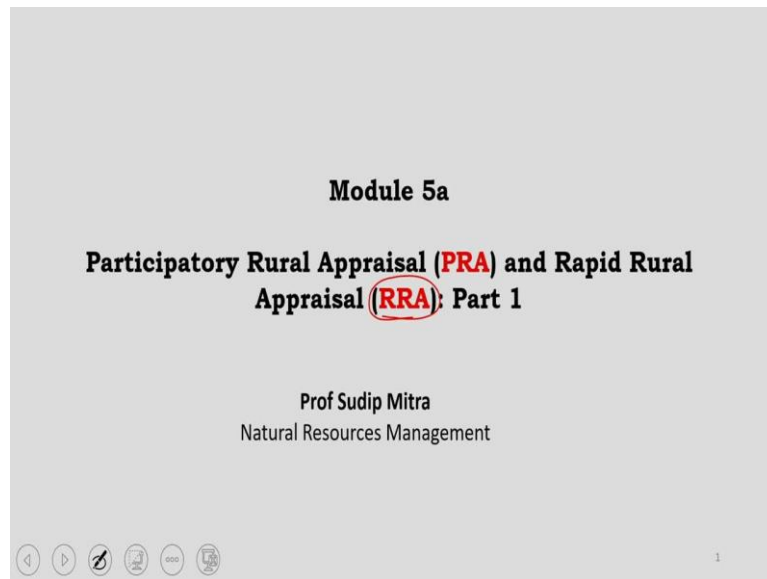**Natural Resources Management, NRM**
Professor Sudip Mitra, PhD
Centre for Disaster Management & Research (CDMR)
Head, School of Agro & Rural Technology (SART)
Discipline - Agriculture Engineering
Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, Assam, India
Module - 02
Lecture - 11
Participatory Rural Appraisal & Rapid Rural Appraisal (Part 1)

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Welcome back to the next module 5a, in this module, we will discuss about a very important aspect which will help you to actually measure the different aspects associated with natural resources management and this is participatory Rural Appraisal. In short, we call it PRA and another one is Rapid Rural Appraisal in short we call RRA. Now PRA and RRA are 2 very important tools that most of the professionals in the field of natural resources management use.
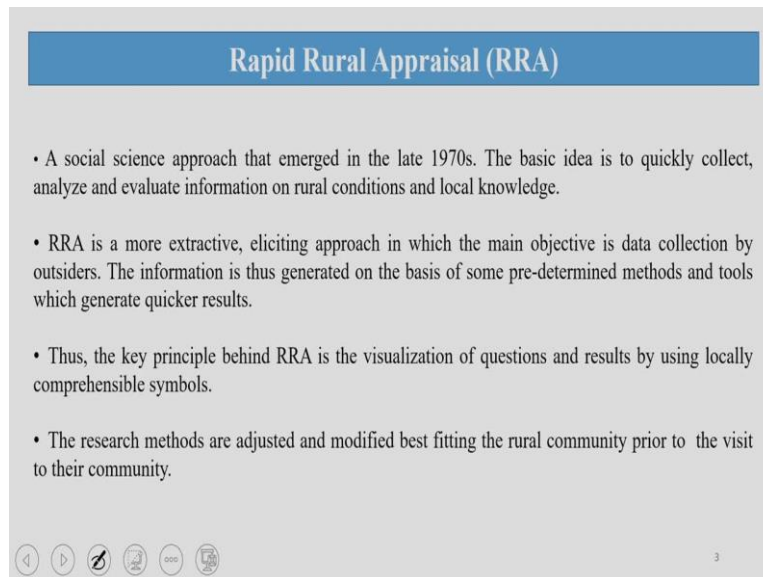
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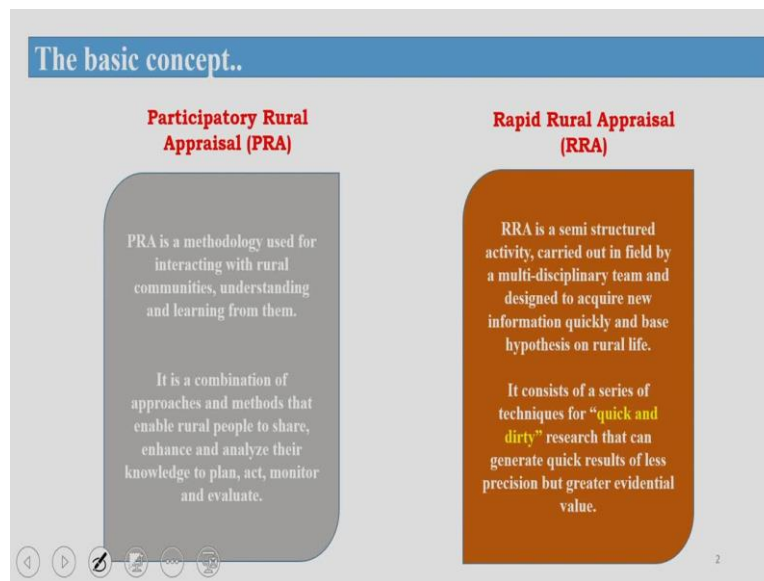
So, before we get into detail of these 2 very important tools that are used for measuring natural resource base, let us try to understand the basic concept of these 2 tools participatory Rural Appraisal, PRA, it is a methodology which is used for interacting with rural communities understanding and learning from them, it is more like an end tool where community participate with experts.

