



The term rapid appraisal does not refer to a single technique but to a range of evaluation procedures. Their chief characteristics are that they take only a short time to complete, tend to be relatively cheap to carry out and make use of more 'informal' data collection procedures. The techniques rely primarily on observation coupled with semi-structured interviewing of farmers, local leaders and officials. In this way, it is thought that the varying perspectives of RRA research team members will provide a more balanced picture.

Team Composition

One of the main characteristics of RRA is to work with a team of people from different disciplines. The main question then is, "which disciplines have to participate?" The recommendation is to recruit both men and women to be included on the research team. Teams should also have a mix of insiders and outsiders. Insiders or people very familiar with the area will provide a high-knowledge perspective to the problem. The outsider's participation may help identify possible options and in noting constraints that might otherwise be overlooked.

Rapid Rural A is a bridge between formal surveys and unstructured research methods such as in depth interviews, focus groups and observation studies.

Field operation principles

Armed with tentative questions and information objectives, field research can begin. At first everything may seem confusing in the field. However, before long the region will become understandable if researchers follow three simple principles of fieldwork:

Observe: Researchers should keenly watch for patterns of crop production, land use, and farm/farmer behavior.

Converse: Researchers should stop and talk to farmers and listen to their concerns and views.

Record: Researchers should write everything down. Complete field-notes are crucial. This is especially essential in the early stages of the appraisal to help organize thinking.

If a large region is to be studied in the rural appraisal and a large research team is to be employed, it is advisable to carefully divide the region into smaller areas and appoint small teams (of 2 or 3 researchers) to cover each area. Specific delineation of the boundaries of each area must be made to ensure that no overlap occurs between teams.

A secondary data review should be conducted before conducting the research in the field. This would involve searching for and studying existing reports and records, and not only published data. Relevant information can be found in government agencies, universities, research centers, marketing bodies and other institutions. Relevant information can be project documents, research papers, annual reports, previous survey results, maps, as well as journals and books and even newspapers.

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Major Source: **Crawford, I.**, (1997) *Marketing Research and Information System*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, Rome.

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Available at www.meas-extension.org/tip-sheets

