Certificate Programme

International Perspectives in Participatory Research

Unit 4
Participatory Research Methodsof Generating Knowledge

Units of Certificate in International Perspectives in Participatory Research

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Introduction

Unit 4 will introduce the concepts and issues in participatory methods. In Section 4.1 you will understand the meaning of participatory methods. In Section 4.2 the various streams of participatory methods will be explored. In Section 4.3 you will understand the core principles of participatory methods. Diverse participatory methods are described in Section 4.4 and Section 4.5 will elaborate upon the advantages and challenges of participatory methods.

Learning Objectives

After completing this Unit, you should be familiar with the following concepts and issues:

- Meaning of participatory methods
- An overview of streams of participatory methods
- Underlying principles
- Diverse participatory methods
- Advantages and challenges

4.1 What are Participatory Methods?

Participatory methods constitute a strategy for analysing different aspects of social facts. It is a set of logical procedures used to investigate, describe and analyse the current social reality. It also refers to a process through which knowledge of a given social reality is co-constructed by the subjects, who possess the knowledge, and the external researcher. Both the actors, through a dialogical process, assume the task of objectifying, problematising and researching reality.

Participatory methods promote:

- **Collective knowledge**: The investigation and presentation of a social reality by the group(s) living it, with a sense of ownership of the information;

- **Collective analysis**: The ordering of information in ways that are useful to the group in examining their reality;

- **Critical analysis**: Using the ordered information to determine the root causes of problems with a view to finding solutions to them; and

- **Linking of reflection with action**: Taking time to ask who, what, why, how, where, and when.

Participatory methods include a flexible set of techniques. There is no one set of techniques that can be mechanically applied in all contexts for all participants. Participatory research (PR) draws upon all available social science research methods, but excludes techniques that require a separation of researcher and the researched, for instance, in experimental studies where experimental subjects are kept ignorant of the purpose of the study. Methods that are beyond the technical and material resources of the people in the research are also excluded. Field observation, archival and library research, historical investigations using documents, personal history, narratives and storytelling, as well as questionnaires and interviews are extensively used in PR (Sohng, 1995).

4.2 Streams of Participatory Methods: An Overview

Several streams and traditions have directly or indirectly contributed to a convergence in participatory methods. Streams, which stand out as sources, are listed and described below.

4.2.1 Participatory Action-reflection Research

During the 1960s and early 1970s it was increasingly felt that most current forms of social science research were not adequately addressing the political implications of people's participation in development. As controversial aspects were too often ignored, it was difficult for such research to contribute to any sustainable solution. In grassroots work, PR emerged to heighten poor people's awareness about the conflicts and contradictions existing in their situations and ways to overcome these. PR owes much to the work and inspiration of Paulo Freire, and to his books **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** (1970) **and Education for Critical Consciousness** (1974), and to the practice and experience of conscientisation in Latin America (Vio Grossi, Martinic, Tapia, & Pascal, 1983). Freirean-inspired popular education was premised on the action research approach. It promoted participatory and collective learning; emphasised empowerment of poor people to take action so that they could change social conditions and use their experiential learning to challenge theory and practice. Popular education methods were essentially group methods linked to alternative ideas about "development" (e.g., against imposed development projects) and participatory democracy. Many grassroots social movements and adult education movements from the 1960s used popular education methods, such as, collective research through meetings and socio-dramas, critical recovery of history, valuing and applying folk culture, and the production and diffusion of new knowledge through written, oral and visual forms, which were creative, expressive and culturally relevant. Activities in this tradition have been both PR and participatory action research and as these overlap they are labelled as participatory action-reflection research.

4.2.2 Agro-ecosystem Analysis

The agro-ecosystem analysis developed in the late 1970s. Drawing on systems and ecological thinking, it combines an analysis of systems and system properties (productivity, stability, sustainability and equitability) with pattern analysis of space (maps and transects), time (seasonal calendars and long-term trends), flows and relationships (flow, causal, Venn and other diagrams), relative values (bar diagrams of relative sources of income etc.), and decisions (decision trees and other decision diagrams) (Chambers, 1994).

4.2.3 Applied Anthropology

In the 1970s and 1980s applied anthropology and development anthropology gained professional legitimacy in development agencies. Social anthropologists helped other development professionals to appreciate better the richness and validity of rural people's knowledge and to distinguish the *etic* (the outsider's mental frame, categories and world view) and the *emic* (those of the local insider). Applied anthropology led to greater awareness about the need for a more sophisticated understanding of poverty, social processes and grassroots perspectives on development (Mayoux, 2001).

4.2.4 Farming Systems Research

Farming systems research evolved in the 1960s for further research in the area of farming systems; analysing problems and planning research and extension activities. In the latter 1980s and early 1990s it was increasingly recognised that farmers should and could play a much greater part in agricultural research. Research of the farming systems sought to understand the farmers' own decision-making processes. It contributed specially to the appreciation and understanding of:

- The complexity, diversity and risk-proneness of many farming systems;
- The knowledge, professionalism and rationality of small and poor farmers;
- Their experimental mindset and behaviour; and
- Their ability to conduct their own analyses (Chambers, 1994)

4.2.5 Rapid Rural Appraisal

Rapid rural appraisal (RRA) emerged in the late 1970s. It had three main origins.

(1) Dissatisfaction with the biases, especially the anti-poverty biases, of rural development tourism – the phenomenon of the brief rural visit by the urban-based professional. These biases were recognised as: spatial (visits near cities, on roadsides and to the centres of villages, to the neglect of peripheries); project (where projects were being undertaken, often with special official attention and support); person (meeting men more than women, elite more than the poor, the users more than the non-users of services, and so on); seasonal (going in the dry and cool rather than hot and wet seasons, which are often worse for poor rural people); and diplomatic (where the outsider does not wish to cause offence by asking to meet poor people or see bad conditions). All these could combine to hide the worst poverty and deprivation.

