

**Report of Backstopping Mission on  
Participatory Rural Appraisal /  
Participatory Land Use Planning Issues in  
Bhutan-German Integrated Forest Management Project  
(BG-IFMP), Bhutan**

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## Preface

From June 17 to 27, 1996, I was asked to visit the Bhutan-German Integrated Forest Management Project at Thimphu and Lobesa, Bhutan, in the context of my backstopping work on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) approaches. The visit took place one year after my first backstopping task for developing and carrying out a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) study in Nahi Gewog, Wangdi Phoedrang district (one of the three districts in which the project is mandated to work).

The team leader of the project had, in two faxes, assigned me a total of four different tasks (cf. faxes in the annex) for my second backstopping mission:

- to critically assess the RRA study on the use of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) undertaken in Nahi Valley by a consultant from the Forest Research Center in December 1995;
- to accompany, advise and support a twelve-member team from different Bhutanese institutions in the implementation of an RRA study in Kothoka Valley in the context of a planned revision of the Forest Management Plan for Kothoka Forest Management Unit;
- to help develop a proposal for future PRA processes in the context of an improved Forest Management Plan approach, starting with the example of Gogona valley, where a forest management plan will be devised for the first time;
- and finally to critically assess a recently undertaken land use planning study by the DANIDA-supported Land Use Planning Project (LUPP), which was carried out in one of the Gewogs of Wangdi Phoedrang district, in which BG-IFMP will be active in future. The assessment should focus on the methodology employed by LUPP and on the potential basis of this study for future work of BG-IFMP in the Renewable Natural Resources (RNR) sector.

As much of the backstopping work involved on-the-spot counseling rather than a long elaboration on paper - especially so since five out of the ten days were spent on supporting the RRA team in Gogona directly in the field - the following report is kept short. It is also not presented as one comprehensive report, but rather as a compilation of four individual papers, one for each of the tasks assigned. In this way the individual papers can be shared with different audiences, not necessitating the spread of the whole report.

On the other hand, the four tasks are nevertheless intertwined; thus, reading all four papers in sequence will also result in a hopefully clear direction of my suggestions for future participatory work in sustainable (forest and other) resource management for BG-IFMP.

The “heart” of this backstopping mission, especially as regards the future approach of BG-IFMP in forest management planning, is contained in the third contribution, the “Proposal for PRA Approach in the Context of the Development of the Forest Management Plan for Gogona FMU”. While it is short and yet preliminary, it contains in a nucleus my view of an integration of sectoral concerns of the Forest Department with the social concerns of the

project. I hope that it could be the seed for a future “holistic forest management” approach, based on the traditions and present practice of Bhutanese society, but enriched with valuable experiences from outside.

I would like to thank all people with whom I had the pleasure of cooperation during this short visit, and from whom I profited a lot in my understanding of Bhutan and its challenges for sustainable resource management.

Uwe Kievelitz

June 26, 1996

**Comments on**  
**FRC/BG-IFMP Occasional Paper No. 1:**  
**Phuntsho Namgyel,**  
**Beyond Timber - What Value of the Forest?, Thimphu 1996**

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**Comments on  
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**1. General comments**

Overall the paper is of quite a good quality. It is set up in a solid theoretical frame, in which the basic understanding, role and importance of Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) is clarified. The RRA approach, as explained in the text as well as the annex, is in line with the international (classic) understanding of Rapid Rural Appraisal as an analytical methodology for qualitative and, with limitations, participatory methodology. The main shortcoming in this context is that the potential for participation even within a more “extractive” analytical approach is not clearly discussed and made use of in the later text. Helpful literature in this context would be Chambers 1992, Schoenhuth/Kievelitz 1994 or IIED 1995.

The results of the study are very interesting and show already a much higher degree of detail than comparable studies in Bhutan, e.g. Wagner 1994. The actual and potential importance of NTFP clearly speaks from these data, and will be a useful background reference based on which future Forest Management Plans (FMP) can take up this issue (cf. also the comment in the BG-IFMP PFK, de Vletter/Mueller-Hohenstein 1996). The conclusions from the field work are nicely developed in the final chapters.

A certain weakness of the paper is that it is not clearly enough set up within the action agenda of the BG-IFMP, so that the contribution of this study to the overall development of both an improved (i.e. especially more user-oriented and participatory) FMP approach as well as the concrete development of actions in Nahi Valley would become clear. If one would have done this, potentially the overall approach chosen for the study would have shifted from RRA to PRA, i.e. using the study already to derive potential options for action together with the local population (cf. examples in FAO 1995).

