



Participatory Rural Appraisal and Community Development in Gombe State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) describes 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. In PRA information is more shared and owned by local people. This study undertakes to describe the role of participatory approach in community development in Gombe State, Nigeria using Gombe State Agency for community and social development projects (CSDP) as a case study. The methodology adopted was the use of secondary data with the aid of content analysis approach. The study indicates that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is one of the most appropriate approaches for the identification of community problems and for understanding the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the community. The beneficiaries were well aware of the PRA and its procedure because of the proper application and implementation by the Agency (CSDP). The researcher recommended that, there should be an increased level of awareness and enlightenment about public participation through mass media, and regular meetings with stakeholders and traditional authorities. Also, involvement of rural people in project formulation, planning and implementation should be encouraged. Moreover, the agency (GSA-CSDP) should sustain the PRA approach as the best procedure for bottom-up method of decision making since it has yielded the desired result.

Keywords: *Participatory Rural Appraisal, Community Development, Community Participation, Community Empowerment, Problems Identification.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Participatory methods have gained momentum in recent years as researchers, field practices and development experts have sought more effective ways to involve local people in decision-making and



research. PRA has developed a variety of participatory tools especially for use with communities and other natural resource needy groups. PRA is intended *to enable local communities to conduct their own analysis and to plan and take action* (Chambers R. 1992). 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. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is considered one of the popular and effective approaches to gather information in rural areas. This approach was developed in early 1990s with considerable shift in paradigm from top-down to bottom-up approach, and from blueprint to the learning process. In fact, it is a shift from extractive survey questionnaires to experience sharing by local people. PRA is based on village experiences where communities effectively manage their natural resources.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Until recently, the belief among most Nigerian communities was that it was the sole responsibility of the government and its agencies to provide the needs of their communities. In other words government should develop the community by providing the entire necessary infrastructure and social and physical amenities (Onibokun, 1976). Consequently social amenities are lacking in most communities. However the degree or level of poor infrastructure facing communities varies from one place to another. It's evident today that most people don't want to participate in community development programme due to some negative factors such as cultural, socio- economic, lack of awareness and religious factors among others. However empowering individuals to be conscious of the effect of community participation will help in reducing the compelling factors. Government is expected to deliver necessary amenities such as portable drinking water, good road, health care services, better agricultural and literacy education plus operational security of lives and property. This has not been obtainable. Therefore people must come together as a social unit to develop their community by removing or doing away with their differences that serve as great factors that affect community participation on community development. The top-down approach of decision making has failed woefully in most development projects where Government agencies execute community project without the inputs of the host communities. Based on the above exigencies it became imperative to carry out a study on the Role of PRA on community development in Gombe state, Nigeria.

The aim of this study is to eradicate social problems from the community by applying participatory methods. This study will provide a food for thought to all institutions whether governmental or non-governmental to apply these methods in their various activities & solves the problems of the community. This study will benefit the researchers, planners and policy makers to make a meaningful use of PRA tools in community development.



III. CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

Clarifications (PRA/RRA)

Appraisal – The finding out of information about problems, needs, and potential in a village. It is the first stage in any project. **Participatory** – Means that people are involved in the process – a “bottom-up” approach that requires good communication skills and attitude of project staff. **Rural** – The techniques can be used in any situation, urban or rural, with both literate and illiterate people. 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. The basic concept of PRA is to learn from rural people. Chambers (1992) has defined Participatory Rural Appraisal (**PRA**) as an approach and methods for learning about rural life and conditions from, with and by rural people. He further stated that PRA extends into analysis, planning and action. PRA closely involve villagers and local officials in the process. Similarly, Rapid Rural Appraisal (**RRA**) reflects the new thinking about development, needs, and people oriented responsibilities. It is a process that is highly systematic and structured, relying on interdisciplinary teamwork and special strategies for data collection and analysis such as triangulation, probing, and iteration. Some critics consider RRA to be a quick and dirty technique. There are a wide range of participatory tools and techniques available. People can use these tools and techniques according to their situation or needs. Generally, the application of different tools may vary from one situation to another. However, the process for conducting RRA/PRA remains the same. There are five key principles that form the basis of any PRA activity no matter what the objectives or setting:

1. **PARTICIPATION** - PRA relies heavily on participation by the communities, as the method is designed to enable local people to be involved, not only as sources of information, but as partners with the PRA team in gathering and analysing the information.
2. **FLEXIBILITY** - The combination of techniques that is appropriate in a particular development context will be determined by such variables as the size and skill mix of the PRA team, the time and resources available, and the topic and location of the work.



3. **TEAMWORK** - Generally, a PRA is best conducted by a local team (speaking the local languages) with a few outsiders present, a significant representation of women, and a mix of sector specialists and social scientists, according to the topic.
4. **OPTIMAL IGNORANCE** - To be efficient in terms of both time and money, PRA work intends to gather just enough information to make the necessary recommendations and decisions.
5. **SYSTEMATIC** - As PRA-generated data is seldom conducive to statistical analysis (given its largely qualitative nature and relatively small sample size), alternative ways have been developed to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. These include sampling based on approximate stratification of the community by geographic location or relative wealth, and cross-checking, that is using a number of techniques to investigate views on a single topic (including through a final community meeting to discuss the findings and correct inconsistencies).

The tools have mixed applications: stakeholder identification, decision-making, planning, conflict management, information collection, and other uses. This is concentrating toward environment and development researchers, and local government leaders. It provides information on several tools in order to help persons who read and understand the tools' basic capabilities, identify the most appropriate tool for their needs and find resources for further information.

The guide does not provide a comprehensive description of how to use each tool but rather an introduction and comparative overview. Much like a map, this guide puts the readers in the right direction. The guide is divided into three sections. The first provides a brief discussion about forest communities, participation, participatory tools, pitfalls of participatory tools and related concepts. The second section provides a summary description of each tool, considerations when selecting a tool and a comparative matrix to make it easy to find the right tool. The final section provides more details about the tools in a table format. Each tool has a general description, strengths and limitations, practical considerations, an example and resources for more information. As more tools are developed, they will be added to the guide. Readers who are new to participatory tools may find it valuable to start with the overview in "Concepts." Those who already have a clear idea of their objectives for using a tool may find it easy to visit first the comparative matrix in "Guidelines for Selecting a Tool" to determine which tool meets their needs. Others may wish to flip straight to the "Toolbox" and browse (Chamber, 1992.p3).

IV. HISTORY OF PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

Participatory rural appraisal PRA is a specific form of rapid rural appraisal (RRA), a research techniques developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the researchers in the international



development as an alternative and compliment to conventional sample survey. PRA is a way of learning from and with community members to investigate, analyze and evaluate constraints and opportunities, and make informed and timely decisions regarding development projects. It is the method by which a research team can quickly and systematically collects information for the general analysis of a specific topic, question or a problem; Need assessment, Feasibility studies, Identifying and prioritizing projects and Project or program evaluations. In other words, its purpose is to gain an understanding of the complexities rather than to gather highly accurate statistics on a list of variables (Richard F, 1974 p.18).

V. PRA (PARTICIPATORY RURAL APPRAISAL)

It is a way of learning from, and with, community members to investigate, and evaluate constraints and opportunities and make timely decisions regarding development projects. It is a method by which a research team can quickly and systematically collect information for the general analysis of specific topic, question, or problem, needs assessment, feasibility studies, identifying and prioritizing projects, and finally, the project evaluation. The PRA tools are implemented to achieve increased accuracy at low costs both in terms of time and money. Participatory appraisals methods are useful for accelerated knowledge, not just overall speed, but rapid rounds of field relations that result in the increasingly precise knowledge (Joachim Theis & Heather M. Grady, 1991; p.5). Participation means involving local people in the development of plans and activities designed to change their lives. In its most developed form, participation is a continuous process of negotiation and decision making that occurs at various levels and with all stakeholders (Chambers, 1992: p.8). Participation is the process through which stakeholders influence and share control over priority setting, policy-making Resource allocation and access to public (Gregory, 2000:p. 179).

