Rapid appraisal

There are two ways in which to organize the discussion of the techniques that are included in the RRA toolkit and the situations in which they are applied. One is according to the purpose for which they are to be used. The other is in terms of specific techniques. In this section of the discussion, the decision has been to focus on the specific techniques, describing briefly and indicating some of the types of circumstances in which they are applied. Where there are strongly contextual issues related to the use of particular techniques, such as in the case of the value and applicability of formal sampling to RRA exercises, these aspects of the toolkit are discussed subsequently at greater length as detailed sections.

3.1 General Methods

The general methods that are employed in RRA to address the time constraint on data collection are analysis, use of cross-checking or triangulation, extensive reliance on the available secondary data, use of detailed but opened-ended interview guides to ensure pertinent issues are covered, and intensive team interaction to maintain a multi-disciplinary perspective. This paper will not go into detail about these general methods. The box below lists a number of excellent sources that describe the general principles of the RRA toolkit.

RRA is revolutionary for project planning because it leads planners to genuinely talk to local people, interact closely with local people, and sensitize planners and decision-makers on the specific techniques, describing them briefly and indicating some of the type of specific techniques. In this section of the discussion, the decision has been to focus on the specific techniques, describing briefly and indicating some of the types of circumstances in which they are applied. Where there are strongly contextual issues related to the use of particular techniques, such as in the case of the value and applicability of formal sampling to RRA exercises, these aspects of the toolkit are discussed subsequently at greater length as detailed sections.

3.1.1 Triangulation

Triangulation or cross-checking is not unique to RRA methods. It means quite simply gathering information about a particular topic from a variety of different sources, using a variety of data-gathering methods. If, for instance, a farmer informs the team that his yield will not grow even though the field boundaries are gradually reducing, the team should "check" this information by asking other farmers with similar fields, by discussing this case in group interviews, by checking what the project reports have said on the subject, or by measuring the impact of new crops on other fields. If the same information is heard repeatedly, it is more likely to be correct. The trick is in using cross-checking to be sure information is actually coming from a different source. Teams with tight time limits often make the mistake of asking questions only in a limited geographic area and only read reports regarding that limited area, and come away generalizing about a very one-off, site-specific-phenomenon. For example, one FSE/EPE expert talks about a diagnostic survey team which concluded labor was a severe constraint to farmers in the target area. In fact, this information only pertained to the small area of farmers that they had interviewed, who lived relatively close to a sugar-cane growing area and who migrated elsewhere to capitalize on the high wages paid by the sugar-growers. Their cross-checks did not include a broad geographic radius.

Box 10.1 MOST USEFUL GENERAL REFERENCES ON RRA TOOLS


RRA Notes, A Newsletter for the RRA Network, Number 1, 14, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), London, 1985-89.


3.1.2 Pre-existing Data

This topic is well-discussed in the sources mentioned above. The purpose of pre-existing and secondary data is always problematic in the short RRA exercise, since there is seldom adequate time allotted to the team for background literature search. Rapid Rural Assessment's role is to help the team identify core issues on which people are apt to stonewall teams, such as land tenure and common property management. Resettlement specialists mentioned that they would try to maintain a multi-disciplinary perspective to the process of rural development project planning than do other for more effective for using RRA tools and approaches would be to deploy two sub-teams, one team to raw data collected in surveys and one to analyze key topics before going to the field. If the purpose of a photo-essay or social perspective to the process of rural development project planning than do other for more effective for using RRA tools and approaches would be to deploy two sub-teams, one team to raw data collected in surveys and one to analyze key topics before going to the field.

3.1.3 Interview Guides

Two of the findings of this review have been that 1) the systematization of interview guides for land-based, natural resource management planning is increasing, and 2) this is a methodological area which would benefit greatly from more work on validation of the interview guides being developed by practitioners. Interview guides offer subject mastery and the methodological area for which they are being used. More guidelines are being developed for specific topics and are available here. As mentioned above, John Bruce (1989) has developed a series of checklists on issues like tenure and land-use issues. Barbara Gonzales Jaramillo (1986) also developed a checklist exercise for team leaders to become aware of the interviews. They are getting good results.