**2. Methodological Reflections**

While it has been stated that overall the methodology is clear and in line with the international standards for RRA (not for PRA of course), there are a number of smaller issues that can be discussed, some of which might also contribute to a further improvement of a future study:

Chronologically dealing with it, the first methodological issue is the role of the formulated six hypotheses. Aside from the fact that their derivation and connection to each other is not fully clear and stringent, the major question is, why they are needed in the first place. If it is said in the end conclusions that they are not discussed, and that the NTFP study was not even assumed to be able to find answers to them, then the question of their necessity immediately arises. A better alternative would be to formulate simple and direct questions which can be tackled

within the framework of an RRA study. Such guiding questions could at the same time serve as guidelines for semi-structured interviews (cf. Kievelitz 1995a).

With regard to team composition and preparation, a few items deserve future attention: first of all, while it was positive to have an overall inter-disciplinary team with one woman, attempts should be made in the future to at least include one social scientist in addition to the exclusively RNR-sector-related specialists. At the same time the number of female staff should be increased, as gender issues are still insufficiently covered in the different documents of the project. The training workshop in preparation of field work was in all likelihood too short: from comparative training examples both in Bhutan and neighboring Nepal (cf. Kievelitz 1995a; Butcher 1995) it becomes obvious that even a participatory RRA - to leave aside the more demanding option of PRA - needs team members with solid skills in dialoguing, listening and facilitating, as well as analytical skills for good sequencing of field methods and optimal interpretation of results. It shows that these skills are often only insufficiently developed. A one-day workshop can in no way do justice to this problem. In an overall investment of several weeks or - in combination with other similar approaches like RRA for Kothoka undertaken by the same group - even several months, investment in pre-field training is vital and well invested. It is necessary to foresee between four days and one week for preparation.

As regards the mix of methods (observation, semi-structured interview, group interview), the choice is in line with standard approaches for RRA. As the quality of data overall indicate, it was also well chosen. However, one or the other additional method (e.g. wealth ranking, gender-differentiated time use charts for collection of NTFP's) might have well served a good purpose in further improving the data obtained. This is standard even in present-day RRAs (even though many of the individual methods might come from PRA practice; cf. Schoenhuth/Kievelitz 1995). At the same time, the team could have experimented more with "handing methods over to the people" (i.e. taking the "handing over the stick" dictum seriously also in terms of method utilization and adaptation). This could for example have been done in the seasonality diagramming. Such a handing over would include - and this is a very important methodological principle - handing over the authority for developing categorizations to the local people: in other words, not defining ex ante a certain number of researcher categories, but asking the people themselves how they differentiate between different items or within one category. This might give important insights into structural issues on the side of the local population (cf. the example of wealth categorizations in Nahi Valley as developed during the first RRA, cf. Kievelitz 1995).

Regarding individual methods, a number of further improvements are possible. For example, for the question of different wealth/well-being groups in the village, previous study results which had been gathered through application of RRA (cf. Kievelitz 1995) should have been utilized. In this way a sequencing of methods would have taken place. Alternatively, peoples' own wealth/well-being categories should have been developed with their help, triangulating the mentioned earlier results. In the elaboration of the seasonal calendar (p. 19), important NTFP's mentioned on the previous pages (such as Rushing, Nashey, Namda, Jahoen) are not included; again this shows a weakness in sequencing of methods. Furthermore, the ranking carried out (p. 20-21) is unclear with regard to such

important questions as: who has done the ranking, how many people were involved, whose categories are utilized, how was ranking done.

Finally, the development of diet as well as of income data (p. 22ff.) remains unclear: how was it developed, by and with whom, and how accurate are the data? Especially since these data suggest a more quantified empirical approach, it should be made very clear how they were derived. From discussions with the author, it became clear that the basis for the income data were pie charts in which individual farmers showed the relative parts of their total income from different sources. It is clear that such an approach, while entirely helpful and practical (because it does not hinge on asking farmers such unpopular questions as absolute income in terms of money from different sources, but conceals the actual amount of income), cannot be handled just like a percentage-wise declaration of income. Therefore, some more caution and openness with regard to the presentation of such information is necessary.