PRA as a Toolkit

1. Review of secondary information and data;
2. Semi-structured interviews;
3. Probing;
4. Diagrams, maps, calendars, historical profiles and Venn diagrams;
5. Ranking and quantification methods;
6. Preference/Problem Ranking (e.g. Pair-Ranking);
7. Photographs and games (Chambers, 1992: p.38)



VI. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Any action taken by any agency and primarily designed to benefit the community. (T.B Bother, 1957). It is a process by which the efforts of the peoples themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to nation (Rafiq S. Zari, 1987). In simple words we can say that community development mean to developed human being socially, economically & politically.

VII. THE EIGHT STAGES IN PROBLEM SOLVING WITH PRA

Rapport formation: The objective of this phase is to form a relationship in which the villagers feel comfortable with you and your role as facilitator. No progress is possible if you fail to establish a good and clear relationship at the beginning. A sign for this is when the client starts to tell you about the problem with a level of honesty and depth which goes beyond that which you would usually expect from your normal relationship.

Understanding: The objective of this phase is to understand the problem from the perspective of your partner, and for the partner to know that you do. You can find out when you have achieved this objective by asking the partner. Without such an understanding any attempt to move forward will be resisted by the client.

Reframing: Your objective in reframing is to be critical partner in reflecting the situation and the problem. You encourage the client to see the problem from a perspective that makes its management possible. When the partner is in a more manageable perspective they will be ready to move to the next stage.

Solution searching: The objective of this stage is to identify a type of solution. You will arrive at this point having explored various solution types. Progress to the next stage depends on the partner being committed to a particular type of solution.

Solution planning and commitment development: After identifying a type of solution your objective in this stage is to plan a specific solution and to see it through to a successful conclusion. The actors have to express their commitment to the solution.



Implementation: The obvious objective is to carry out the plan generated in the previous stage. Specifically your role here is to help the people with their motivation, focus and persistence.

Evaluation and adjustment: Whether you are pushed into this stage through the situation or your partner, the time will come when the implementation as planned has been completed or has reach an impasse. This is the time when, together, you begin to evaluate and adjust the plan, if necessary. The objectives in this stage can vary from abandoning a plan the partner has lost faith in, or is creating new problems to fine-tuning a minor aspect of the plan.

Ending and consolidation: Now a particular problem has been overcome, it is wise to help the partner consolidate the problem solving skills they have learned or the solutions they have adopted. A sensible option is to put the client in positions where they can solve the same or similar problems if they emerge or re-emerge. Not seldom you will realise that in one stage something emerges because in an early stage things have not been handled properly. You will face often strong need to jump back and forth amongst the stages. Sometimes some stages have to be combined, because the feedback between them is so strong that they are clearly functioning as one single stage.

VIII.LITERATURE REVIEW

Theories of Participatory Approach

Participatory theories also criticized the modernization paradigm on the grounds that it promoted a top-down, ethnocentric and paternalistic view of development. They argued that the diffusion model proposed a conception of development associated with a Western vision of progress. Development communication was informed by a theory that became a science of producing effective messages. After decades of interventions, the failure to address poverty and other structural problems in the Third World needed to be explained on the faulty theoretical premises of the programs. Any intervention that was focused on improving messages to better reach individuals or only change behavior was, by definition, unable to implement social change (Hein in Quarrymen, 1991).

The Previnoba, Senegal Project

The overall objective of the Project in Senegal is to contribute to the battle against desertification through the improvement of the natural environment and the living conditions of the rural population. Specific objectives are to consolidate local capacity for integrated village land use and natural resource management, comprising the integration of forestry activities within agriculture and



livestock systems, and to support the institutional strengthening of the forestry service. These activities should lead to the restoration of forest cover and enrichment of the soils to achieve sustainable self-sufficiency in forestry products for the local population, as well as raising incomes of farmers through silvicultural activities (Colella, V., 1998). The steps followed are: Sensitization of different institutional authority, Selection of target villages, Prioritization, Farmers' training, Systematic monitoring by village forestry committees and Evaluation (Robert Chambers, 1993).

