



# Participatory Rural Appraisal: A Tool for Inclusive Growth and Participatory Development A Case Study of Village *Marale*, MS, INDIA

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## Abstract

PRA is defined as a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, enhance, and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan, and to act. The purpose of this paper is to provide practitioners with application-oriented information on how PRA tools were utilized to help communities take ownership through group analysis, planning, and action, with the added benefit of improving cooperative efforts between outsiders and insiders. PRA technique like mappings, group meetings, village assembly, problem priority chart and people initiated action plan, seasonal calendars, trend and change analysis, survey and transect walk were applied in the said village. In this present study, 15 student social workers with one fieldwork supervisor conducted the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) camp of 10 day (3days training and 7 days camp) in the said village. After this PRA the student social workers were again placed in the same village to take follow up of planned task. This study also attempts to share with the participants about the significance of PRA in participatory rural development.

**Keywords:** Participatory rural appraisal, participatory rural development and social work intervention.

## Introduction

Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) has been defined as a 'family of participatory approaches and methods which emphasize *local* knowledge and enable local people to do their *own* appraisal, analysis and planning. PRA uses group animation and exercises to facilitate information sharing, analysis and action among stakeholders<sup>1</sup>.'

PRA is intended to enable local communities to conduct their own analysis and to plan and take action. PRA involves project staff learning together with villagers about the village. The aim of PRA is to help strengthen the capacity of villagers to plan, make decisions, and to take action towards improving their own situation<sup>2</sup>.

PRA is a methodology of learning rural life and their environment from the rural people. It requires researchers / field workers to act as facilitators to help local people conduct their own analysis, plan and take action accordingly. It is based on the principle that local people are creative and capable and can do their own investigations, analysis, and planning<sup>3</sup>.

**PRA and Micro Planning:** The plan for the smallest unit of administration (*Panchayat* in India) is called a micro plan. In this method the *Gram Sabha* (Village Council) members of each ward plan for their won ward. These ward level plans may be called peoples plan. These people's plans are put together to make a *panchayat* level plan and are called micro plan. Micro planning encourages bottom-up planning process and people are motivated in planning<sup>4</sup>.

**Objectives of the paper:** i. To understand Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as a tool of participatory rural development. ii. To discuss a case study of village *Marale* in Kolhapur district, Maharashtra. iii. To discuss about how PRA can be useful for micro planning and participatory policy making at grass route level.

## Methodology

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is considered one of the popular and effective approaches to gather information in rural areas. PRA is a methodology of learning rural life and their environment from the rural people. In the present study, PRA tools and techniques were used to collect the information of this village and its problems from villagers by conducting various activities like, mappings, group meetings, village assembly, problem priority chart and people initiated action plan, seasonal calendars, trend and change analysis, survey and transect walk etc. 15 student social workers with one fieldwork supervisor conducted the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) camp of 10 day (3 days training and 7 days camp) in the said village. The present study is a short report of this program.

**A Case Study of Village Marale, Maharashtra: Profile of village Marale:** The village Marale is situated in the green and beautiful mountainous area in Taluka-Shahuwadi, Dist-Kolhapur, Maharashtra. This village is located besides the river Barki. It is 65 km away from Kolhapur city (Maharashtra). Marale village group gram panchayat covers another two villages namely Yelewadi and Kante. According to survey conducted in Marale village by Shivaji University, Kolhapur,

Maharashtra (December 2012) the total population of village is 743 (male 388, female 355). Total 65 families are from below poverty line. 222 people are illiterate and main occupation of villagers is farming.

Participatory rural Appraisal and village micro planning was carried out by the student social workers with their field work supervisor. Total 6 days were spent in the above said village and applied the PRA tools as discussed below;

**Mapping:** Village map, resource map and health map were prepared by villagers to understand the structure, resources and health related issues in the village.

**Transect Walk:** The objectives of this activity was to understand the farming pattern of this village and various issues.

**Visiting:** to village health sub centre, Anganwadi workers, ASHA, Gram panchayat, School, Cooperative organizations and other government institutions to get know information about village current problems and programs to deal with them.

**Meetings:** i. Youth meeting, ii. Old age meeting, iii. Farmers meeting, iv. Dalit community meeting, v. Adolescent boys/girls meeting, vi. Women self-help group meeting. All these meetings were carried out to understand these groups problems and finding out solution by them through discussion.

**Survey:** was carried out to understand the characteristics, living condition, problems and resources available in the village.

**Voluntary labor:** to aware people about the importance of labor in our life i.e. planting trees, sanitation or soak pit.

