

2023

Training Programme on Participatory Rural Appraisal



Department of Social Work- PG St. Edmund's College, Shillong

Contents

A. Introduction	2
Inaugural Function	2
B. Technical Sessions	
Technical Session 1	3
Technical Session 2	5
Technical Session 3	
Technical Session 4	
Technical Session 5	
C. Conclusion and Feedback	
Annexure	
Annexure 1: Press Release	
Annexure 2: Event Poster	
Annexure 3: List of Participants	

A. Introduction

The Department of Social Work-PG, St. Edmund's College, Shillong organized a twoday training programme on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) for MSW students of William Carey University on May 10th and 11th, 2023. The faculty members of the Department of Social Work-PG, St. Edmund's College were the resource persons for the training.

As part of the training, the students were introduced to the concept of PRA and discussed methods and tools of PRA while engaging with the community. They were also involved in conducting practice sessions in order to help them to apply the techniques they had learned. With this training, the department played a significant role in ensuring greater participation in development activities.

Inaugural Function

The inaugural function for the Training Programme on PRA marked the start of the programme. The welcome address during the program was delivered by Dr. Rituparna Rajendra, Head of the Department of Social Work-PG, followed by a prayer for God's blessings and guidance throughout the program by Dr. Baljuda War Nongbri, Dean of St. Edmund's College.



Following the invocation of the program, Dr. Br. Simon Coelho, Principal In Charge, made a brief address encouraging participants to work together to empower the community, indicating the beginning of a partnership in this community empowerment initiative by the very fact that two higher educational institutions collaborated for this training program. Dr. K P Pallavi Malhan, Vice Principal (Academics) made a speech following his inspirational speech. In her speech Dr. Malhan highlighted that true democracy takes place when the right people with appropriate skills are at work.



B. Technical Sessions

Technical Session 1

Topic: Concept of Participatory Rural Appraisal and tools such as Transect Walk, Social Map, Venn Diagram, Seasonal Calendar, Resource Mapping

Resource Person:Mr. Martius Rynjah

After the inaugural session, the technical session for the two days Training Programme on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was taken by Mr. Martius Rynjah, Assistant Professor Department of Social Work-PG, St. Edmund's College. The topics covered in the first session of the training programme were concepts of PRA, origin and evolution of participatory approaches and tools of PRA. The initial part of the session was focused on understanding the underlying concepts and philosophy of PRA as a tool for rural engagement. It also facilitated in understanding the importance of participatory methods as an integrated component in modern development practices. The session also emphasized on the importance and origin of participatory approaches prior to the conception of PRA as a tool for rural engagement and knowledge gathering.

The resource person also discussed on the aspect of why PRA is considered over other participatory approaches while working with rural community. Further discussion also included on the features and principles that are the core components in the practice of PRA which would guide practitioners with ethical standards in the process of conducting PRA. The latter part of the session was focused on the various tools of PRA. During this session the resource person highlighted the different tools that are commonly used in PRA practices such as; transect walk, social map, venn diagram, seasonal calendar, resource mapping. The PRA tools that were discussed in this part of the session were transect walk and social mapping.



Transect walk is an observatory walk through the residential area of a village.During the transect walk, the team members are guided throughout the village by members of the village. The purpose or objective of the transect walk is to have direct observation of the resources of various types, infrastructures, human settlements, and institutions, interact with people based on the observations. On the other hand, transect walk contributes towards rapport building with the community members.

The next PRA tool following the discussion on transect walk was social mapping. Social mapping is a map that is drawn by the residents demarcating the boundaries of the village and showing the important infrastructures, social structures, forms of social institutions (formal and informal), housing patterns and settlements, public amenities, roads, etc., that are present in the community. Social mapping will provide the practitioner with valuable information for the analysis of the demographic profile of the community, the presence of the various forms of institutions and its role, the distribution pattern of human settlement and the presence of any form of stratification, and in understanding the accessibility of the community to important resources and its benefits for the community. The technical sessions were followed by practical sessions on social mapping which was undertaken by the participants of the training programme under the supervision of the resource person and other faculty members.

Technical Session 2

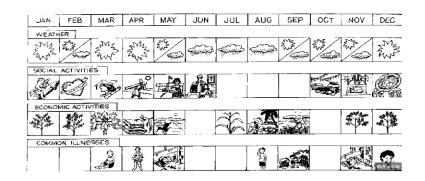
Topic: PRA tools like Seasonal Calendar, Venn Diagram and Income & Expenditure Matrix

Resource Person: Mr. George Kerry Sunn

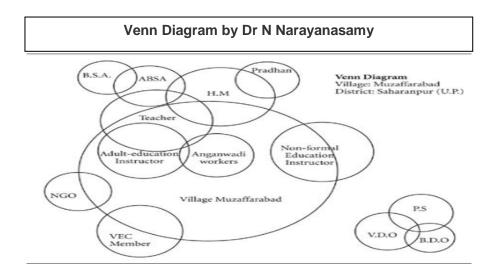
On 10th May 2023, Mr. George Kerry Sunn, Fieldwork Coordinator of the Department of Social Work-PG, delivered the second technical session on PRA tools related to Seasonal Calendar, Venn Diagram, and Income & Expenditure Matrix.