So, it is a combination of approaches and methods that enable the rural people to share, to enhance and analyze their knowledge to plan, act, monitor and also to evaluate the natural resources whereas, Rapid Rural Appraisal or RRA is a semi structured activity, where the role of community or rural people tribal people are relatively less.

This is largely carried out by a multidisciplinary expert team and designed to acquire new information in a very quick manner in a short period of time. So, it consists of a series of techniques for quick and dirty research that can generate quick results of less precision, but greater evidential value. So, these 2 RRA and PRA, as you understand, they are characteristically very different.

In case of PRA, the community is involved, it is more like a people-oriented tool for measuring evaluating natural resources whereas RRA fits with a different purpose to quickly get some information, suppose government or some agency needs an information within a week. So, that means they want a kind of overall information and idea. So, in that kind of situation, RRA or Rapid Rural Appraisal will be the correct tool to use.

Rapid Rural Appraisal has been started in 1970 largely by social science people, the basic idea, as I said was to collect, analyze and evaluate very quickly about something in the ecosystem. RRA is a more kind of extractive or eliciting approach in which the main idea is data collection by outsiders, when I say outsiders means there will not be people from that area where from you are getting the information.

So, as I said that a group of expert people will just go there, look at that, it is kind of a helicopter type of approach. So, the information in this way actually generated on the basis of some kind of predetermined methods or questions or tools or kind of a list of items that you just give tick marks like that.

So, the key principle behind this rapid Rural Appraisal is kind of a visualization of the questions and results by using some short brief questions or symbols about certain activity or resources. So, the scope for very detailed analysis, detailed knowledge about your resources from an area is not possible in case of RRA. The research methods are adjusted modifies, in a manner that you can get the information about an area or an ecosystem of community in a very quick manner.

So, I would say that RRA could be a good way to have an idea about a place. So, before you go for PRA, which is more detailed, and more people-oriented community will be involved and definitely the expenditure will be much higher, I would say that a RRA study prior to PRA would be good, because you can decide then in case of PRA, how you should go ahead and approach.

In case of RR a few methods which are actually often followed by people, you try to review the secondary sources of data like photographs, aerial observations, direct observations, foot transects, interviews with key informants or group interviews, you can go for mapping, diagramming, local histories, case studies, then ranking, scoring, timeline, short sample questionnaires at the end of this process, and finally, a rapid report writing in the field.