Furthermore, while a final meeting was held with the farmers in Nahi Gewog - a very good and typical method for RRA and PRA -, the procedure or results of this meeting are nowhere given. It would be very helpful to know which role such a meeting played in the overall study, and which new insights - or confirmation of previously derived insights - were gained by it.

One final methodological issue should be reflected which goes beyond the actual set-up of the study as it was employed, and which focuses more on the role of BG-IFMP. As it was mentioned above, the study is not clearly set up within the action agenda of BG-IFMP in Nahi Valley (Nahi Gewog and FMU Nahi). It has been the policy of BG-IFMP to help develop forest management planning as a more participatory endeavor with more focus on peoples' interests and problems. It was this context in which the RRA for Nahi Valley was placed, based upon which already further steps have been carried out or are in the planning stage (support to Nahi School; planning for a road to open up Gewog and forest). The study on non-timber forest products in Nahi could (or could have) likewise serve to initiate certain action between the local population and the project or the Forestry Department. One example is the issue of drying of mushrooms: while apparently mushrooms are a good source of income especially for poorer people, the study mentions problems of the local gatherers with their preservation. One possibility of following up this issue would be solar dryers - simple appropriate technology devices which are, for example, produced and used for food preservation in Nepal. One could have imagined issues such as this one already being taken up and prepared by a study of the kind which was done in Nahi. In this way, the study would (have) become embedded in the overall Technical Cooperation strategy for Wangdi Dzongkhag and Nahi Gewog, and could have evolved a more participatory outline and approach.

### **3. Content issues**

While it is beyond my scope as anthropologist to comment on the subject-matter issues regarding NTFP in detail, a number of observations and suggestions on this topic might be helpful.

Overall, the wealth of data on NTFP known and used and their level of detail is very good and impressive; it goes beyond previous studies undertaken in Bhutan (e.g. Wagner 1994) and is a good complement to other more in-depth studies on NTFP (e.g. Bliss 1996).

A general weakness of the study is the fact that gender differentiation is not sufficiently taken into consideration (just as we had insufficiently done so in the previous Nahi study). This goes for questions such as the division of labor, and the relative importance of NTFP to, e.g., women, children, or female-headed households. Some of the few gender data also need to be treated with care, such as the mentioned knowledge about NTFP by men and women (p. 28), as internationally, it is argued that women's knowledge of the forest and its usage, based on their higher dependence of forest products, is higher with women (cf. Bliss 1996).

The seasonality discussion unfortunately does not take up the interesting issue of the overall inclusion of forest product extraction in the farming cycle. In this context, a specific seasonal diagram might have been helpful. Likewise, a few case studies of different types of households, their dependence on the forest and their management of it within the farming system (and its differentiation according to household members) might have added a lot of gist to the study.

Another highly interesting and important issue is the long-term management of NTFP by farmers. Do men or women in Nahi take specific precautions with regard to individual plants not to deplete such resources, but to manage them sustainably? Do they employ certain ritual, or are there regulations or prohibitions based on mythology, as for example is the case with the use of rangelands in neighboring Kothoka?<sup>1</sup>

Finally, another interesting issue is the apparent limited importance of NTFP for the very low-income households. While this might be entirely true for Nahi Valley - it is argued that such households rather engage in daily labor - international evidence suggests that forest products are an important source of food and/or income especially for the poorest households. It would be helpful to re-check this issue again.

The conclusions derived from the study as well as the further research proposals are, apart from the above comments, well founded, justified and nicely put together.

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<sup>1</sup> In Kothoka, a legend exists which mentions a particular female deity called Radap, which apparently watches that the open rangelands in the heart of Kothoka valley are not put under plough or individually used with intensive rangeland management practices. In case of non-observance, the deity is said to punish the respective person by inflicting illness. In consequence, these rangelands have not been intensively used up to date. The legend is mentioned in NRTI 1992, and was cited by local farmers during the recent RRA in Kothoka.

#### 4. Literature

Bliss, F.

1996 Frauen Baeume. Wie Frauen in der Dritten Welt eine lebenswichtige Ressource nutzen. Bonn.

Butcher, K.

1995 Report on a Rapid Rural Appraisal in Dhading District. PHCP, Kathmandu.

Chambers, R.

1992 Rural Appraisal: Rapid, Relaxed and Participatory. IDS Discussion Paper 311, Brighton.

FAO

1995 Forest, Trees and People Newsletter No. 26/27.

IIED

1995 Participatory Learning and Action. A Trainer's Guide. London.

Kievelitz, U.