The PUCD Project in Butare, Rwanda

In Rwanda, the PUCD inter regional project is working in the municipality of Runyanya, Province of Butare, in the south of the country. From July 1992 onwards, the project together with the local population carried out an iterative process of participatory appraisal, planning and implementation of priority actions, and planning of more complex activities for the longer term. A detailed project work plan was elaborated and finalized on the basis of actions selected and planned by the population.

The PUCD Project in Makamba, Burundi

In Burundi, the interregional project is working in the Rwaba watershed, Makamba Province, in the south of the country. At the time of execution of the case study, approximately 130 families, organized in 21 groups, were involved in the preparation or implementation of their own project activities, covering a wide range of fields, from erosion control to social communication. These "micro projects" have been prepared and designed by the groups themselves with additional support from the project. This support has been provided with the objective of strengthening local capacity in the areas of analysis, planning, and management of the resources in their environment, mobilization of their own financial, human and material resources, economic and financial management and self-evaluation (F.A.O Series title: Forests, Trees and People Programme, 1998).

Participatory Approach in USA

The Community Development Programme (*CDP*) is a programme aimed at strengthening community capacity for sustainable human development. A programme in the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (*UNCHS*) Habitat, CDP has been in operation for nearly fifteen years and over that period had produced over 250 publications. CDP is aware of the importance of documenting the learning that emerged from its work with partners. This has included building partnerships, providing practical management and technical skills and providing opportunities for collaboration with other actors in the human settlements sector. CDP has also provided education to public authorities about the importance of community participation and has assisted governments to formulate policies that place end-users of



local development at the centre of the planning processes. This catalogue was therefore prepared to document and disseminate the experiences of Community Development Programme and its partners.

Disaster Prevention Programme, Ethiopia

Disaster Prevention Programme is a collaborative effort between the Ethiopian Red Cross Society and the Ministries of Agriculture and Health. The UMCC-DPP is located in Wollo Province in the Ethiopian highlands, and was created to develop disaster response strategies with a broader scope than standard Red Cross activities. The village level work is carried out in Kalu and Ambassel awrajas (districts) by Development Agents (DAs) with the assistance of sub-district (woreda) and district level experts. Participatory Rural Appraisal (RRA) techniques that could be used to investigate the various issues, were: Mapping (M), Transect walks (T), Calendars (C), Specific interviews (I), Observations (O), Pie diagrams (P), Ranking exercises (R). The fields were agriculture, livestock, and forest. (Mukherjee 1995:280-282).

The PUCD Project in Quetta, Pakistan

In Pakistan the PUCD project, executed through the Balochistan Forest and Wildlife Department of the Ministry of Agriculture, is in the Kanak Valley southwest of Quetta. Water, because of its scarcity and the low rainfall levels, is the most important natural resource in the area. The most significant cash crop, fruits and vegetables, could not be produced without irrigation from tube wells, but these wells are lowering the water table. After an analysis carried out by the villages, the project has been able to distinguish three areas for action: (1) increase the infiltration of rainwater by reducing runoff; (2) improve on-farm water harvesting techniques and water management; and (3) improve water-use regulations. A thorough cause-effect analysis was made of the issues mentioned by the villagers in order to arrive at a feasible plan of action for each of the villages (F.A.O Series title: Forests, Trees and People Programme, 1998).