So, what are the different uses of this RRA now? There are few stages of this RRA that are being carried out. So, the pre-project before you start the project; so, you will conduct several RRA in an area that is new to the agency and a sense of the range of issues that need to be addressed is normally attend and provide or better inform on the context of socio-economic,

political, environment etcetera, where that particular project for which you are going into the field will be carried out.

So, this pre-project appraisal is very important. Once your pre-project appraisal is over, then you go for project design. In this project design phase, you ensure that the project is appropriate to the realities in the area where it will be working and that realities' information will come from your pre-project information or pre-project outcome.

Third; early project intervention. Rapid Rural Appraisal early in the project can help the project leaders or the people to further refine their objectives or modify or re-channelizing in such a way that you can actually get your objective fulfilled. In some cases, these RRA will logically lead to PRA which is a more detailed analysis that draw the communities more deeply into these planning processes.

Next mid project level kind of appraisal as the project gets underway, the staff which are involved in that project may choose few members of the communities in which they go to regularly visit and interact with them. So, they will talk with, interact with each other and then try to assess the effectiveness of this approach that they are following in this particular project. And that will enable a mid-level corrections means in between the project you will have a chance of corrections also looking at the we call it mid-course correction looking at the way the project is moving.

So, finally, once you have brought in some kind of corrections, then finally at the end, you come out with evaluation of various activities. And then you study a kind of SWOT analysis of the entire project we call his strength, weakness, threat and opportunity test and then you finally compile a report and there is the end of this exercise or appraisal, which we call Rapid Rural Appraisal.

The concept of Rapid Rural Appraisal as I said, that is to get a kind of a firsthand information about an area and the people associated with that area. So, once RRA is done, as I said that it actually leads to the more detailed analysis, which we call as PRA or Participatory Rural Appraisal. The concept of PRA was first developed in Kenya in 1980s in close collaborations with non-government organization operating at the very grass root level. It is a method by researcher, who wants to plan their work in close proximity of people, community. Here, you actually work with the people for their own benefit.

So, that approach is a very human approach. In case of PRA, it not only improves the researcher's knowledge, their information regarding certain issue of the community, but it also improves the interaction and the exchange of ideas between the rural communities and the researchers. So this approach, PRA is best suitable for people like us, all of you, when we go for some research in the field. So, the USP of PRA is that it allows joint planning of project or any experiment with equal emphasis on researcher and local communities.

So, the participation of rural communities in planning and executing of a research or of a project naturally will tend to increase the relevance of those results and there is a high chance that the outcome will be accepted and outcome will be very good because you have started the entire work project along with the people for whom you are working. I t is especially useful when a project or a research work is actually targeted to help resource poor farmers, farmers who are actually in an area where they have no access to various important natural resources either for geographical region or for financial region or for any other social regions.

So, in that kind of case, under severe economic or ecological residents, PRA and the results or outcome a PRA is very helpful for preparing a very effective and useful policy.

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Now, let us look at how PRA actually works. The word participation in PRA is actually used in three contexts, what are those three contexts? Number one, simply cosmetic level, whatever is proposed appears good. Donor agencies and governments require participatory approaches they need they always feel happy if you have consultants, if you have good experts and if you have good managers, who can actually deal with the people, the community in a more effective manner.

Second, a co-opting practice; it is to mobilize labor and reduce the costs. Here communities contribute their time, their efforts to self-help projects with some outside assistance, how because as I said, that PRA starts along with people. So, here suppose you are going for in a developing and water shed in a participatory manner, then you can actually invite the community and you can request them that this is for you this pond is being created for you. So, let us join and you put your effort and try to build this pond. So, in that case, they will provide free labor because they understand this pond is going to stay with their community, it is not just going out from their community. So, a sense of ownership is instilled through PRA approach.