(2) Disillusion with the normal processes of questionnaire surveys and their results. The experience had been that questionnaire surveys tended to be long-winded, tedious, a headache to administer, a nightmare to process and write up, inaccurate and unreliable in data obtained, leading to reports, if any, which were long, late, boring, misleading, difficult to use, and often ignored.

(3) More cost-effective methods of learning were sought. This was helped by development professionals recognising the painfully obvious fact that rural people were themselves knowledgeable on many subjects, which touched their lives. What became known as indigenous technical knowledge (ITK) was then increasingly seen to have richness and value for practical purposes. One major question then was how ITK could be tapped more effectively as a source of information for analysis and use by outsider professionals.

Rapid rural appraisal was developed for quick field oriented results with the following objectives:

- Appraising agricultural and other needs of the rural community

- Prioritising areas of research for meeting such needs

- Assessing feasibility of development needs and action plans

- Implementing such action plans, monitoring and evaluating them.

Rapid rural appraisal enabled researchers gain information and insight from rural people and about rural conditions in a more cost effective and timely manner. As its normal mode entailed outsiders obtaining information, taking it away and analysing it, RRA was extractive, or, more neutrally elicitive(Chambers, 1994).

4.2.6 Participatory Rural Appraisal

In the mid1980s, the words 'participation' and 'participatory' entered the RRA vocabulary. In 1988, there were parallel developments in Kenya and India. In Kenya, the National Environment Secretariat, in association with Clark University, conducted an RRA in Mbusanyi, a community in Machakos District, which led to the adoption of a Village Resource Management Plan in September. This was subsequently described as a participatory rural appraisal (PRA). Around the same time in 1988, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP), India was interested in developing participatory RRA, and invited the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) for help. In September and October 1988, Jennifer McCracken from IIED, and AKRSP staff including MeeraKaul Shah and Parmesh Shah, facilitated participatory RRA with villagers in Gujarat. The Kenya and Indian experiences were seminal for the development of PRA (Chambers, 1994).

By the mid 1990s it became increasingly evident that the mechanical application of the appraisal techniques was often failing to reach the poor people and capture their views, particularly women, children and the socially excluded. There was renewed interest in methodologies for participation, drawing on earlier traditions for PR, which had been an integral part of many grassroots organisations in the South developed for grassroots mobilisation. These methods were based on the principles of human rights and aimed to use the research process itself as a means of empowerment through the use of visual techniques and group and team dynamics methods.

Initially PRA brought together RRA and activist research. Its application was based on a number of underlying principles such as,

- Embracing complexity and seeking to understand the social reality rather than oversimplifying it in accordance with predetermined categories and theories.

- Recognition of multiple realities to be taken into account in analysis or action.

- Prioritising the poor and the most disadvantaged as equal partners in knowledge creation and problem analysis.

Participatory rural appraisal, as a set of approaches and methods, enables local people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, and to plan, act, monitor and evaluate. Practical applications have proliferated and are applied in different sectors such as in natural resources management, agriculture, health and nutrition, poverty and livelihood programmes, and in the urban context. Participatory rural appraisal approaches and methods present alternatives to questionnaire surveys in appraisal and research, and generate insights into policy relevance. Not only NGOs and government departments, but also training institutes and universities are increasingly using PRA methods and approaches (Chambers, 1994).

Participatory rural appraisal is sometimes also known as participatory rapid appraisal. Other names for describing PRA are participatory learning methods (PALM), and participatory appraisal of natural resources (PANR). More recently the term participatory learning and action (PLA) is preferred as it more effectively incorporates the underlying human rights traditions through emphasising the importance of:

- Changing from appraisal to learning and hence moving away from the use of participatory methods as an extractive process by outsiders to a sustainable learning process involving different stakeholders as equal partners.

- The importance of relating learning to action incorporating programme and policy improvement as an integral part of the learning process(Mayoux, 2001)

Since the late 1990s the interest in participatory methods was to a great extent on the impact assessment of development programmes. Participatory approaches were a required component for funding in development programmes. By the end of the 1990s interest in project level participation had widened to a concern with civil society development and good governance. Empowerment, civil society development, responsiveness to the needs of the poor and building social and government institutions are explicitly emphasised and echoed in the policies of aid agencies, participatory consultative processes and grassroots based lobbying and advocacy organisations (Mayoux L. , 2003).

4.3 The Underlying Principles

The core principles of participatory methods include the following.

- **Grassroots participation:** Grassroots participation facilitates the understanding of the complexities of development processes, power relations and grassroots aspirations. Participatory group methods facilitate negotiations between different stakeholders in projects, policy dialogue and communication between donors, policymakers, development practitioners and the grassroots affected by interventions.

- **Concern with relations of power:** The perspectives of the poor and disadvantaged people are emphasised to offset biases in dominant paradigms.

- **Analysis by local people:** Researchers facilitate local analysis in order to learn with and from them. This requires analysing the processes of discussions and interviews as well as the data these produce. Learning takes place face to face and on the spot.

- **A defined methodology and systematic learning process:** As the focus is on the cumulative learning of all participants, the process of enquiry is cumulative and participative. Use of open questions and semi-structured interviews is favoured. Joint analysis takes place in several phases and these are context specific.

- **Multiple perspectives:** The assumption is that there are multiple possible descriptions of any real world activity. The complexity and diversity of individual and group perceptions are recognised to understand contradictions and differences. This often involves purposive sampling rather than statistical sampling for participants.