**Trend and historical diagram:** to understand the current trends in the village and changes in life style of villagers.

**Seasonal Calendar:** to understand the changes in villagers' livelihood status over the year and to show the seasonality of agricultural and non agricultural workload, food availability, human diseases, gender-specific income and expenditure, water, forage, credit and holidays this activity helped.

**Street plays:** on various current village issues were conducted like; child marriage, addiction and sanitation.

**Problem Priority Chart:** the following issues were find out; addiction, Anganwadi, water supply, library, computer facility, gym and health facilities.

**People's action plan:** to overcome on the problems identifies through problem priority chart some community people took initiative and did planning with time bound.

With the help of above techniques especially; problem priority chart the problems in the village were assessed. These issues are as following: Alcoholism, Migration of youth for employment,

Lack of women participation, School dropout, early marriages, Passive Self Help Groups, Traditional farming techniques, Health issues, Blind beliefs

### Post PRA Intervention

After this PRA; some student social workers were placed in this village to deal with village problems which were identified during PRA with the help of active involvement of village people.

**Alcoholism:** The problem of alcoholism was one of the most chronic problems of this village. Villagers used to spend their money on drinking alcohol and it was affecting their family relationships and economy. Once all women came together and passed a contract of 'Ban on liquor/alcohol' in the village during village assembly. Polling method was used and this contract was passed democratically. Student social workers facilitated and encouraged village women to solve this problem of alcoholism by applying social action method.

**Women empowerment:** Gender sensitive community organization practice and Feminist social work are expected to be practiced by student social workers. Empowerment is a process of change by which individuals or groups gain power and ability to take control over their lives. It involves access to resources, resulting into increased participation in decision-making and bargaining power and increased control over benefits, resources and own life, increased self-confidence, self-esteem and self-respect, increased well-being<sup>5</sup>. There are five dimensions of empowerment: political, social, economic, cultural and health. National policy on women emphasize on women empowerment and gender equality. It is an area to be targeted by student social worker while placed in villages for field work.

First time in the history of the village women village assembly was organized in village *Marale* to deal with problems of women. The participation of women for this assembly was remarkable. Politically women came together to discuss on the issue of alcoholism in the village. A contract of ban on liquor was passed by all villagers with the initiation of women.

Before social work intervention self-help groups were suffering from number of problems i.e. most of the SHGs were closed, lack of awareness about auditing, inappropriate loan distribution, absence of records and lack of will power and confidence among women to run SHGs etc. Women were encouraged with the help of fieldwork activities. Women were motivated to restart these SHGs and run properly.

To increase women participation various cultural activities were carried out i.e. competition and festival celebrations. Women meetings were conducted to aware them about health and problems of drop out children.

**School Social Work:** In this village one primary school from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> standard is running. Various activities in the school were carried out like; parents meeting, competitions, games, songs, polio rally, home visits to drop out children and save my hobbies etc.

**Youth Centered Social Work:** Youth group meetings were conducted to get registered and attach to *Neharu Yuva Kendra*. Cultural programs were organized and tried to organize the community. Career guidance program was organized.

**Social Work with Minorities:** Student social workers should apply the anti-oppressive approach to work with marginalized and deprived communities in villages. The caste system is always stronger in rural than urban areas. In Dalit community group meetings were carried out to understand their issues and imparted education about various government programs for minorities such as; scholarships.

**Social work with Farmers:** Farming is the backbone of rural economy; documentaries on modern farming techniques were shown to farmers like modern farming techniques, sugar cane farming, animal husbandry etc. to impart education and awareness among them.

**Other activities:** Home visits were done to educate people about various government programs. In this doing, necessary documents were collected. Street plays on various issues like child marriages and alcoholism were presented.

## Conclusion

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a process that empowers local people to change their own condition and situation. A PRA field exercise is not only for information and idea generation but it is about analysis and learning by local people. It is about building the process of participation of discussion and communication and conflict resolution. Governmental efforts for development all over the world are proving insufficient. Local communities are on a point where many of the changes yet will have to start. RRA can help to generate relevant information more quickly to help in making wiser decisions where each one can contribute to the solutions. PRA can help to enable local analysis and planning, within and by communities, where much is possible even without seeking outside resources.

Neither approach can nor should do everything, but both can make a meaningful contribution<sup>5</sup>. Thus, PRA can be seen as participatory policymaking, planning and development process. Participatory Rural Appraisal and associated participatory methodologies could be used to aid decentralizing programs. Government to implement and adopt policy of participatory techniques for development and decentralization reforms. All decentralizing programs need to be accompanied with a participatory methodology.

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