Number 3, an empowering process; PRA enables local people to do their own analysis, to take the command in their hand to gain more confidence and finally to make their own decisions. That is what actually all of us want, we want to make those rural people who are

staying in a naturally endowed place, but they do not know how to actually utilize the maximum for their benefit and also how to actually reserve or conserve for their future generation. So, if PRA approach is properly done, it allows the local people to gain the confidence to take some decisions on their own.

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And, PRA is also a bottom up approach. If you look at the bottom up paradigm in PRA, basically it implies that the transfer of power from the upper side people like institutions, disciplines which have been dominant mostly to the lower people like rural people, institution disciplines which have been subordinate in most of the time. So, the inception is greatly dependent on the recognition of the fact that many development strategies have failed in our country or elsewhere, in an attempt to impose something from the top.

So, project or any initiative, if it comes from the top people, there is a high chance of failure. In case of PRA, there is a shift in that so it works on a bottom up approach philosophy. So, it is a shift from data collection to data sharing and empowerment. In case of RRA this kind of sharing or empowerment does not take place. RRA is like we going into a village, we need some information, come back, analyze and submit suppose some report to the government for policy making; quick, but here you empower the people. It is a shift from certain things to people, it is also shift from extractive kind of survey questionnaires to experience shared by the local people, and you have the time to listen to the local people to understand their need to understand their problem through dialogue.

And if this is the way the management takes place, along with people, naturally community or people will have a kind of a sense of ownership on the projects or on the initiative that actually you plan to carry out for their benefit. So, the sense of ownership is generated through a good PRA, which is missing in case of RRA.

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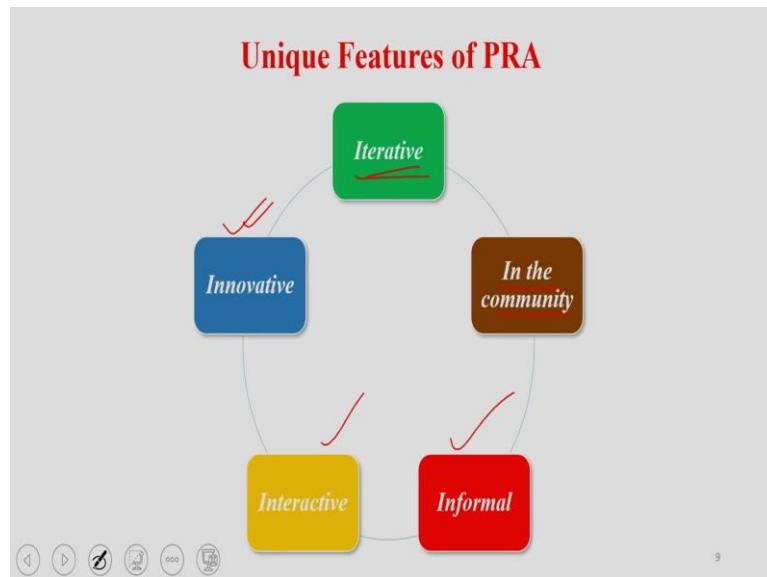
Now, let us look at the various unique features of PRA. PRA is iterative in nature, it involves community people; it is informal in nature, because you meet people things happen through dialogue; interaction; obviously, it is very much interactive and it is also innovative in nature. So, iterative, community participation, in formal, interactive and innovative these are few unique features of Participatory Rural Appraisal.