3.1.4 Interdisciplinary Team Interaction

A commonly-recognized problem of using team resources during a Rapid Rural Assessment exercise is the tendency to ignore the social science perspective. In the context of a RRA team, it is often extremely easy to be sure we are making a principle mistake when, according to perceived time constraints or the difficulty of imposing this degree of organization on the team members' interactions. Interaction with a multidisciplinary team becomes a central issue for the social science perspective. The other is in terms of specific techniques. In this section of the discussion, the decision has been to focus on the specific techniques, describing briefly and indicating some of the types of circumstances in which they are applied. One particular topic that is only beginning to receive detailed attention in interview guides is team structure and capabilities. While teams tend to pay close attention to biophysical issues, socio-economic issues, or human resource issues related to the beneficiary/client population, a weak area has been sufficient questioning about the structure of local-level functioning or an agency or organization in terms of staff incentives, supervision/worker relationships, status of staff, their clients, decision-making, and organizational priorities.

3.1.5 Issues for Multi-Disciplinary Team Interviewing

In interviews conducted for the review, particularly with social scientists who use interview techniques on a regular basis, an interesting mix of opinions emerged regarding the best ways to develop a good team interaction and overall allow the social scientists to maximize the quality of information collected from local people. Some argued strongly that the role of the social scientist in a team setting was to provide relevant socio-economic information for reconsidering a course of action. They argued that the team members themselves were the experts and that the team members from technical disciplines and project officers, and to provide training for officials and extension workers in flower methods of interviewing benefit greatly through the RRA exercise itself. Leaving the team for several days of independent interviews, perhaps with a translator or junior project staff member, was seen as a wise decision unless a special target group was likely to be excluded from the sample unless they went alone to interview them. What was true in these social science situations was that the interview techniques and other team members set of checklist topics that are applicable to short-term, field work. Additional training is beginning to appear in the academic literature regarding the applicability of specific indicators to different field situations, for example see Schacht (1988). The RRA articles which are regularly published as a newsletter by the IIED, London, has tried to compile the available information on the progress made on this topic.

3.1.6 The Case for Interviewing Apart From Other Team Members

A second group argued for adequate time apart from the rest of the team and the high-profile officers. Only then could they have enough confidence in their findings to argue strongly for a particular course of action when the report was being carried out. The team members mentioned that they were unable to understand the usefulness of the subjective data, the subjective data and the comprehensive information on socio-economic issues was of more importance. Constraints on working exclusively as a team were that other team members often sought information in interviews or for assessing their current strategy of deploying large planning teams for the same reasons. More effective for using RRA tools and approaches would be to deploy two sub-teams, one team to raw data collected in surveys and one to analyze key topics before going to the field.

3.1.7 What Are Some Possible Courses of Action

RRA approaches work best when the team of rural fieldworkers or researchers is small (2-4 members). When larger donor agency or host-country planning teams of 7-14 or more try to apply systematic RRA tools to their work, many logistic problems and complications may result. For example, a large number of team members may be required to answer their current strategy of deploying large planning teams for the same reasons. More effective for using RRA tools and approaches would be to deploy two sub-teams, one team to raw data collected in surveys and one to analyze key topics before going to the field.
3.3. Techniques of Group Interviewing

The techniques offered here are designed with a particular emphasis on group interview methods. Group interviews, rather than individual interviews, can help gather more information in a shorter amount of time. However, group discussions can be more difficult to manage, and the need to encourage all participants to contribute can be challenging.

Box no.1 - Group Interviewing

- All group interviews should start with an open-ended question to allow the respondents to freely express their thoughts and ideas.
- Use of the word "why" can be helpful in eliciting more detailed and qualitative responses.
- Encourage group members to build on each other's ideas and to add their own perspectives.
- Keep the discussion focused on the topic at hand to ensure that all participants remain engaged.
- Use non-verbal cues, such as eye contact and nods, to show understanding and encourage participation.

3.3.1. Overview of Group Interviewing Techniques

Group interviews are a valuable tool in research, allowing for the collection of rich data from a diverse range of perspectives. However, they require careful planning and facilitation to ensure that all participants feel comfortable and are able to contribute.

3.3.2. Use of Interpreters/Translators

In multicultural settings, interpreters are essential to ensure accurate communication. However, the presence of an interpreter can sometimes create barriers to open and honest conversation.

Box no.2 - Use of Interpreters/Translators

- Choose an interpreter who is familiar with the topic and has a good understanding of the culture.
- Establish clear guidelines for the interpreter to follow, such as maintaining confidentiality and neutrality.
- Allow the interpreter to ask clarifying questions to ensure understanding.
- Foster a positive and inclusive atmosphere to encourage all participants to speak freely.

3.3.3. Interviewing Women

Women's perspectives are often underrepresented in research, making it crucial to include them in interviews. However, female interviewees may require additional support and encouragement.