1995 Analysis of the Environmental and Social Situation in Nahi Gewog, Wangdi-Phodrang District. Results of a Rapid Rural Appraisal June 21 to 24, 1995. BG-IFMP Working Paper No. 3, Thimphu.

Kievelitz, U.

1995a Training Modules for the RRA/PRA Training. Training held in Lobesa and Nahi Valley during June 19 to 24, 1995. BG-IFMP Working Paper No. 2, Thimphu.

NRTI

1992 A Rapid Rural Appraisal of Bjenna Gewog, Wangdi District. Lobesa.

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1994 Participatory Learning Approaches: Rapid Rural Appraisal - Participatory Appraisal. An Introductory Guide. Rossdorf.

Vletter, J. de/Mueller-Hohenstein

1996 Report on the Progress Review of the Bhutan-German Integrated Forest Management Project Phase I 1994 - 1996. Eschborn.

Wagner, J.

1994 The Ethno-Botany of Four Villages in Zhemgang Dzongkhag. Zhemgang.



**Comments on  
RRA Study in Kothoka Forest Management Unit, Wangdue  
Phoedrang**

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Thimphu, June 1996

# **Comments on RRA Study in Kothoka Forest Management Unit, Wangdue Phoedrang**

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Thimphu, June 26, 1996**

## **1. Introduction**

The RRA study in the FMU of Kothoka has been commissioned by BG-IFMP to be carried out by a team of Bhutanese specialists under the teamleader Phuntsho Namgyel (Researcher, FRC) and has been scheduled between May 7 and August 6, 1996. The main phase of the study, the field work in the Kothoka Valley, is carried out between June 20 to 27, 1996, with a preparatory day at NRTI Lobesa on June 19. I had the possibility to take part in the preparation as well as the first four field days as an observer and advisor. The following comments are based on this observation and the study of the Terms of Reference as well as of a back-up document by Phuntsho Namgyel<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. The Study Concept and Terms of Reference**

The origin of the study concept dates from consultant Werner Schindele's suggestions for incorporation of "local forest uses" into the newly to be prepared Forest Management Plan for Kothoka FMU (cf. annex). In it, the main parameters for such local forest uses are mentioned (socio-economic data, local forest produce demand, animal husbandry, wildlife information) and an approach to the study via "PRA/RRA" is suggested.

The draft Terms of Reference by BG-IFMP specify as the objective of the study:

*"To provide information on present land use practices and forest utilization by the local population of Kothoka Valley. This information shall be incorporated into a new forest management plan for Kothoka FMU which at present is under preparation by FRDS."*

The terms also specify the major topical focus of the study and give useful hints about the methods of how to gather such data (seasonal calendar, ranking, resource mapping...).

The final Terms of Reference, drafted by the RRA field team leader by incorporating suggestions from FRDS and by adding a study schedule as well as the team composition, reiterate the objective as well as the specific tasks for the study; at the same time they give it a somewhat stronger tilt towards PRA, when stating in the introduction that...

*"To involve local people in the planning process and later for effective forest resource management, a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Study is felt crucial for the success of the plan."*

This point is dwelled upon in even more detail in the Background Note by the RRA field team leader, in which a critique of past forest management planning in Bhutan is given alongside with a detailed discussion of principles of people's participation and its problems. Finally, the background notes also include an overview of "socio-economic parameters" which are supposed to guide the field work.

The following comments to the study objective and the Terms of Reference apply:

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<sup>2</sup> Namgyel: 1996.