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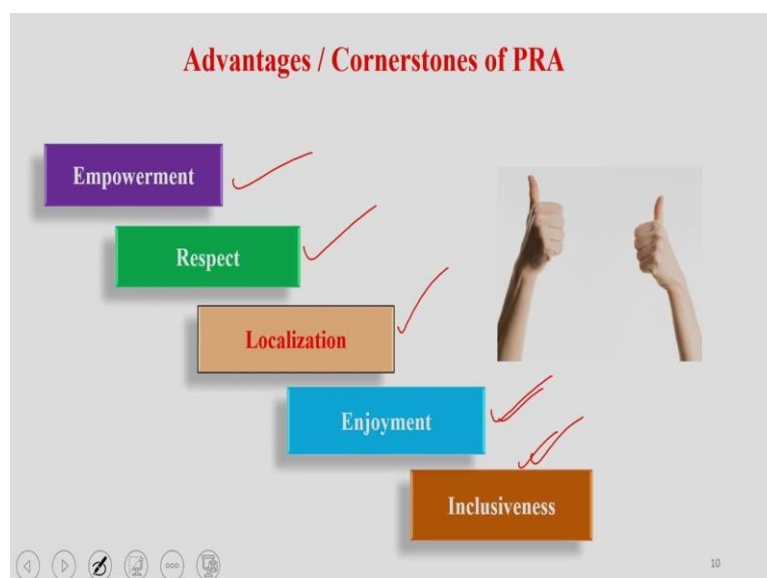
Now, what are the advantages of PRA? PRA, it empowers people, it generates a certain amount of self-respect among the people community. A localization effect also is generated; enjoyment because when you work when people work as a group as a community, certainly there will be a lot of fun. So, enjoyment is there and finally, inclusiveness there is a sense of inclusiveness in PRA where you bring in men, women community everyone together to work for their own village or for their own area.

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Now, when everything is good, I must also share with you some concerns or disadvantages of PRA. The term PRA itself is a difficulty; it is at times not rural and not participatory as well. There are risks of hijacking by expert, formalism, disappointment and threats also can takes place. The major shortcomings of PRA are that it is very difficult to find the right team and right set of questions. Right team, when I call that right composition of a team, in a PRA team, there has to be one woman at least, more is better. Because when you interact with people in various remote places, it has been seen that in most of the cases, if your team is composed of only men, then the women farmers or community members will not come forward so not only to make your team inclusive in nature, but also for the benefit of success of the project or the PRA exercise, you must have women also into your team.

Focusing on the wrong target individual and vested interest on both sides is a risk, in case of PRA, sometimes this could happen. Then some of the team members may not have that much tenacity or patience to listen and then move very slowly. So, there will be a chance that some of the team member might be too quick or focusing on part of the problem and instead of

getting the full picture, they are happy with just, few answers or feedback on a particular issue or problem. That is not the real objective of the PRA exercise.

There is a chance of getting misled by myths and gossip, as we know that in rural areas, there are a lot of gossips around in the year. So, you have to be a little bit careful about those myths and gossips. Lack of people and social skills can at times lead to some kind of unprofessionalism, I think that you have to smartly handle that because you cannot just ask someone that why you were late by 10 minutes or so or Okay! Stop talking all those unwanted things; rather you have to sometime allow them to speak because they are not coming there with a purpose in mind; it is your job to take them into the process in such a way that they feel comfortable with to share the information and whatever they have in an honest manner.

Sometimes it also happens in case of PRA assuming that a community is homogeneous, a very important point and we overlook the social differences that sometime actually leads to intervention benefitting only a few. So, we must be careful about that. We generally considered that okay fine whoever 30 people are here in my PRA exercise all are same. If we do that, yes, it is easy for me to carry out the exercise further, but that is not the case in reality. So, these assumptions of thinking about the community as homogeneous are dangerous.