Box no.3 - Interviewing Women

- Ask women about their experiences and opinions, using open-ended questions that allow for a wide range of responses.
- Use non-verbal cues to show that you are listening and interested in what they have to say.
- Avoid gender stereotypes and assumptions when asking questions.

3.3.4. Probing is a Key Element of RRA Interview Method.

Probing techniques are essential for obtaining deeper insights and understanding. However, it is important to avoid leading questions that may influence the respondent's answers.

Box no.4 - Probing Techniques

- Use open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses.
- Ask follow-up questions to clarify or expand on the respondent's initial comments.
- Avoid double-barreled questions that require the respondent to choose between two options.

3.3.5. Interviewing Children

Children's opinions and knowledge about resources and management can provide valuable insights. However, it is important to use engaging and age-appropriate language.

Box no.5 - Interviewing Children

- Use simple and direct questions that are easy for children to understand.
- Encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings.
- Respect the children's autonomy and privacy.

3.3.6. Interviewing with Special Populations

Interviewing special populations requires additional considerations to ensure accessibility and understanding. Considerations such as language, culture, and physical abilities must be taken into account.

Box no.6 - Interviewing with Special Populations

- Use clear and concise language.
- Avoid cultural stereotypes.
- Make sure physical accessibility is provided.

3.3.7. Interviewing Social Scientists

Social scientists have a unique understanding of human behavior and social dynamics. However, they may require additional training in RRA methodologies.

Box no.7 - Interviewing Social Scientists

- Provide training on RRA methodologies and techniques.
- Encourage social scientists to use their expertise to enhance the interview process.
- Foster a collaborative relationship with the social scientist.

3.3.8. Interviewing Key Informants

Key informants are often crucial sources of information, providing insights into local knowledge and practices. However, their information may be biased or incomplete.

Box no.8 - Interviewing Key Informants

- Choose key informants who are knowledgeable and trusted within the community.
- Establish clear and open lines of communication.
- Use open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses.

3.3.9. Interviewing Men

Men's perspectives are often underrepresented in research, making it crucial to include them in interviews. However, male interviewees may require additional support and encouragement.

Box no.9 - Interviewing Men

- Ask men about their experiences and opinions, using open-ended questions that allow for a wide range of responses.
- Use non-verbal cues to show that you are listening and interested in what they have to say.
- Avoid gender stereotypes and assumptions when asking questions.

3.3.10. Interviewing Women in Groups

Women's perspectives are often underrepresented in research, making it crucial to include them in interviews. However, female interviewees may require additional support and encouragement.

Box no.10 - Interviewing Women in Groups

- Ask women about their experiences and opinions, using open-ended questions that allow for a wide range of responses.
- Use non-verbal cues to show that you are listening and interested in what they have to say.
- Avoid gender stereotypes and assumptions when asking questions.

3.4. Special Techniques to Reduce Bias

There are several techniques to reduce bias in RRA interviews. These include:

- Using a calibrated scale for rating responses.
- Conducting a pilot study to test the interview schedule.
- Ensuring that all interviewers are trained in RRA methodologies.

3.5. The Role of the Interviewer

The interviewer's role is crucial in determining the success of an RRA interview. It is important to maintain professional conduct, show respect and consideration for the respondent, and facilitate a comfortable and open dialogue.

3.6. Use of Interviews in RRA

Interviews are a key component of RRA. They allow for the collection of qualitative data that can be used to inform decision-making. However, interviews require careful planning and execution.

Box no.11 - Use of Interviews in RRA

- Use interviews to gather information about local knowledge and practices.
- Use interviews to validate information obtained through other methods.
- Use interviews to make recommendations for action.
Rapid appraisal

What can realistically be adapted from formal sampling theory in selecting people to

be interviewed? Some practitioners argue for more follow-on of RRA exercises with small, formal surveys -- but many others argue that the issue is not an absolute one: the individuals are not skilled in interviewing and use of the toolkit. Non-country team members often have as much -- though different -- pre-conceptions about “what the villagers think or do” as the outsider. They may have a very clear understanding about a certain group or class within the village, but fail to recognize the diversity of different situations. (Kumar 1987) suggests some strategies for circumventing these problems:

- carefully worded, leading questions to circumvent avoidance of real issues;
- interviewing a group of village leaders beforehand introducing the meeting with their thanks to encourage others to participate;
- subdividing the group into smaller, homogeneous, working groups;
- varying topics to spark the interest of a wide group; and
- using humor when pointing out the limitations of certain situations.