- **Group inquiry process:** The underlying assumption is that the complexity of the social reality will only be revealed through group inquiry. This implies three possible

combinations of investigators viz., those from different disciplines and from different sectors, from outsiders (professionals) and insiders (local people).

- **Context specific:** The methods are adapted to suit each new condition and actor. Researchers use methods flexibly, innovatively and improvise with conscious exploration in different circumstances. No research process is ever the same so there is no blueprint for the researchers. The adaptability of methods and possibilities of different sequencing according to local conditions encourages a greater sense of ownership.

- **Facilitating experts and stakeholders:** The role of the expert is to help people in a situation carry out their own studies to bring about desirable and sustainable changes in their world. These facilitating experts may well come from the community, and thus be stakeholders themselves.

- **Visual medium:**Visual techniques are open to groups and encourage the participation of the people, who are marginalised, who do not read, are neither used to verbal communications nor share languages. Visual techniques include mapping, time line, seasonal analysis, and matrix ranking and scoring.

- **Leading to change:** The process of enquiry embodies a strong capacity building element for local participants, research teams and other stakeholders. Dialogue and joint analysis help to define changes and motivate people to act. Depending on the commitment to the participants and stakeholders, action can include further capacity strengthening for the implementation of desired changes or for increased participation in advocacy, decision-making and policy development.

4.4 Diverse Participatory Methods

Participatory methods generically combine qualitative methods, popular education methods anddiagramming and visual techniques*.* Popular education methods are creative, expressive and culturally relevant tools. It is based on "problem-posing dialogue". It promotes critical analysis through group discussion.Diagramming and visual techniques*,* extensively used in PRA, aim to understand and cross-check a community's lived experience, culture, and way of doing things to assess needs, identify and prioritise projects and evaluate programmes. Originally developed for livelihoods analysis, they are now widely used in different development sectors.

4.4.1 Qualitative methods

Ethnographic methods areused to collect the data directly from the field. The researcher studies a population or cultural groups over a prolonged period of time in its natural setting. The data is primarily collected by using observation technique (Cresswell, 2003). The research process is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999).

Observation is a technique by which we can collect latent/unspoken data. In *participantobservation*the researcher becomes a part of the group or society under study (as William F. Whyte said in his 'study of street corner society' in Chicago, 1955). However, there are a few issues related to participant observation. The researcher should know what data is to be collected and how much is to be revealed. The population under study should know that they are being observed and for what purpose. The problem is that when people know that they are being observed they may act differently and not naturally. The time and place of observation are the two most important aspects, which may affect the quality of data (Alston & Bowles, 2003).

Grounded Theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it presents. That is, it is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Thus, this process involves using multiple stages of data collection and the refinement and interrelationship of categories of information(Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Narrative discourse has roots in the term narration, meaning interpretation or description. It refers to a form of inquiry in which the researcher studies the lives of individuals and asks one or more individuals to provide their life stories. This information is then retold or made into a new story by the researcher into a narrative chronology. In the end, the narrative combines views from the participant's life in a collaborative narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Content analysis refers to the analysis of some form of communication, written, audio or visual, for trends or patterns and to analyse the style and technique used. It examines the existing material and does not require the researcher to collect the primary data. Content analysis is useful for examining not only what is included and how it is presented, but also what is excluded. When conducting a content analysis study one may be interested not only in a quantitative analysis of the material, but also in a qualitative assessment of the way the material is presented, its style and the values represented.

Documents, media, and artefacts provide secondary data. The sources for the documents are library material like books, monographs, journals, historical details and traveller's accounts, etc. Media gives the current news collected by journalists and disseminated via the audio visual or printed medium and artefacts speak about the cultural history of a population. There are several benefits of using these mediums. The foremost is that the researcher need not be physically present at the place and time of the event. It saves time, which he can use in constructing the history, but there is a disadvantage too. When using this method of data collection, the researcher has to depend and rely on the intelligence and common sense of the data collector. This may lead to the development of lop-sided or biased reports.

4.4.2. Popular education methods

Participatory workshops are events in which a group of people can learn together and share experiences. In PR, learning is collective and based on praxis – the joining of knowledge and action. Learning is not just the reception of new information from one source; ideally it is a horizontal exchange.

Forums are generally large events, which may include speakers, panels and workshops, in order to learn about the different experiences of participants on key issues, debate and jointly organise action on these issues. For example: the World Social Forum (WSF), and parallel forums in other countries.

Public meetings are general open meetings to which all members of a community or organisation are invited for a specific purpose. The meetings generally have a facilitator who encourages two-way communication and provides an opportunity to all members to contribute, share common problems and a common purpose. Community members are also motivated to join small focus groups comprising of people with common concerns (women, tribals, poor and the marginalised) to speak freely with each other. The outputs from focus group meetings can be presented to larger group meetings, giving a "voice" to those in the community who are unable to speak up in a larger meeting.

This method serves the purpose of giving and receiving information. Discussions take place around the issues of relevance to the community. Public meetings also help to identify problems and solutions, find community agreement on issues so that they can find solutions, plan activities and negotiate conflicts and validate evaluation results and formulate recommendations.

Dialogue is a potent method of integrating inquiry and intervention. It commences with the participants' topic of interest. It is not merely confined to discussion, debate or arguments. There is an emphasis on generating general questioning rather than on one-to-one questioning, discussion or the giving of 'answers'. All contributions are honoured, respected and heard. No content is excluded, all are worthy of discussion.

People speak for themselves ("I") and not on behalf of others ("they" or "we"). It involves careful and focused listening, and the giving of attention to others and to one's own reactions. It involves all suspension of or "holding lightly" current beliefs, ways of thinking, assumptions, etc. It is an exchange, where there is an iteration of listening and hearing and speaking. It rests on collective inquiry depending very much on what takes place between participants as they trigger new thinking and reflection in each other.