- The study had a clear applied purpose in the context of the new FMP for Kothoka FMU; this purpose is amply captured in the objective of the study. From this purpose and objective, it follows clearly that an RRA approach - i.e. a rapid assessment of a socio-economic situation by means of an outside team of experts, with close interaction with the local people and based mostly on qualitative methods - is asked for. The later attempt to shift the emphasis from a more exploratory RRA - to contribute to a more “holistic” forest management planning - towards a strongly participatory endeavor - is not mandated from the original set-up of the study and the project objectives as embodied in the ToR. It would have been helpful to spell out the intention of this particular study for Kothoka FMU more clearly in the final draft of the documents, as the field team leader repeatedly tried to clarify this point in the field.<sup>3</sup>
- The “specific tasks” outlined in the original draft ToR and restated in the final ToR are solid and good as a focus for the RRA. There was no necessity to brake them down further into more sectoral “socio-economic parameters” as suggested in the background note. In fact, such sectoral details as a back-up for an RRA or PRA have the potential danger of leading an RRA or PRA field team into the, methodologically different, direction of quantitative and sectoral social research. While this was not the case in the actual field work in Kothoka (cf. para 5), the danger of this was there: it was enlarged by the preparation of a short questionnaire, which had not been mandated in the original draft Terms of Reference, but incorporated in the final ToR. A questionnaire invariably changes the quality of interaction between local people and outsiders, as studies have shown. The overcoming of this problem in fact was one of the origins of RRA and later PRA. So to incorporate a questionnaire in RRA or PRA work implies the danger of reverting to another track of empirical social research. It would have been more helpful to completely leave out the questionnaire and rather try to search for the needed quantitative information in secondary data, or to more rigorously apply specific PRA methods (e.g. social mapping).
- This leads to the final point regarding the Terms of Reference: the study schedule and Terms, as elaborated by the field team leader, in fact were only partially fulfilled. While a preliminary visit to the FMU was carried out with four people, a field report was not prepared. And while a number of steps for providing backup information are designed and even assigned a generous 20 days, this back-up information and document search was not analyzed and made available; thus, while the intention of such a step-wise procedure was undoubtedly very good and right, the possibility of making use of the preliminary steps in further focusing (and maybe even shortening) the study was not taken. In this context it is important to state that the division of days between the field and “the office” is unbalanced: out of a total of 68 days, in practice only a maximum of 15 days (2 preparatory, 6 RRA field days, 6 verification days - probably further reduced) are devoted to work in the field. In future, a more balanced timing should be striven for.

The mentioned issues hint to one weakness of BG-IFMP, that is critical backstopping as well as guidance of the employed consultant in terms of development and fulfillment of the Terms of Reference.

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<sup>3</sup> In this context it should be reiterated again that from my perspective (cf. Schoenhuth/Kievelitz 1994), there is no qualitative difference between RRA and PRA. Both are social science approaches which are, in their respective context, fully justified. It is felt necessary, however, to make distinctions between what RRA and what PRA is supposed to mean and imply; this all the more so, since in the context of applied research for development cooperation, “labelling” in order to create the illusion of a certain “up-to-dateness” is an increasing problem. While RRA has been

### 3. The Preparation Phase

The preparation of the whole field team took place in the course of one day (10.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m.) at NRTI Lobesa, with the participation of the BG-IFMP team leader and myself. The structure applied by Mr. Namgyel, the team leader of the field team, was as follows:

- Introduction of participants roundtable
- Objective of field study lecture Mr. Namgyel
- Background to the study lecture Mr. Namgyel on his paper (Namgyel 1996)
- Overview of Forest Management Planning lecture Mr. Dittal
- Overview of GTZ approach to FMP lecture DFO Mr. Baskota
- Overview of GTZ project lecture TL Mr. Krezdorn
- Principles and approach of RRA Discussion guided by Dr. Kievelitz
- The RRA approach in Nahi Valley Slide show Dr. Kievelitz
- Clarification of topical focus in Kothoka Group discussion
- Preparatory planning for Kothoka Group discussion
- Review of RRA/PRA methods Review by Dr. Kievelitz and team members
- Discussion of proposed questionnaire Group discussion
- Clarification of logistics lecture Mr. Namgyel

Overall, the scheduling of only one day for preparation of field work proved to be too short. Especially during the afternoon session about prior information on Kothoka, topical focus of the study, RRA/PRA methods, and questionnaire discussion, it proved that time was too tight. The necessary clarification and harmonization of understanding and know-how of methods and approach could not be reached. From my own experiences in Bhutan and Nepal as well as in other countries, I conclude that the minimum time necessary for RRA or PRA preparation is about 3 days, taking into account not only the question of a common standard regarding approach and methodologies, but also regarding the group dynamics of the team. It was one of the weaknesses in this preparation period for Kothoka that both aspects of preparation could not be fully reached.

Regarding the methodology for the preparation workshop, the importance of familiarizing or reminding the team of a participatory approach, the availability of know-how within people, and the positive dynamics of the team, was not recognized. Too much of the work done during the day relied on lecturing to the group rather than working in the group. The fact that a more participatory approach within the team would have been possible was proved during my interventions, when on the one hand the stimulation of an interesting discussion on RRA vs. PRA principles was

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developed in the beginning of the 1980's and PRA about ten years later, it is not so that PRA has "outdated" RRA. Following from that, a solid and good RRA study is better than a poorly done exercise labeled PRA.

possible, on the other hand the review of the “RRA/PRA tool box” was not done by myself, but mainly by examples given by the team members themselves.