There is also resistance to allow local communities to determine the research agenda and giving them professional recognition which sometime create some kind of misunderstanding among the people the team that we are going to carry out the project and also the community. So, these are few points or concerns that one has to take care of, when we go for PR exercise in any area, all right.
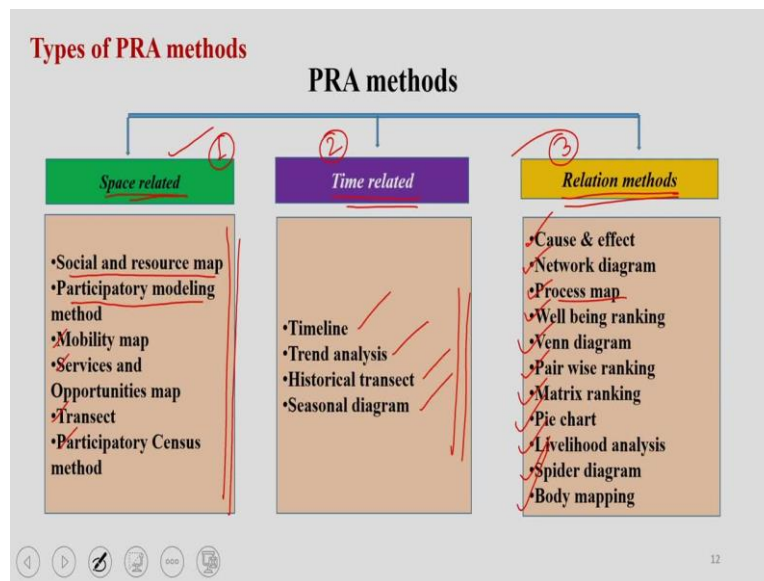
Now, types of PRA methods as I said that it is a method or tool where people are involved. Now, three type of PRA methods we have and these three are; one is space related means location, second is time and third is relational methods.

In case of space related method, we generate social resource map, participatory modeling method, mobility map, services and opportunities map, transit map, participatory sensors methods. So, these are the sets of methods that are used in case of space related type of PRA method.

In case of time related PRA method timeline, we go for trend analysis, historical transect and seasonal diagram. So, these all are very, very methodical and it actually gives you a lot of clarity about the issues involved in an area and what kind of intervention or policies that could be formulated.

So, each one of these tool are very important. Finally, the relation type methods; very sensitive cause and effect of any event or any activity network diagram, process map, anything any process that you are carrying out there has to be mapped out well-being ranking that is a methodology that we carry out. Venn diagram, pair wise ranking these all I will be discussing in future lectures, matrix ranking, we can have pie chart, livelihood analysis, spider diagram and body mapping. So, these are the various kinds of tools that we have under these three different types of PRA method is a huge thing PRA method and if you learn this PRA and RRA in a very professional manner the opportunity in this field is really enormous.

So, as I say that in under types of PRA methods, there are different aspects that we discussed. If you see the relational methods under that various kind of activities are being carried out in a full-fledged PRA exercise. So, seasonal calendar, we largely carry out to examine the seasonal patterns of crop-based diseases, rainfall activities in any household or in a village. So, in a season, how different activities come in, if it is clearly mentioned somewhere that definitely would allow a good way of planning of any activity in that particular area is not it.

So next Venn diagram, Venn diagramming it reveals the importance and the relevance of involvement of local and external institutions in addressing various kinds of problems, issues that exist in a particular area. It could be agricultural, it could be horticultural, it could be

fishery, any kind of initiative or program. So, Venn diagram basically reveals the importance of local and external institutions.

Timelines and trends are very important. It actually enable the analysis for change over time such as a crop, crop varieties often in some crop varieties takes 90 days some crop varieties grows in winter, some grows in summer like that. So, timeline and trend is important to observe evaluate those activities. Extent of soil erosion; suppose in a particular trend is followed or is observed then that will help you to decide the proper corrective measure.

Next matrix scoring; it helps us to examine the people's own criteria for choosing among different sets of options. Suppose, there are different sets of crop varieties available. matrix scoring will help to identify the most wanted one or most suitable one, same for soil fertility measures, measures for irrigations. So, matrix scoring basically, it allows you to find out the most suitable or most important one and that helps the community also to choose the right one.

Next resource and agro ecological zone mapping, mapping areas with similar characters in terms of soil type, crops grown, land access tenure so, resource and agro ecological zone mapping help you to understand the distributions of different characteristics in terms of different natural resources in a particular area.

Next, causal and impact diagramming; very important, this particular type of diagram it shows the flow causal relationships and other such connections such as impact of irrigation on soil erosion or impact of chemical pesticides on insects. So, these causal and impact diagramming also help basically to identify some reason or causes a problem, the nature of problem. So, that obviously will allow you to find out a right path to regulate that.

