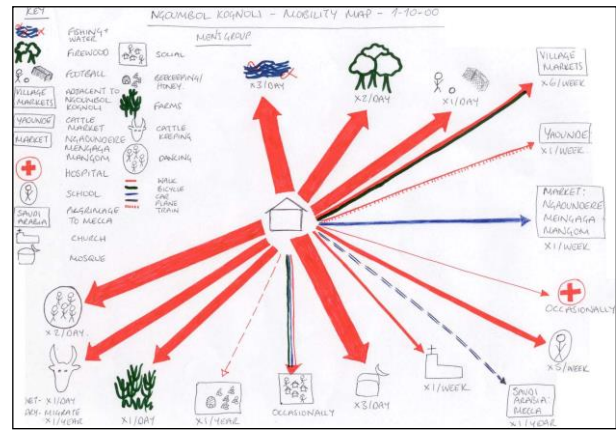


Discussion Starters: When discussing transport issues with a community, visual aids are a useful mechanism for generating debate and obtaining ancillary information. Laminated ‘flash cards’ showing, for example, different types of intermediate means of transport (IMT) give rise to commentary relating to the utility of intermediate modes and their effectiveness under different climatic conditions.

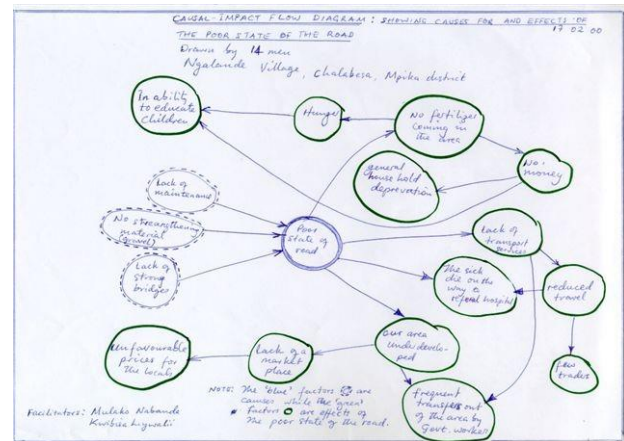


Source: CIDT (2001)

Trend Analysis: a tool for presenting data collected as indicators of change. Time lines record changes over time to a community, highlighting historical events. Seasonal calendars record seasonal factors or activities within a community. Trend analysis tools can be presented as a bar chart, a transect through time, or as a series of pictures depicting the nature of change.



Mobility charts: a tool utilised for discerning trip distance, destination, frequency and modal choice of daily income and non-income earning activities presented in a schematic diagram. The chart can be drawn as a spider diagram, with participants drawing arrows from their ‘household’ at the centre of the diagram in varying thickness and colour to denote frequency of trips and different transport modes respectively. The arrow points towards a drawing, which represents a particular activity for which the journey has been made.



Causal Impact Analysis: used to probe into the cause and effect of particularly acute problems faced by communities, their strategy for alleviating the impact of these problems, and their prioritisation for problems that require external intervention most urgently. This can be achieved by using a flow diagram with the problem statement at the centre and cause and effects of the problem emanating from the midpoint.

| ZONE | RESIDENCE | ARABLE LAND | DEPRESSION | COMMUNICATED TOWN (ROAD) | GARDENS | ARABLE LAND | RESIDENCE |
|---------------|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| SOIL TYPE | Sandy loam | Sandy loam | Clay loam | Limestone | Sandy loam | Sandy loam | Sandy loam |
| LAND USE | Backyard crops such as mango | Agricultural production and vegetable gardens around houses. Occupation of a small scale | Small scale rice, sorghum, maize for local consumption. Little bit of potential area for cultivation of a large scale | Market shops, small scale shops, etc. | Vegetable production, rubber, citrus, etc. | Groundnut production, dairy, mixed cropping, etc. | Backyard crops such as mango, papaya, etc. |
| TREE SPECIES | Mango, Guava, Neem | Mango, Citrus, lime, Guava, etc. Trees used for medicinal purposes as 'Soko Kalimo' 'Limo' | Small scale rice, sorghum, maize for local consumption. Little bit of potential area for cultivation of a large scale | Market shops, small scale shops, etc. | Banana, Cassava, etc. mixed cropping, etc. | Mango, Citrus, lime, Guava, etc. Trees used for medicinal purposes as 'Soko Kalimo' 'Limo' | Mango, Citrus, lime, Guava, etc. Trees used for medicinal purposes as 'Soko Kalimo' 'Limo' |
| INTERVENTIONS | EEC WELL | Post and clean-up of fruit trees. No possibility of planting new trees. | Inadequate rice yield for the past few years | Government | APTC (Agriculture in the Garden) | Department of Agricultural Services team | EEC WELL |
| PROBLEMS | Strategic facility for mango, guava, papaya, etc. and other fruits and vegetables. | Post and clean-up of fruit trees. No possibility of planting new trees. | Inadequate rice yield for the past few years | Government | APTC (Agriculture in the Garden) | Department of Agricultural Services team | Strategic facility for mango, guava, papaya, etc. and other fruits and vegetables. |

Transect Walk: A transverse taken across a community with a group of key informants to identify and analyse distinct land use, transport use and production characteristics, as well as problems and constraints in the community. The group should proceed along the transect (typically of 1-2 km in length) slowly observing the most prominent characteristics along the way. After the visual walk, the community members and facilitator can reproduce the transect diagram.

Source: ActionAid (1992)

5. Lessons for Undertaking Participatory Appraisal

PA should not be prescriptive! It is neither a blueprint nor a panacea for development – simply a means of giving a voice to poor and vulnerable groups in order for them to contribute to their own development!

It should be a learning experience by both facilitator and respondent.

The facilitator has a responsibility to feed back the information to the whole community and to decision makers in authority who are often unaware of the issues on the ground – this can be achieved through community meetings, workshops, poster campaigns. Dissemination is key!

Gatekeepers can be used as an entry point into the community, to be informed of the research and also to help make appointments with community groups, gatekeepers include:

- Local councillor
- Village head
- School head teacher

Make time for reflection with the PA team at the end of each day to ensure there is validation of information and to aid data analysis at the end of the survey period.

Do not raise expectations and, if appropriate, provide a token of gratitude to the host community:

- Groceries, soap, sugar, school equipment
- Refreshments during the group work
- Money if appropriate

Take advice from the gatekeeper as to the type of incentive and, where appropriate, the monetary value to be provided. Allow a sufficient budget for providing incentives and factor in the significant time inputs into the data collection costing.

Triangulation:

Triangulation refers to the use of different methodologies and techniques to verify and validate data acquired from a survey. It ensures that the data is as accurate as possible, and that there is no influence of bias on the data.

Triangulation involves using different methods, sources and disciplines, and a range of informants in different locations, allowing for cross-checking and validation of data.

Methods triangulation: comparing data generated by different methods (qualitative and quantitative). This is especially important if the research question requires a large sample of data.

Triangulation of sources: comparing data from different qualitative methods (observations, interviews, maps and diagrams). Also through comparing secondary data (from existing literature) and primary data (from fieldwork).

Triangulation through multiple analysis: using different observers, interviewers, analysts to compare and check data collection and interpretation.

Theory triangulation: looking at data from different theoretical perspectives.

Respondent triangulation: involves taking research evidence back to the research participants to see if the meaning or interpretation of the researcher is confirmed by those who provided the data in the first place.

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