Drawing is another useful method in a culture with a strong visual tradition. People who live in communities where there are class/language barriers or are not well developed speakers, often express opinions and feelings more easily through drawings. Using self-created visuals, individuals are able to see and jointly develop an analysis. It deepens group identity. Drawing helps in identifyingan issue or a problem. It facilitates gauging community perception of a current situation; provides a record for comparison at a later date (for evaluation); develops a group analysis; strengthens the connection between "thinking" and "doing"; and promotes discussion at points where bridging, reforming or focusing are needed.

Publicart displays

Murals and posters are large, semi-permanent drawings designed by the community and drawn by an artist. They are generally located where members of the community can see them frequently. Murals help promote the knowledge and valorisation of local history and talent, energise community cooperation and communicate messages. Mural paintings as public art often deal with difficult social, political and economic problems in neighbourhoods. The mural, an exterior or interior wall painting, involves viewers in a visual dialogue. The walls express a strong narrative of social awareness using symbolic content. Some of the themes are a commentary on social issues and problems, such as drugs, housing, world peace, brotherhood, family, ecology, national heroes, social justice, and cultural heritage. Wall paintings make public statements about life as it is, as it was, or as it should be. They become a vehicle for public voices and neighbourhood self-definition, as they symbolise location and define its character in the eyes of the residents and outsiders.

> **NOTE BANK**
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> **"Break the Silence"**
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> The Durban based group Artists for Human Rights initiated the "Break the Silence" project in 1999. The overarching theme, "Break the Silence", was meant to address the stigma around HIV/Aids. The project was in part inspired by the killing of Aids activist, GuguDlamini, by her own community after her HIV positive status was revealed in 1999. This incident highlighted the need for not only creating HIV/Aids awareness and providing information about preventing infection, but also to address the often-deadly stigma attached to those already infected with HIV or living with Aids. HIV/AIDS murals took art out of the elitist space of the gallery and into the streets for the appreciation of ordinary people.
>
> (Marschall, 2002)

The picture-novel or *fotonovela* (in Spanish) is both a PR tool and a means of systematising research findings in an accessible manner.The word fotonovela means picture-novel, an illustrated story. Community members, engaged in a PR process, utilise this method to systematise their experience and share their research findings.

Socio-drama, the creation of improvised sketches, is an excellent tool for collectively analysing a conflictive situation. Participants of a workshop, divided into smaller groups, are asked to prepare a theatrical representation of a situation at issue andvolunteer as actors to present it to the others. Socio-dramas are usually very lively and can generate important discussion afterwards. Role-playing is similar, but roles can be assigned.

Popular theatre is the carrying out of theatre or skits, usually in public places, with the aim of generating critical understanding of an issue. Popular theatre is different from traditional theatre because rather than mirroring and mimicking the culture, it shows the contradictions, leaving the audience with unanswered questions upon which to reflect and hopefully seek answers.

Puppet theatre: Puppets are used to represent characters, which act out the issues and/or story determined by insiders. If an outside professional puppet group is used, the assistance of insiders is required to develop scripts around the issues. Puppet theatre has the same purpose as popular theatre, but because the puppets are not viewed as "real people", they can often deal with sensitive situations and more easily obtain feedback from the audience.

Puppet theatre has high entertainment value in some cultures, and can reach and receive feedback from a wide audience. An ongoing process of audience feedback strengthens the group analysis. It is a multipurpose method. For instance, it can be used for assessment, for the collection of qualitative information, as an extension tool, and for the presentation and communication of results (Case, 1990).

Group discussions are probably the most widely used method. Usually a number of people come together for the purpose of solving problems by sharing experiences, information and support. They take placethroughout the research process and are often used together with other methods. For instance, a community meeting might regularly break into small focus group discussions on a particular project. Other uses of group discussions are as follows:

- Pose problems, clarify causes, discuss possible solutions and evaluate actions.

- Create a situation in which people feel comfortable and free to speak.

- Build a sense of trust, support and solidarity among people who share the same problems but may not know it until they talk with each other.

- Serve as efficient interviews. The information can be recorded in notes, on audiotape or on videotape.

- Make more efficient use of the labour of a large group of people by assigning particular topics or tasks to small groups.

- Periodic group discussions are a good way of maintaining communication among people who are separated in their day-to-day work by geography or by time commitments.

Semi-structured interviews are a flexible format of interviews that allow the interview to follow the interest of the person being interviewed. These are partly structured and mostly unstructured depending on the responses of the person or group with whom the interview takes place. People bring in different aspects related to the question. The questions are open-ended. The interviewer generally has a mental checklist. This helps in maintaining a broad framework for the enquiry and for the flow of queries to be an orderly exercise with the progress of the semi-structured interview.

Role-play is a structured experience in which learners get an opportunity to act out problems concerning human relations and human interaction before a group of co-learners and facilitators. It is a conscious attempt to examine the various roles played in actual life. This process is then subjected to critical reflection through effective feedback given by both the observers and the actors.

Since actual or close-to-life situations are taken up in role-play, the dynamics of the various roles can be explored in depth. Role-play also provides the opportunity for an exploration of various roles from a distance; this method also makes risk-taking and spontaneous responses possible. Learners do not feel threatened as they would in a real situation. This facilitates opportunities for learning.

The emotions of the actors involved in the role-play determine the outcome of role-play. The outcome cannot be predicted or pre-determined. Learners get an opportunity to become a player, an observer, summariser, clarifier, etc. Besides, they also get an opportunity to practice new behaviours in role-play.