Barani Area Development Project Description, Pakistan

In the NWFP., the basic source of income and livelihood is agriculture, but 60% of the cultivated land of the province is non-irrigated (barani / rain-fed). Due to rain-fed status of the land the output is low as compared to irrigated land. This is the main reason of poverty in such areas. The focus of the Barani project was to improve the socio-economic life of the people through the improvement in agriculture, livestock, poultry and forests. To ensure these developments, Barani project took initiative from the community and utilized participatory approach in community development through NGO's in the area. (Asian Development Bank Project 2001 p. 9)



IX. THE AGENCY - CSDP IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

Gombe state Agency for Community and Social development Project (GS- CSDA), started in 2005 as a community-based Poverty reduction project (CPRP) assisted by AfDB which was executed for a period of five years and closed in 2008. In 2009 the project was scaled up to Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) by the World Bank, the Gombe State Agency for Community and Social Development Project (CSDA) with support from the World Bank and Gombe State Government joined other participating states of the federation in the program. Like in the previous project (CPRP) the CSDP is a Community Driven Development (CDD), Demand Driven and Down top approach. It is a project that enables communities to participate right from conception through its completion and ownership. The Agency (CSDA) facilitates community development agenda, in collaboration and partnership with the communities, local government authorities, state line ministries, and other development partners. The Agency came on board in October, 2010 and commenced community investment intervention in July, 2011.

Goal and Objectives of CSDP

The overall goal of the CSDP is to improve access to services for Human Development (HD). To achieve this goal, the Project Development Objective (PDO) is to support empowerment of communities and Local Government Authorities (LGAs) for sustainable increase access of poor people to improved social and, natural resource infrastructure services. Specifically, the CSDP hopes to:

- [1] empower communities to plan, part-finance, implement, monitor and maintain sustainable and socially inclusive multi-sectoral micro-projects;
- [2] facilitate and increase Community-LGA partnership on HD-related projects;
- [3] increase the capacity of LGAs, State and Federal Agencies to implement and monitor CDD policies and interventions; and
- [4] Leverage federal, State and local government resources for greater coverage of CDD interventions in communities.
- [5] Increase transparency and accountability in Government at all levels, particularly at local government and community levels.



Summary of Micro Projects Implemented in the State by CSDP from 2011-2016

S/No.	Sector	Output	Quantity
1	Education	Classrooms Constructed	96
		Examination Halls Constructed	5
		Science Laboratories Constructed	8
		Science Laboratories Equipped	8
		Students/Pupils Desk Provided in the Schools	1,855
		Teachers' Residential Units Constructed	8
		Teachers Tables/Chairs Provided	173
		Two Cells VIP Toilets Constructed in the Schools	45
2	Water	Distance Of Water Reticulation (M)	4,176
		Earth Dam Constructed	5
		Earth Dam Rehabilitated	6
		Hand Pump Borehole Constructed	78
		Motorized Boreholes Constructed	5
		Open Concrete Wells Constructed	13
3	Health	Health Centres Constructed	27
		Health Centres Equipped	32
		Health Centres Rehabilitated	5
		Staff Residential Units Constructed	25
		Two Cells VIP Toilets Constructed in the Health Centres	32
4	Transport	Culverts Constructed	8
5	Rural Electrification	Communities Connected To Electricity	21
6	Socio-Economic	Skill Acquisition Centres Established and Equipped	5
7	Environment	Length of Drainage Channels Constructed (M)	2,046
8	Gender & Vulnerable	Orphanages Home Constructed	1

Source: (GSA-CSDP MTR, 2017)



In addition;

1. Over Eight hundred (800) trees planted around the schools buildings.
2. Over three hundred (300) trees planted around the Health centres.
3. Erosion controlled around culverts and drainages constructed in communities that benefitted from the transport sector intervention.
4. Large area of land reclaimed as a result of transport sector intervention.
5. Reduction in water borne diseases, cost of water, and distance to water fetching points.
6. Economic empowerment, particularly for women achieved. **Source:** (GSA-CSDP MTR, 2017)