A practitioner drawing upon his work in Africa suggests that group discussions can more fruitfully lead to village consensus about their desired course of action. The research team views issues of importance informally with a traditionally-expected community leader and then allows the leader to generate the discussion, thereby gaining the confidence of the group of villagers present for the topic of interest and attention. In discussions of the optional ways to achieve effective common property resource management over a particular piece of common land, for instance, villagers are more likely to seriously consider new options and provide a research team with an honest opinion if the discussion is initiated by a local village member who commands the respect of this group if the team members present hypothetical options from their outside view of the situation.

There are often an assumption that host-country team members and local project staff will be able to generate a balanced, useful discussion with local groups of people. While it may be the case that local professionals will better understand local decisions and practices when they are a generation older and have a more formal education, the fact is not an absolute one: the individuals are not skilled in interviewing and use of the toolkit. Non-country team members often have as much -- though different -- pre-conceptions about “what the villagers think or do” as the outsider. They may have a very clear understanding about a certain group or class within the village, but fail to recognize the diversity of different situations. (Kumar 1987) suggests some strategies for circumventing these problems:

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A chance of a number of biases (also results), which are lumped together in survey terminology as non-sampling errors. One criticism is that often biased against formal surveys in that, while the random sampling errors are very small, the non-sampling errors resulting from poor wording of the questions, poor choice of questions, lack of sufficient attention to the context in which the question is asked, and poor choice of a time of day to hold the interview, can be much more damaging than sampling errors. The sample for the survey may be pseudo-random, but the data that results from the survey can have serious consequences and limitations.

In-depth and open-ended interviews attempt to reduce the non-sampling error by paying closer attention to putting the person at ease, asking questions in a number of different ways to reduce the chance that the question was misunderstood, eliciting longer answers from the person to ensure the researcher understands what is being said, and a host of other such techniques. However, good open interviews remain f. d. to be sure whether the interviewer or household is typical, especially with households that are only formulated halfway through the RRA exercise. Findings of the type or RRA tools are being used, there is seldom time to select individuals through a complete, random sample or to code and analyze the information collected. Use of key informants who have good village-wide knowledge is one check on the representativeness of individual interviews carried out. It is possible, however, in addition to interviewing key informants, apply some of the principles underlying random sample selection to help reduce the biases that are potentially introduced in any field surveys.

One such principle is stratification. In RRA, this is achieved by a form of stratification (such-checking). This is a technique used in constructing a formal sample that ensures that certain groups in the population are included, despite the limited size of the sample. A stratified sample is constructed by dividing the population into groups of importance. One can choose a sample from those groups in proportion to their representation in the population, or a 20% sample (20% of each strata) be known to be biased.

One application of this principle to quick surveys that do not use formal sampling is, instead of selecting the people to carry a 70% survival rate is prevalent in the following chart summarizes some of these options.

### Figure 3: SAMPLING TECHNIQUES APPLIED IN THE RRA TOOLKIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Possible Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How to ensure that the views of less visible target groups are not under-represented in interviews</td>
<td>1. Reflect the sample of interviews that will be carried out during visits to include specific proportions of various groups of income-stratified-poor, men, and women, old and young, different ethnic groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How to control the common problem that more remote agroecological zones are poorly represented in a sample?</td>
<td>2. Prune select area that includes those zones when the team goes there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How to include some random sampling that is not too time consuming to prepare a sample</td>
<td>3. Use the pull hypothesis interview a limited number of individuals to determine whether there has been a work interruption or filling of that MDS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. How to include all random sampling that is not too time consuming to prepare a sample</td>
<td>4. Prune select area that includes all zones when the team goes there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What do I do if I test hypotheses that are only formulated halfway through the RRA exercise</td>
<td>5. Use a sample with the same income-stratified-poor, men, and women, old and young, different ethnic groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What do we do if we have insufficient information about sensitive issues</td>
<td>6. Combiner individual interviews with groups interviewee, participant of the interview, and find people in a limited time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. How to include a small sub-sample that is not too time consuming to prepare a sample</td>
<td>7. Combine a small sub-sample with a previous, formal survey sample (such as one conducted by the ME unit of the project earlier on, or from a baseline survey).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. How to include a small sub-sample that is not too time consuming to prepare a sample</td>
<td>8. Combine a small sub-sample with a previous, formal survey sample (such as one conducted by the ME unit of the project earlier on, or from a baseline survey).</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this context, the analysis is divided into two major parts: (1) the types of bias that are likely to be encountered, and (2) the methodology for reducing the bias. The types of bias are divided into two main categories: (a) those that are likely to be encountered in the field, and (b) those that are likely to be encountered in the analysis.