A final point in this context is the fact that the previous step assigned in the Terms of Reference (“Preparation of background information for the PRA members”, etc.) was not carried out. While the field team leader disclosed towards the end of the preparation that even a previous RRA exercise had taken place in Kothoka in 1992, undertaken by an NRTI team, the information available through this report - and potentially others as well - was not shared and therefore not made use of.

#### **4. The Study Team and its Cooperation**

The study team in principle was well chosen for the RRA, both in terms of composition and in terms of experience. It consisted of about 12 people from different Bhutanese institutions, either in the field of research or in the line agency administrations of agriculture and forestry. In terms of composition, it was thus interdisciplinary in nature, having incorporated people from agriculture, livestock, forestry and wildlife/nature conservation. Unfortunately, a social scientist was not part of the team; however, as in Bhutan social scientists are very rare, this situation was almost unavoidable. In terms of gender balance, only one out of 12 team members was a woman; however, again, the number of experienced women in the respective fields in Bhutan being also very limited (the female participant being the first one of presently only two women in the forestry service), this situation could likewise not be improved very much. However, as every field work in RRA or PRA is also a training ground, it would have been very good to incorporate a few more women even with less experience, in order to build up capacity for future work of this type.

In terms of practical experience with RRA, there was a wide divergence within the team, from quite experienced people to real newcomers. In view of this fact alone, a longer introduction to the practical work (cf. para 3) would have been necessary. Furthermore, the total number of participating persons in the actual field was somewhat fluid: next to a core of eight, more experienced, people, was a second group of up to five people who seemed to have an unclear status. On the one hand, they seemed to be junior researchers who also (partially) came along in the field to meet with households etc. On the other hand, some of them did administrative or organizational errands; also, they did not always attend feedback meetings in the evening. In future, it is therefore necessary to clearly differentiate roles between one or two support personnel on the one hand and junior experts on the other hand - who then, however, have to be fully incorporated in all activities and should also be supported by a personal supervisor or “godfather/ godmother” in the field.

In spite of these shortcomings, overall interaction of the team in the field was very positive: all people in the field were led by a strong desire to do their best; all were equally cooperative, also helping each other out with specific skills.

## **5. The Study Implementation (June 20-24)**

The field work proceeded in a well-focused manner and in overall a quite positive form between June 20 and 24. On June 20, general familiarization with the field was made (transport via ropeway and further transect walk to the tent site), followed by an intensive several hours long discussion with the local village forest ranger. In the evening of that day, the group reflected on the first day and decided about procedures for day 2.

The next day was spent entirely in household discussions in the four directions of Kothoka valley. In the evening a very intensive three-hour feedback and focusing session for the next day was undertaken, which showed that a general overview and understanding of the social situation and problems had already been achieved. While some groups had methodological difficulties, others had already done excellent and innovative work.

Day 3 was mostly spent in individual households again; however, from one area of Kothoka valley a delegation of about 20 male and female farmers had come to the site of the field team (under the wrong presumption that a public discussion session was scheduled for that day). The group who had worked on the previous day in the same area, took up the chance to involve these people in a several hours long discussion in one male and one female group. In the evening, another more informal sharing of experiences was held by the team, followed by a further focusing session for the next day. This was all the more important as for the next day the mentioned public meeting was scheduled. While some major contended issues were identified, however, a further “choreography” for the next day was not developed.

The fourth day was occupied with a general meeting, which was attended by about 60 people from all parts of Kothoka (mostly older people, among them about 25 women). After a general introduction and clarification of the purpose of the study, the group was split into five smaller groups based mainly on sectional or gender concerns (agriculture; livestock; forestry; women; political leaders). Intensive discussions regarding the major issues identified followed in these small groups; visual methods were also applied.

This study design, as applied in the field, is quite in line with a modern RRA approach: methodological focus on a mix of methods consisting of informal or semi-structured interviews; observation; visual methods; and group discussion. It is also in line with a focused team approach with a step-wise combination of action - reflection - action with an increasing concentration on the major issues identified.