Role-play can be designed to facilitate understanding and raise awareness; it can also be used to practise some skills. For example, role-play can be used to become aware *of* the power structure in a village; it can also be used to find ways to confront that power structure.

4.4.3 Visualisation and diagramming based methods

Participatory rural appraisal, by and large, comprises of visual and diagram based methods for enhancing a shared understanding between outsiders and insiders. These methods present visual details and complement and supplement verbal discussion. They help in flagging issues, which are important to local communities, both literate and illiterate. They help in building consensus and can form a basis for resolving conflicts and differences of opinion. They can also facilitate an exchange of views and can form the basis of resolving conflicts and differences of opinions; data generation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. These methods, based on what aspects they deal with, can be classified as space, time and relationship methods. A brief discussion of each type is given below.

4.4.3.1 Space-related methods are useful for exploring spatial dimension of people's reality. These methods deal with mapping and focus on how people perceive and relate to space.

- **Social maps,** using different symbols, illustrate individual household level characteristics – relative wealth, levels of resource use, number of school-age children in or out of school, membership/involvement in a community group or project activity, etc. Participatory modelling is the three-dimensional depiction of an area. Mobility mapping analyses the mobility pattern of the local people. Services and opportunities maps help in the presentation of various services and opportunities in the locality. Transect provides a cross-section of an area and is particularly useful in natural resources management (Kumar, 2002).

- **Personal maps**, drawn by individuals rather than groups, show the perspectives of different sections of the community (men versus women, rich versus poor), in terms of, for example, the boundaries of the community, the places most important to them, or their vision of how the community could be improved.

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Social map showing wealth ranking in a village in West Bengal, India
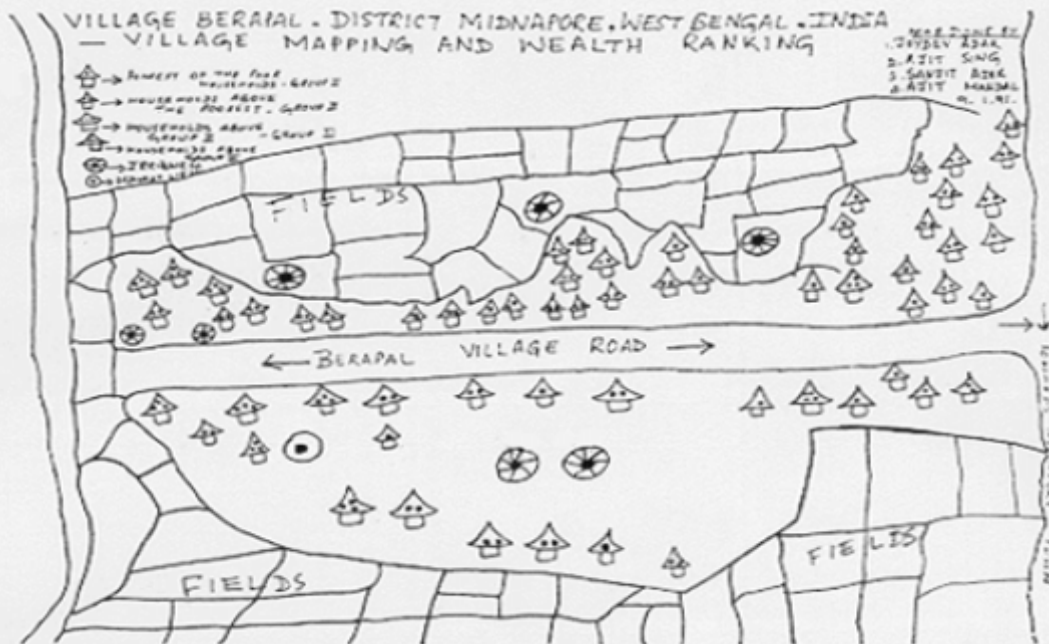
A PRA in West Bengal focused on learning about the local people's perceptions of rural poverty. Social mapping was used to enable the villagers to identify the poorer households and to rank them using their own indicators of poverty. The social map of one village, Berapal, was drawn by a group of villagers gathered in a central meeting place. Once the map was drawn, the participants identified four different wealth groups, from the poorest of the poor to the richest. The locally determined indicators of poverty included households headed by widows and agricultural labourers who had no land and no regular source of income or food.
(Reitbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998, p. 146)

Participatory mapping and modelling involves spatial drawing of any area, drawn by local communities with chalk, sticks, seeds, powders, pens, etc., on the ground, floor or paper. These methods have been among the most widely used and can lead to household listing and well being ranking, and linkage diagrams. Maps can be used for extension, assessment, planning, monitoring, baselines, and evaluations.

4.4.3.2 Time related methods showquantitative changes over time. They chronicle events, list major local events with approximate dates; people's accounts of the past, of how customs, practices and things close to them have changed; ethno biography – a local history of a crop, an animal, a tree, a pest, a weed, diagrams, maps; show ecological histories, changes in land use and cropping patterns, population, migration, fuel uses, education, health, and credit.

- **Historical transect** documents the changes that have occurred in the community and can be used, for example, to generate discussion on the causes and effects of environmental degradation.

- **Seasonal calendars** focus on local livelihood systems. They show month-by-month patterns of rainfall, crop sequencing, water use, livestock fodder, income, debt, migration, wild harvests, labour demand, labour availability, health, diseases, prices; women's, men's and children's work, including agricultural and non-agricultural labour; diet and food consumption, sources of income; expenditure; debt and so on. Usually the calendars are created at a meeting of several households where people decide among themselves as to what the appropriate answers are to the various questions asked. Creating their calendars and other records on the spot and in front of the group ensures an immediate tallying of the data.