Summary of Outcomes of CSDP Intervention using PRA from 2011-2012

S/No.	Sector	Description of outcome	% increase in the intervened communities
1	Health	Number of people with access to health services.	84%
2	Education	No. of children with access to education.	80%
3	Water	No. of communities with access to clean / safe water.	90%
4	Transport	Reduction in travel time	80.5%
5	Environment	Flood control and land reclaimed	65%
6	Electricity	No. Households connected	90%
7	Socio Economy	No. women with access to skills acquisition centers	70%
8	Gender & vulnerable	Orphanage home construction	100%

The impact assessment of the project conducted by independent consultants in 2013 revealed that the project has contributed significant outcomes in all the sectors of the project intervention. In the table above, shows that people with access to health services have increased to 84% in CSDP communities when compared with before intervention. There has been increased of 80% in school enrolment in the



project communities when compared before intervention and in non-CSDP communities. Also in the water sector, access to clean and safe drinking water have increased to 90% as revealed by the impact assessment study. There is also decreased in water born related diseases. Tremendous decreased in cost of water in the CSDP intervened communities has also been recorded. More household are now connected to electricity, with businesses springing up as a result of our intervention in the electricity sector. The study shows 90% increase in the household connected with electricity. The CSDP also recorded successes in Transport and Environmental sectors, where travel time and cost of transportation have reduced by 80.5% and erosion control and land reclamation was achieved in CSDP communities to 65% as a result of drainage channels constructed, tress planted around schools and the general hygiene improvement due to VIPs toilets constructed around schools, Health centres and skill acquisition centres. Women with access to skills acquisition has also increased to 70% with all the economic multiplier effects. Finally the orphanage home built for the orphans at Tumfure had sheltered 49 orphans. Also unit cost of CSDP projects are always lower than the cost of putting same structures together by other Agencies as revealed by the impact assessment study. **Source:** (GSA-CSDP MTR, 2017)

X. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to describe the role of participatory rural appraisal on community development in Gombe state, Nigeria with an emphasis on Gombe state agency for community and social development (CSDP). From the whole study we conclude that Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is one of the most appropriate and suitable method for finding the actual position of community. Through PRA we can analyse the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the community. All the beneficiaries were well aware about participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and its use because of the proper introduction and implementation in the state by the Gombe state agency for community and social development (CSDP). Initially (GSA- CSDP) introduced PRA in the area by providing training to community and then through establishment of Village Organization (VO) in the target area. All of the respondents were of view that the role of PRA is to organize and mobilize the people towards development. They mentioned that before the PRA approach, there was no arrangement to mobilize and organize the community. Through this approach we can enhance the capacity of the community and they will be able to identify the community problems with solution. Thus the GSA- CSDP used PRA approach in the area to empower the community through self-help and self-decision for participation in any developmental activities without any discrimination among the community members. The PRA tools used are helpful to the whole community, and they will easily identify their problems and make decision as to which Micro projects will best suit them for the mean time. The



community peoples are very happy and satisfied from PRA role because they will ensure maximum participation through various groupings (i.e elders, youth, disable, women and children etc.) for the community development.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher recommended that, there should be an increased level of awareness and enlightenment about public participation through mass media and regular meetings (bi-weekly, weekly or monthly) with stakeholders and traditional authorities. To have a wider participation there should be involvement of rural people from all division of the host community in project formulation; planning and implementation. The local/village elite should be included, while discrimination should be avoided among the community members, most especially gender/vulnerable discernment. Benefit of the Micro-project must be told to all community members.

Moreover, the agency (GSA-CSDP) should sustain the PRA approach as the best procedure for bottom-up method of decision making since it has yielded the desired result. Furthermore, It should be necessary to have simple and easy the procedure of Village Organization (grouping).

The state government should incorporate the activities of the agency (GSA-CSDP) and also attach them to work side by side with the state civil service staff in order to assist the staff of the agency and also learn from their vast knowledge of PRA for future references.

The state Government should improve the welfare packages of the staff of the agency; so as to motivate them to give out their best in all actions.

For a meaningful development to take place there must be transparency, accountability, Monitoring and evaluation and above all there must be a strong relationship among the community members and staff of the agency (GSA-CSDP).

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