Then next comes farm planning and flow diagramming; these individual map farm plots and their location in relation to each other. Farm mapping will show the relationship between a farm plots and their location. It also helps community to examine different kinds of management practices that are followed in that particular area according to different kinds of cropping practices, different kinds of rotation, different type of nutrient management practices, basically, the farm mapping will allow someone to see that in this area, this kind of crop grown, this kind of fertilizer use, these kinds of nutrients are being applied. So, if that picture is clear through a good PR exercise, it will help, suppose a district commissioners or a government to decide and to plan a corrective measure on that.

Transect walks is to learn about the locality that someone is working on, it helps you to know that different types of infrastructure, crops, trees, ponds, any resources that are available there. abasically a transect walk when you mean suppose this is a field plot, a transect walk can be from one direction to the other. So, it could be from north to south and then go corner diagonally there, then again come towards south, then diagonally you can go towards west, from west to east, again, diagonally come back to West. So, you can basically get a detailed information through transect walk of any area. So, that transect walk often also being carried out, along with community, and that actually allows you to make a rapport with your community that for whom or with whom you are going to work on, that is a very good way to establish a friendly relation with the community where actually we are going to work on.

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Comparison between PRA and RRA

PRA and RRA in terms of research methods:

• Both these methods fall in the qualitative side of the research spectrum. They are not suited to gathering statistics and precise numerical information.

• They best gather information about orders of magnitude (e.g. "The vast majority of the population does x" rather than "83% of the population does x") and trends (e.g. "While only a small proportion of the population grows x, it is important to realize that this number is increasing.)

• The qualitative information that helps us understand the reasons why the vast majority behaves in a given way or what is causing something to change in a certain direction.

PRA and RRA in terms of participatory methods:

• On the participatory dimension, both RRA and PRA can be applied in ways that are more or less participatory.

• PRAs in which community members take full control of the process are at one extreme of the participatory continuum.

• In RRAs, there is generally little expectation that the community will be in charge of the process but they too may be carried out in a way that is more or less participatory depending on how the study is set up, the information is used, etc.

Now, competition between PRA and RRA by now already you might have understood the difference between these 2. PRA and RRA in terms of research methods, both these methods fall in the qualitative side of the research area, they are not suited for gathering statistics or analysts calculation, a precise numerical measurement, they help us to gather information about some order of magnitude.

Trends so, kind of timeline, the qualitative information which we can get from these kinds of tools help us to understand the reason why a certain kind of phenomena is happening in certain area, what are the reasons for that, how to address those issues. So, that kind of picture that you get through this kind of exercise.

PRA or RRA in terms of participatory method; if you see PRA is having higher participatory then RRA on this dimension PRA can be applied in ways that are more or less detail in analysis detailed in characteristics.

So, PRAs in which community members get involved into PRA that actually will take the control of the entire exercise you give a lot of freedom to the community in case of PRA but in case of RRA the control is more with the people experts going into an area not with the community. In case of RRA there is generally little expectation that the community will be in charge of the process. But they can also sometime give some information, but that is not as detailed level as PRA, the involvement of people and community in PRA is very much important for a PRA to get successful.