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Seasonal calendar of poverty, drawn by a group of villagers in Nyamira, Kenya*

Item	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Light meals	000	000	0	0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	00
Begging	000	000	0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	00
	000	000	0	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	00	000
Migration	000	000	00	0	0	00	–	–	–	–	–	–
	000	000				0	00					
Unemployment	000	000	00	–	–	–						
	000	000			–	–	0	000	000	000		0
Income	–	–	0	00	00	00	000	000	000	000	000	0
			00	00	00	000	000	00	0	0		0
Disease	–	–	0	0000	0000	000	00	000	00			
Rainfall	–	–	0000	0000				0	0	000	000	00

* Zeros (0) in the Table represent stones used by participants to indicate the degree of change by month. Thus, three zeros in the January column for "Light Meals" means that light meals are three times more likely that month than they are in March or April.

This calendar was constructed using leaves, stones, and symbols to identify each item, and participants then used a stick to mark the seasonal differences on the ground. The greatest stress was found to be from December to May, a period when food stocks, employment opportunities, and income are at the lowest. People cope by begging for food and eating "lighter meals". During this period, men and, to a much lesser extent, women engage in seasonal migration to bigger farms, tea estates or wherever they can find work. The highest incidence of disease, especially malaria and diarrhoea, coincides with the long rainy season from April to July.
(Reitbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998, p. 158)

- **Daily time-use analysis** indicates relative amounts of time, degrees of drudgery, etc., of activities, and sometimes seasonal variations in these. Daily activity charts are useful as a way for community members to show graphically how they spend their day. The diagrams also make it easy to compare the daily activities of different groups of people, such as women versus men, employed versus unemployed, married women versus widows.

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Daily activity chart drawn by a group of widows in Zambia
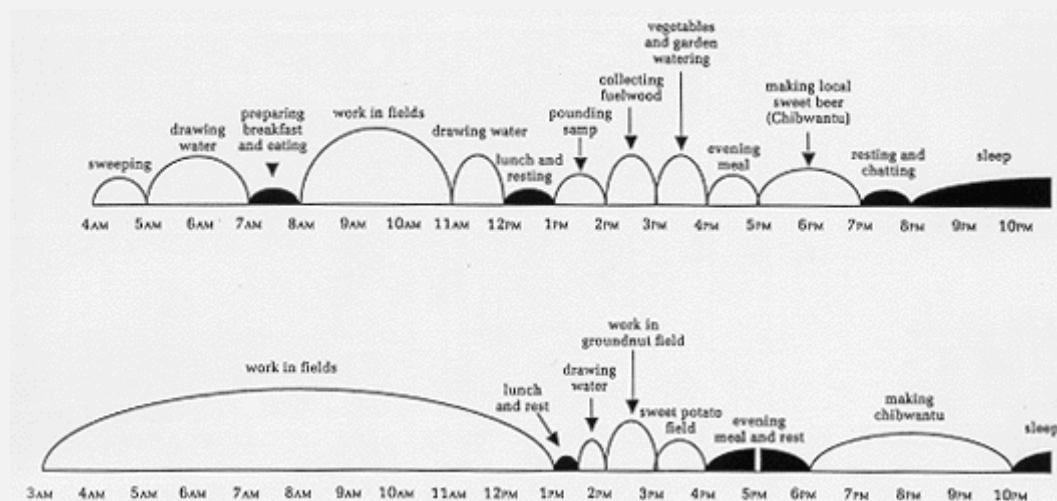
The women who drew these charts described the differences between the rainy and dry season patterns. In the dry season, the women must spend much longer getting water from the well and collecting firewood every day to stockpile it in readiness for the rainy season. When the rains come, things are much busier and the women's days are much longer because of all the work to be done in the fields.

(Reitbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998, p. 160)

4.4.3.3 Relation methods studyrelationships between various items or various aspects of the same item. This category of methods include flow diagrams, impact diagrams, system diagrams, network diagrams, well being ranking methods, Venn diagrams, force field analyses, livelihood analysis and body mapping.

- **Institutional or Venn diagramming:** Also called institutional linkage diagrams or chapatti diagrams. It illustrates the extent to which individuals, organisations, projects or services interact with each other or overlap. The importance of each, and their efforts, to the issue are evaluated. A circle represents each entity. The larger the circle the more important it is; the closer the circles are to each other the more interaction there is. Large circles represent powerful organisations, overlapping circles represent interacting organisations, and a small circle within a larger circle represents a component of that organisation. The diagrams may be created using cut out circles or by drawing. The group may combine their diagrams and discuss the differences if any. Further discussions may tackle issues such as conflict resolution or organisational capacity building. These versatile diagrams have been used for the analysis of sequences, marketing, nutrient flows on farms, migration, social contact, and the impact of interventions and trends, and for income and expenditure trees.

- This technique can be done either as a part of a group discussion, to generate a consensus view of the community's social infrastructure, or can be undertaken by individuals to illustrate the different perspectives of, for instance, men versus women, project staff versus community members, or project participants versus non-participants.