The session commenced with the introduction of a tool of PRA, the seasonal calendar, which aims to improve participants' understanding of overall activities throughout the year and to increase their awareness of seasonal patterns in rural areas. This tools gives a visual representation of activities that take place over a year including the seasonality of agricultural and non-agricultural workload such as rainfalls, farming practices, employment, disease pattern, availability of food, grazing pattern, breeding season gender-specific income and expenditure, water, and holidays etc.



The tool of Venn Diagram was highlighted to understand local people's perceptions about local institutions, individuals, programs, the power structure, and decision making processes to analyze various institutions, individuals, and groups in and outside the locality and their influence on the local people and to find out how the different organisations and groups relate to each other in terms of contact, co-operation, flow of information and provision of services. Therefore, it gives a virtual presentation of features as perceived by the local people that are used to identify and understand the relationships of various institutions, organization, programmes and their importance in and for the community. As results, it shows institutions, organizations, groups and important individuals that are found in the village which can be used to know and understand the numbers of the organization which are working in a particular area and their relationship with the people.



Another tool which was presented to the students was the Income and Expenditure Matrix. The objectives of this PRA tool is to learn about sources of income and how income is proportionality spent by the people and to understand and compared the features of social status in the community and how secure or how vulnerable certain groups of people incomes are. Hence, this tool helps us to identify and quantify the relative importance of different sources of income and expenditures. In the Expenditures matrix, we can see if all, most or only some of people's total income is spent to meet basic needs such as; food, water, clothing, shelter, health care, education etc. And it gives an understanding on the money which is left over to save or to invest in their tools and needs, or other important items that could help them in their work and other needs.

The PRA session continued with the mock PRA on the above tools whereby the participants were divided into 8 groups for the activity. Three mock PRA tools were conducted with an objective to enhance the participants with the knowledge and skill of carrying out the different tools practically and to give the opportunity for the participants to learn the different tools and techniques on how to facilitate the process. Therefore, these activities enhance the students to be equipped with the practical knowledge and facilitating skills in conducting the PRA with the community people. As a result, the students were able to learn and understand the facilitating process of all the tools of PRA and thus it gives them a platform to present and carried out the PRA session in the future.

Technical Session 3

Topic: Resource Mapping

Resource Person: Dr. Wandaia Syngkon

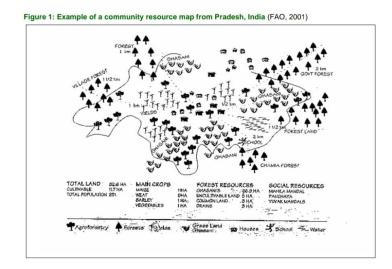
On the afternoon of May 11, 2023 a technical session on Resource Mapping was organised for the Social Work students of William Carey University, Shillong by the Department of Social Work- PG of St. Edmund's College.

Resource mapping is mapping with a focus on natural resources that are available and used by the village community. It is drawn with the purpose of understanding resource availability, their use & dependence of the people on them.Resource Mapping is one of the most commonly used PRA methods next to social Mapping. While the social Mapping focuses on habitation, community facilities, roads, temples, etc., the resource Mapping focuses on the natural resources in the locality and depicts land, hills, rivers, fields, vegetation etc. At times, the distinction between the resource and social Mapping may get blurred. A resource mapping in PRA is not drawn to scale. It is done not by experts, but by the local people. The local people are considered to have an in-depth knowledge for the surroundings where they have survived for a long time. Hence the resource Mapping drawn by the local people is considered to be accurate and detained. It is important to keep in mind, however, that it reflects the people's perception rather than precise measurements to scale. Thus, a resource Mapping reflects how people view their own locality in terms of natural resources.

Resource Mappings have been used for depicting of various aspects related to the natural resource management of a locality including:

- Topography, terrain and slopes
- Forest, vegetation and tree species
- Soil-type, fertility, erosion and depth
- Land and land use, command area, tenure, boundaries and ownership
- Water, water bodies, irrigation sources and rivers
- Watershed development, various soil and water conservation measures, denuded areas, etc.
- Agricultural developments, cropping pattern, productivity, etc.

Resource Mappings have been found especially useful because they provide a focussed spatial structure for discussion and analysis.



The steps on how to conduct Resource Mapping were discussed with the students' participants.