There are two points that are relevant in deciding whether or not some non-sampling adds to the validity of the information collected. First, random sampling may be a source of error. The interviews of people selected through that random process are conducted. Second, however much use of RRA techniques may be seen as a cost-effective tool, it still costs time and money. It may be worth more in terms of science resources to introduce a more direct rigour into an RRA-style exercise and make it a slightly longer process, than to have to come back to the field with the same range of team members to collect the same sort of information later on. This is an issue that will need to receive more attention by those project staff adopting RRA more extensively to forestry and natural resource management programs in different project stages.

### 3.4.4. Reasons That Teams Using RRA Tools May Not Use Formal Sampling

Two opinions as to why sampling might not appropriate which were expressed in the references in the following as are as follows:

1. Formal sampling has no place in an RRA, which is a "scare" of the range of options in the project area. The objective of an RRA exercise is generally to find out the scope of a problem or of several issues. The team does not get by keeping their "teeth in the water." There is neither time to carry out formal sampling, nor is the objective of gathering information about general hypotheses commoner with a need for formal sampling.

The biggest constant on formal sampling in an RRA is time. While it could contribute substantially to validity of information, there just is not time to devote to constructing a random sample and interviewing those in it.

### 3.4.5. Alternative Methodologies to Representative Sampling

One set of social scientists who were interviewed focused not on the trade-offs of random versus purposive/stratified sampling, but on the need for RRA practitioners to become more conscious of the value (and limitations) of qualitative data collection methods that are traditionally applied in a single-time frame, but which can be adapted to the RRA setting. One such methodology is "in-situ analysis."

In ethnographic work, situational analysis is used as an alternative to listing in a range of individuals. Instead, the interviewer tries to gather information as completely as possible about a single "situation" or a set of situations of importance to the project or planning, conflict, allocation of common lands, including contour plowing or hiring a flight, irrigation water allocation. The goal of this process is to interview a selected "range of individuals" of comparable sizes. The interview should include, at least those relevant to the geographic area where work is being carried out.

A corollary to this is the importance of information about resource use. Convery's "Agroecological Analysis" (1986) and Ramirez's "Regionalization and Design" (1986) analyses both include questions about use of land for trees and crops and pasture. In addition to checking what a crop was grown over time, the importance of information on the history of conflicts over uses and management of productive potential or actual conflicts. Villagers should be asked about changes in the composition of management groups, the history of their formation, changes in leadership, use of witchcraft or people assigned to maintain peace. In conflict history, it is important to establish has the social-economic or social-economic or social-economic or social-economic or social-economic relationship of individuals involved influenced the decision. It is in this context that grazing of the same crop was grown over time, would there have been a case or was it because it was a man with a longer calf horde? For conflicting patterns and teams, Convery's approach includes collection of information for a 10-year period for both crops and pastures, a very useful body of information when evaluating the economics of an intervention from the farmer's perspective.

The qualitative approach generally requires a social scientist on the team, who has a firm-hand understanding of qualitative research methodology, so that they can correctly evaluate what values and norms underlie a particular person's expressed opinion or action. For participatory planning applications of the RRA toolkit, there may not need to be a social scientist, but local staff should have been trained before undertaking such an exercise on their own with a firm-hand understanding of the communities with which they plan to work, not just a common national identity.

### Box 11A - Predicting the Null Hypothesis

While quick-turn around surveys that RRA do not give the interviewer a chance to talk to enough people throughout the population do draw firm conclusions about hypotheses, there are ways to add value for the data collected. One way is to test the null hypothesis. All statistical analysis rely on the use of mathematical tools to test whether a particular correlation of patterns means something or whether it occurred by chance sampling of unusual individuals. If a survey of 80 household finds that 70% of the trees planted had a survival rate of 88%, the mathematical tests serve to show that it is highly unlikely that the survival rate would be measured in the sample population unless it was representative of a general pattern in the whole area. If the sample population had 75% survival of trees, says the statistics, it is most likely that the rest of the population did not as well. These results also indicate (replicability) which argues that the sample is not representative, but a skewed subset of the population.

One application of this principle to quick surveys that do not use formal sampling is, instead of selecting the population to draw a 70% survival rate is prevalent in the following chart summarizes some of these options.

http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/t7845e/t7845e05.htm#P0_0