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Institutional map of a Zambian village, as seen by a focus group of 17 women

MPEWA Village, Eastern Province, 28.9.93
Drawn on ground with chalk.
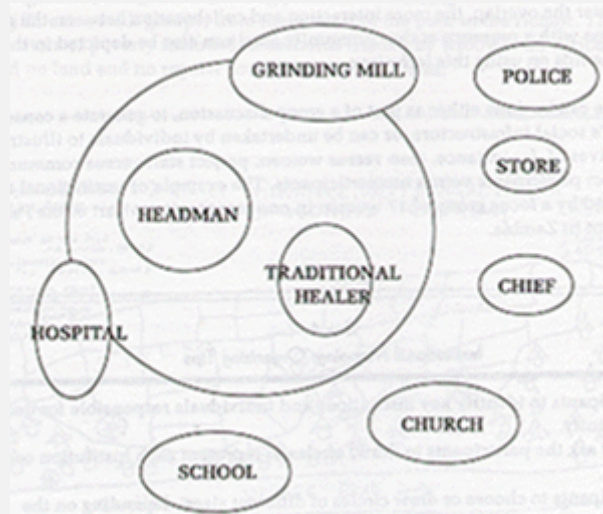
The women explained their Venn diagram, saying for example:

- The **headman** is seen as very important – he helped bring the grinding mill to the village; he settles social conflicts and mobilises the community to help the needy.

- The **traditional healer** is seen as more accessible (drawn inside the community) than the hospital (drawn outside).

- The **chief** is drawn outside the community since he does not visit.

- The **church** is placed outside the community as it "doesn't seem to be helping much anymore" though its spiritual function is still seen as important.

(Reitbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998, p. 148)

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Problem Ranking

Problem Ranking of Reasons for Girls Not Attending School, in a Village in The Gambia

Pairwise Ranking Matrix

Problems	Lack of facilities	Pregnancy	School fees	Losing traditional values	Distance from home	Early marriage
Lack of facilities		pregnancy	lack of facilities	lack of facilities	lack of facilities	early marriage
Pregnancy			pregnancy	pregnancy	pregnancy	pregnancy
School fees				school fees	school fees	school fees
Losing traditional values					distance from home	early marriage
Distance from home						early marriage
Early marriage						

| Problems	No. of times preferred
Pregnancy	5
Early marriage	3
Lack of facilities	3
School fees	3
Distance from home	1
Losing traditional values	0

(Reitbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998, p. 151)

- A more systematic technique is called **pair wise ranking**. It uses cards to represent the different problems. The facilitator shows the "problem cards" two at a time, each time asking, "Which is the bigger problem?" As the participants make the comparisons, the results are recorded in a matrix. Counting the number of times that each problem "won" over the others and arranging them in appropriate order, the facilitator obtains the final result.

- **Preference ranking** involves participants assessing different items or options, using criteria that they themselves identify. A common form of preference ranking uses a matrix with items/options along the horizontal axis and the elicited criteria along the vertical axis. This technique works well as an introductory exercise in a group discussion as it can reveal interesting differences among group members. These discrepancies can be explored later during the discussion or during subsequent interviews with individuals. Gender differences are particularly worth exploring, as men and women often have very different preferences and criteria for those preferences.

- **Wealth ranking,** or well-being ranking, involves community members identifying and analysing the different wealth groups in a community. It enables evaluators to learn about the socio economic stratification of project beneficiaries and local people's definitions and indicators of wealth/well-being. Wealth ranking has sometimes proved problematic in urban areas, where people tend to be less familiar with their neighbours than in rural settings. Furthermore, in some communities, relative wealth or poverty ranking is a very sensitive topic, and this technique may need to be conducted in a private setting to allow participants to talk freely. In some cases, the technique may have to be avoided altogether.

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Preference Ranking of Income-Generating Activities in India

During a PRA by an Indian NGO, MYRADA, a group of village women ranked their preferences for a number of different income-generating activities using a simple matrix-ranking technique. After selecting the items to be ranked, the women identified their own criteria, including the amount of time required by the activity and the level of profit possible. Pictures and symbols were used to represent the different items and criteria, and the women used a five-point scoring system to compare the different options. The outcome, shown above, reveals, for example, that brick making is one of the most profitable activities, but also requires additional labour and a lot of hard work by the women themselves. Other activities, such as selling leaves as plates, are less profitable, but are also less time-consuming and labour-intensive ways of earning cash.

(Reitbergen-McCracken & Narayan, 1998, p. 153)

- **Impact flow analysis** is an impact diagram of the effects of any activity. It helps in analysing a chain of impact of any event, activity or asset. While analysing impact flows, a primary or direct impact can be listed leading to a change of indirect or secondary impact. Once the primary impact is listed then group discussions help in identifying the secondary impact. Impact diagramming involves the illustration of impacts through drawing.

- **Analysis of difference**: This includes contrast comparisons – asking one group why another is different or does something different, and vice versa especially by gender, social group, wealth/poverty, occupation and age.

4.4.3.4 New participatory methods

- **Participatory 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 filmmaking; it is just not on such a grand 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 (Cornwall, 1997).

Participatory video is an iterative process whereby community members use the video to document innovations and ideas, or to focus on issues that affect their environment or their village. The participants attend participatory video workshops where they can review what they and others have filmed. The videos are then screened in the village in the evenings, thus ensuring that members of the wider community are involved in the process.

This local viewing of the material as the project progresses lies at the heart of the participatory video process. It achieves several positive outcomes and at the same time it opens up local communication channels, promotes dialogue and discussion, and sets in motion a dynamic exchange of ideas on ways to solve problems. It can also help to gauge trends, thus contributing to building consensus within the community. It is therefore not surprising that participatory video appears to lend itself so well to participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E). It could be argued that the participatory video methodology itself, which moves progressively from action to analysis, means that M&E is ongoing and integral to the process.

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Insight, a UK/France based organisation, has pioneered the use of participatory video as a tool to empower individuals and communities. Their experience of the use of the participatory video tool is given below.

Participatory video has been used to develop a feedback loop – community members are asked to react to short films made by other villagers, also on video. These reactions are then also screened, eliciting fresh discussions and new perspectives. In one case this process was vital for ensuring that the women were fully involved in the development of an Insight renewable energy programme. In Turkmenistan, community members are using video to document meetings. In this way, women, who traditionally do not attend such meetings, can watch the discussions in their own homes. The women then provide feedback and suggestions, also via video, and the films are played to the community in the evening.