Step 1: Sit on a common platform with the community people.

Step 2: Draw the boundary of the village and facilitate the villagers to draw the map of the village.

Step 3: Involve the villagers to draw the main natural resources available in the village like forests, agriculture land, horticulture lands, ponds, other water bodies...available in the village.

Step 4: Discuss with them referring the map what are the natural resources available in the village whose potentials are not yet utilised fully and which are over utilised.

What are the problems arising due to over exploitation of resources? This will also help in identifying the issues that require environmental safeguards for sustainability.



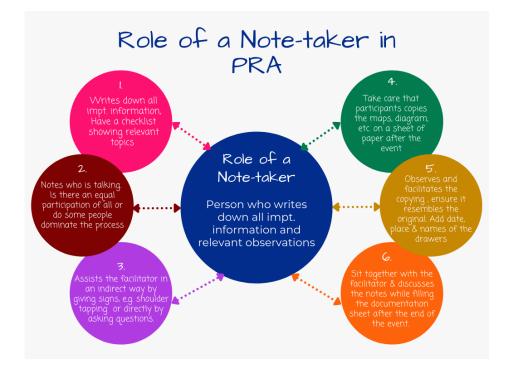
Technical Session 4

Topic:Role of a Facilitator, Note-taker, and PRA Team-leader. PRA Tools such as History Timeline, Daily Activity Clock and Pairwise Ranking

Resource Person: Ms. Hazel Berret Wahlang

The fourth technical session on Participatory Rural Appraisal was conducted by Ms. Hazel Berret Wahlang on the 11th of May 2023. In her presentation, she discussed the role of the PRA team leader, who is responsible for the PRA team as well as all organizational and logistical aspects of the PRA workshop. In this role, s/he introduces the PRA team to the community (or organizes it), moderates the PRA session and evaluation meetings during the evening and assists the sub-teams with any issues they may encounter. She also highlighted the role of the facilitator and the note-taker during the PRA process as shown below





The resource person also discussed the following tools:

- 1. **History Timeline:**The first tool that was taught was the History Timeline. It provides a timeline of significant historical events and changes in the community. Using this tool, students can gather information about important events that took place in their village. It is necessary for participants to identify a few elderly people, or meet a small group of villagers who are familiar with the village well, who will discuss the years and events that have occurred there. During the practice session, the teams were divided into 8 groups and each team had to develop the history timeline for their own university, i.e., William Carey University or the History of Meghalaya.
- 2. Daily Activity Clock: A second tool that was taught was the Daily Activity Clock. The tool illustrates all the different types of activities that occur during the course of one day. The tool is particularly useful for examining the relative workloads of different groups within the community. Comparing clocks also enables one to determine who works the longest hours, who concentrates on a few tasks and who performs a number of tasks in a day, and who enjoys the greatest amount of leisure time. Several groups of participants were asked to create activity clocks, such as women, men, children, youth, and older adults.
- 3. **Pair-wise Ranking:** A third tool that was discussed by the resource person with the participants was the Pair-wise Ranking tool. A ranking, in its simplest form, is the act of placing something in order, therefore, the community people can use this tool to set

priorities (e.g. problems, needs, actions) with the involvement of a diverse group of key informants. By using this tool, it can be determined whether men and women have different preferences, as well as between different chronological age groups.

Steps of Pair-wise ranking (Jensen, 2020) are as follows:

- a. Identify the items to be compared (Write a list on a whiteboard and label the identification options)
- b. Prepare a square matrix for comparison (identify both the rows and columns with the options' identifiers).
- c. Criteria for comparison should be reviewed (to ensure clarity for the entire group)
- d. In a head-to-head comparison, compare each option with every other option (use a vote to choose the best solution).
- e. Make a note of the results in the cell (list the winners).
- f. The results will be interpreted after all comparisons have been completed (prioritize the options in order of highest to lowest priority).

In addition, the resource person conducted a practice session of the pair-wise ranking tool by making a matrix listing out the different problems that the participants face as students, as expressed by the participants. Based on the comparison of the results, it was concluded that financial difficulties are the major obstacle facing students who are dependent on their parents.