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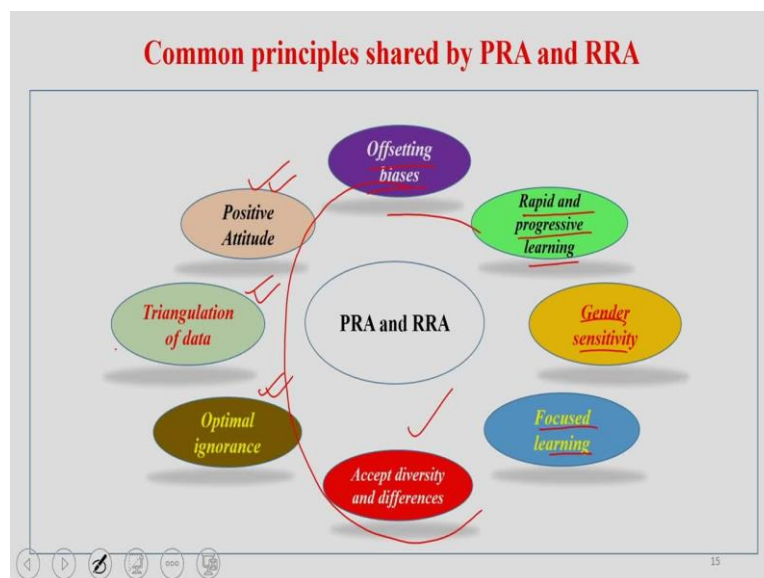
So, these are little bit of comparisons of differences, but the commonality of principle that is shared by PRA an RRA if you look at; offsetting the biases both are almost same, follow the same principle, rapid and progressive learning, gender sensitivity, focused learning, accept diversity and differences of a community optimal ignorance is another thing that you have to consider in both the cases, triangulation of data, we will discuss about triangulation of data and others aspect in detail in the following lectures positive attitude. So, these are largely the common principles that are for being followed in both PRA and RRA.

Comparison between PRA and RRA

RRA		PRA
Inform project design, gather baseline information, monitor and evaluate	*Purpose*	Capacity building for improved decision making at community level, situational analysis, planning and monitoring by community
Multi-disciplinary team of CRS staff and specialists	*Team*	Team composed of villagers, sometimes facilitated by CRS staff person, that works with larger community
Limited number of representative sites	*Sites*	Communities where project activities will take place
Discrete studies, usually lasting 5-7 days	*Time Period*	Ongoing throughout the life of project. Usually begins with training and initial situational analysis (appx 10 days) leading to Community Action Plan
The range of tools and techniques presented below (and others as appropriate)	*Tools and Techniques*	The range of tools and techniques presented below (and others as appropriate)
Comprehensive, well written report that captures the depth and complexity of information obtained in the study	*Documentation*	Village Log Book with notes of principal findings, activities, and Community Action Plan

Now, these slides quickly will give you a kind of a snapshot of the differences between PRA and RRA. If you look at from the purpose point of view, RRA actually it informs project design, gather baseline information, monitor and evaluate. PRA tries to build the capacity, improve decision making capacity community then it is monitored by community.

In case of team level if you see RRA largely multidisciplinary team of experts and specialists, whereas, in case of PRA, it is largely villagers sometimes expert persons are also their but they work with the community.

In case of sites limited number of representative sites is taken in case of RRA but in case of PRA larger numbers of sites are being taken.

RRA is discrete; studies usually last 5 to 7 days we are talking about time period required, but in case of PRA, it is a long duration study it takes much larger time period than RRA.

From Tools and techniques point of view, the range of tools and techniques are more or less well-structured kind of things are not used in case of RRA, it is mostly semi-structured as I discussed earlier. The purpose is quick and brief information to collect in case of RRA. Range of tools and techniques in case of PRA are largely used for detailed analysis.

So, we discussed also the different type of methods and there we discussed about if you see that what are the different tools that we use in case of this analysis, but overall when you come to documentation aspects also, you will find that in case of RRA well written report, which captures mostly the depth of complexity of the information obtained into brief study.

In case of PRA it is a very detailed report you will find village logbooks, notes, principal findings activities, you will also get community action plan in case of PRA.

So, these two naturally they are very different. To make the long story short I can say that RRA is a very brief and quick way of knowing an area, collect information. PRA is detail information to know about area, its people it is a process with the people by the people and for the people. So, more human oriented approach is followed in case of PRA. So, friends, I stop here and I look forward to the next lecture. And we will continue with a little bit more about different aspects of PRA and RRA. Thank you very much.