Before any video is distributed, the edited version needs to be viewed and approved by the community who made it. This is usually a special event for the village and most of the population will turn up, since it is an opportunity for them to discuss in detail how they think the film should be used, who should see it and why, and so on. It is also a chance for us to ask what they think they have achieved, and to gauge their perceptions of the project in general. After working out three or four core questions, community members go out with a video camera and microphone, and interview groups and individuals around the village to record their responses to the final film and to the project in general. When community members interview each other, in the comfort of their own homes or backyards, their responses are always frank and relaxed.

(Lunch, 2006)

- **Participatory digital methods**: One of the dramatic trends in the turn of the millennium is the rise of network society. The civil society actors (the advocacy groups) that largely inhabit Internet space mobilise people through the digital tools, viz., e-mail, Web, cell phones, personal digital diaries or web blogs, and iPods. These digital tools, also referred to as new social media tools, promote interactivity and connectedness. They connect us to one another in *inexpensive, accessible,* and *massively scalable* ways. Civil society actors can alert the widest possible audience about injustices and inequities, e.g., about globalisation and the deficiency of democracy in matters of governance.

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Free Burma Coalition, launched in 1995 broke new ground by being the first international civil society campaign mediated entirely through the Internet. It was the largest human rights campaign in cyberspace. It is an online community of Burmese exiles and supporting activists in about 28 countries that links human rights environment and women's groups, unions, academics, politicians, students and religious groups. Through consumer boycotts, shareholder campaigns, it succeeded in persuading over 50 companies to exit Burma, including Pepsi and Texaco(Clark, 2003).

Internet as an ever-growing network of social networks will fuel social change through social media tools in the 21st century. The World Wide Web enables non-technical users to "see" everything that is going on in cyberspace and to add to it. This is a new way of working connected activism. Connected activism is catalysing efforts in social change and making them more accessible, more participatory and more effective than ever before. Allison H. Fine in her book on *Momentum: Igniting Social Change in the Connected Age has* given an example *of* how a small network came together to ignite social change through digital tools (Fine, 2006).[1]

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[1]The Free Schuylkill River Park campaign used e-mail advocacy, blogs and constituent mail to achieve its objectives.

4.5 Advantages and Challenges

Advantages

Participatory methods, both diagramming techniques and group methodologies, have the potential to bring together information more rapidly and cost effectively from a diversity of sources than quantitative or qualitative methods alone. They have a number of potential key contributions. These are elucidated as below.

- Eliciting people's own analysis of their poverty and well-being provides a deeper understanding of the dimensions of poverty other than income and consumption indicators. This has the potential for identifying key factors of chronic poverty within and between different settings.

- Understanding the complexity and diversity of livelihood strategies, including the impact of structural economic and political factors over time on people's impoverishment and ability to become less poor.

- Establishing causality by identifying barriers to participation, factors of social exclusion and assessing the social capital of different groups according to gender, age, caste, and ethnicity.

- Adaptability and flexibility of methods provide the potential for working in emergency situations and politically difficult environments, although links with community members and entry points may need to be firmly established.

- Capacity building of local people (as well as external researchers) in participatory approaches to research, advocacy and for increased participation in policy development.

- Influencing policy and practice – the in-depth and context bound nature of PR approaches can provide insights for policy and practical actions with high benefits for poor people at their own terms (often at relatively low cost).

- "Scaling up": The process of PR emphasises the linking of information from communities to broader policy dialogue with stakeholders, including, CBOs, NGOs, local and national government officers, providers, academics, trade unions, business and insurance institutions, international NGOs, donors, UN agencies.

Challenges

However, participatory methods also face a number of inherent challenges, which need to be taken into account. The degree to which participatory methods realise their potential contribution depends critically on how carefully they are used and in what context. As noted above, participatory methods are not a fixed set of mechanistic tools, but a diverse range of possible techniques, which need to be flexibly adapted to particular situations and needs. In some cases problems can be resolved through innovation in the methods themselves. Sometimes limitations can only be addressed through triangulation with other quantitative and qualitative methods. The practicalities and difficulties in applying participatory methods are listed below.

- **Raising expectations.** One of the dilemmas of researchers working intensely with disadvantaged and marginalised people to analyse their situation concerns mediating the stages between researches and supporting those communities in taking the action they have identified. Research facilitators need to express clearly the purpose of the inquiry and what role, if any, they will play in future activities. Experience has shown that people are prepared to "risk" participating and remain enthusiastic when there is honest communication about what can (and cannot) be expected as a result of the research.

- Skills and attitudes. The accessibility and simplicity of some of the techniques makes it possible to apply them mechanically without understanding their use. Successful application requires good communication, facilitation and conflict negotiation skills. Users who are sensitive to local gender and power differences will bring these dimensions into analysis and reflect them in outcomes.

- **There's no blueprint.**Thechoice and sequence of methods needs to be adapted to each situation. This requires good team working skills and has implications for the training of researchers.

- **Getting the right team**requires networking and preparation. Team building is crucial when combining local people, professionals, external researchers, government staff and decision makers.

- **Depth and spread**:There are payoffs in terms of time, cost and outcomes in deciding between detailed researches at fewer research sites and spending less time in a greater range of communities.

Summary

In this Unit we were oriented to the concept and underlying principles of participatory methods. The several streams and traditions that have directly or indirectly contributed to a convergence in participatory methods were viewed in detail. Diverse participatory methods were examined and the advantages and challenges of participatory methods were analysed.

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