Technical Session 5

Topic: Focus Group Discussion

Resource Person: Mr. Allanson Wahlang

The fifth technical session on Participatory Rural Appraisal was conducted by Mr. Allanson Wahlang where in his presentation, he discussed the importance of Focus group Discussion as an important tool as part of most experiences of participatory research and action and rural appraisal activities. The label FGD embraces a range of different procedures, but the common denominator is that a group of different types of participants is formed, and the group members are given the opportunity to enter into conversation with each other in a safe setting. In participatory research, a FGD is usually convened, mediated and recorded by a team of at least two people, including a facilitator and a note-taker.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) are qualitative research techniques and important ways of understanding local perspectives (indigenous Knowledge) on different issues. The technique involves the communities in the process of identifying problems and in devising ways for minimizing or solving the identified constraints on development. The techniques facilitate the use of Indigenous Knowledge of the community by relying on norms, values and belief system of communities to select data and other information relevant in guiding development process. The presentation delivered also argued that development solutions from outside are not always based on correct assumption and are sometimes economically unfeasible or culturally acceptable, conventional approaches to development have not achieve the desired result due to exclusion communities from the process of development initiative. It was then suggested that PRA and FGD specifically and qualitative research generally, can be used to complement quantitative research or other methods in generating useful data and other relevant information for development initiatives

Mr. Wahlang also delved into the pros and cons of focus group discussions especially in the context of conservative contiguous groups that may not adhere to the norms and policies as assigned in the FGD formats. Here he stated that primary groups should be given the space to discuss openly on the problems and the needs of the community with little or no interference from the discussant and this would lead to assumptions and unnecessary conflicts. The resource person concluded the session by discussing on the importance to realize that there could be several limitations to FGDs. First, since FGD data is qualitative, it cannot necessarily be generalizable to the population. This is because qualitative data is often context specific and need not be a blanket rule for all other communities.

Second, facilitators must ensure that their bias is not evident. Otherwise, it will veer the trajectory of the conversation. They must be also be active in ensuring that active participants do not overpower subdued participants during the discussion. Lastly the take away from the session was that the importance of FGD in Participatory Rural Appraisal is context driven and community specific and is very much qualitative in nature. One must not quantify the result of the discussion but rather extract quality based information to address the issues and needs of the community they are working in.



C. Conclusion and Feedback

After the conclusion of the Training Programme on Participatory Rural Appraisal, Ms. Lily Jamatia, the Head of the Department of Social Work, William Carey University, presented Dr. Rituparna Rajendra with a Memento of appreciation, which was followed by a vote of thanks from Ms. Lanunechetla, an MSW student of William Carey University.

After that, Ms. Ainamlin Dkhar gave the students a feedback form for them to complete so they could share their



thoughts. As indicated by the feedback, the participants were able to effectively participate in the entire two-day training program. Several of them expressed their appreciation for the training program and commented on how well they had understood PRA as a result of it.Furthermore, they stated that the training program, through its various exercises and group activities, has enabled them to implement and use PRA tools, which will allow them to further apply them to their assigned communities for fieldwork practicum.

When it comes to the trainers, approximately 44% of the participants strongly agree that the trainers possess an efficient level of knowledge regarding the topics covered during the training program, while 56% of the participants find this statement to be true (as shown in the figure below)

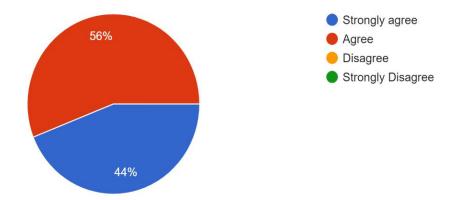


Figure 1: A pie chart illustrating student feedback regarding the trainers' level of knowledge of the topics covered during the training program

Also, the students participants have provided their overall feedback regarding the twoday training programme, with many commenting that it was an excellent programme, a good experience for them, and a programme they enjoyed due to the fact that it provided both practical and theoretical inputs to them. Participants expressed appreciation for the wellorganized and informative programme, which helped them to gain insight and knowledge about PRA that will be extremely beneficial to them in the future.



Practical Sessions on different PRA Tools



Photo of the participants along with their PRA tools

Annexure

Annexure 1: Press Release

The Shillong Times

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Home > MEGHALAYA >

News Capsule

MEGHALAYA

By By Our Reporter

- Last updated May 13, 2023



Training

The Department of Social Work (PG), St. Edmund's College, Shillong, organised a training programme on 'Participatory Rural Appraisal' for MSW students of William Carey University on May 10 and 11. According to a statement here, the faculty members of the Department of Social Work-PG, St. Edmund's College, were the resource persons for the programme. "As part of the training, the students were introduced to the concept of PRA and discussed methods and tools of PRA while engaging with the community. They were also involved in conducting practice sessions in order to help them to apply the techniques they had learned," the statement said.

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Link: https://theshillongtimes.com/2023/05/13/news-capsule-2717/

Annexure 2: Event Poster

TRAINING PROGRAMME Participatory Rural Appraisal

For MSW Students (William Carey University)

> Date: 10 & 11 May 2023

Organized by: Department of Social Work-PG St. Edmund's College, Shillong



Annexure 3: List of Participants

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Training Programme on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

Organizer: Department of Social Work-PG, St. Edmund's College, Shillong

Participants: MSW students of William Carey University, Shillong

Date: 10th & 11th May 2023

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