The strength of the team and its leader was that this focusing through feedback sessions in the evening was continuously applied. The weakness of the team was that it still could have been more rigorous and more consistent in staying in the field, working with the farmers, utilizing the full range of methods and exploiting all their individual potentials. However, overall one can be optimistic about the expected results of the study.

## **6. Further Focus of Study**

It was discussed with the field team leader that the further focus of the study in the remaining days should be on:

- meeting and discussing critical issues with key stakeholders (contractors, teacher, gups, ropeway owner)
- working with the schoolchildren on their perception of the environment and their vision of the future
- clarifying, with the population during the final meeting, the main issues and problems regarding the natural resources and their living situation in the valley (using problem ranking method), and discussing potential ways of overcoming some of the problems, based on a self-help approach (without promising specific project interventions).

It was also suggested that the remaining time in the field should already be used to as much a possible reflect on the received information and start with the analysis and development of the main results.

## 7. Conclusions and Further Suggestions

In conclusion, the following main insights can be gathered from the RRA approach in Kothoka valley:

- ⇒ An RRA approach seems to be a feasible and useful complement of forest management planning. With a clear focus, it can help to identify local peoples' use of the forest as a basis for forestry planning. Such a study input through RRA can be exercised within a few weeks and be an important element of the plan for a future FMU, thus contributing to overcoming weak spot in past FMP.
- ⇒ For such an approach, the expertise - though limited - exists in the country and is further developed by means of activities such as the ones supported by BG-IFMP at the present. The specialists presently available in FRC, NRTI, RNR-RC, NCS etc. should remain involved in the activities of the project; their expertise should be further developed by regular cooperation, periodical backstopping as well as, in individual and well-defined cases, short-term training courses. Additionally, some younger and less experienced people (e.g. graduates of NRTI) should be involved as well in BG-IFMP activities, so as to develop their skills and know-how for the not too distant future. In this context, special care should be taken to identify women with potential in Participatory Learning Approaches regarding natural resources management, and to help develop their skills.
- ⇒ Potentially, a PRA approach could be developed for future forest management planning, focusing further on cooperation between local people and the Forest Department on the basis of a more common planning procedure. However, such an approach would need some further conceptual development based on the successful RRA experiences of BG-IFMP and others. In this context, a proposal for Gogona is developed, which is dwelled upon in detail in a separate paper.

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**Proposal for  
PRA Approach in the Context of the  
Development of the Forest Management Plan for Gogona  
FMU, Fall 1996**

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Thimphu, June 1996

# **Proposal for PRA Approach in the Context of the Development of the Forest Management Plan for Gogona FMU, Fall 1996**

**(Dr. Uwe Kievelitz, GTZ Regional Advisor, RRD, Nepal)  
Thimphu, June 26, 1996**

## **1. Introduction**

BG-IFMP is supporting the development of improved methodologies for Forest Management Planning, in cooperation with different partners such as FRDS, DFO, NRTI and the Dzongkhag administration. In this context, RRA and PRA methodologies have already been introduced in Nahi Gewog. It is intended to further develop the combination of qualitative and participatory social and socio-economic methodologies together with improved methods of forest inventory and forest management planning in the context of a new forest management plan (FMP) for Gogona. The following proposal has to be seen as a first preliminary attempt to suggest and develop a specific approach for this task in Gogona.

While it was specified in the original Terms of Reference for the consultant's coming to "design jointly with the project, FRDS, FRC, NRTI, RNR-RC Bajo and the Dzongkhag RNR extension staff an appropriate concept, methodology and schedule for the use of RRA/PRA in selected areas of the project, in particular for Gogona, Gasello and Rinchengang", this was only possible to a limited extent. Due to a change in schedule, the accompaniment and support of the RRA team working in Kothoka FMU received a higher priority; at the same time, most of the above-mentioned personnel was in the field as part of the RRA team. While on the one hand this allowed for some shorter informal discussions about RRA, PRA and its application to forest management planning, on the other hand a more formalized and systematic development of a concept in the context of a short workshop was not anymore possible. However, the following proposal builds on the present experience of the mentioned personnel in RRA application in the context of the BG-IFMP work. Added to this are theoretical insights and practical experiences from different countries by the consultant. This first sketch of a concept should be discussed and further specified during a next backstopping mission of the consultant to Bhutan (proposal: October 1996).

## **2. Principles and Objective**

The main objective of the recent RRA for Kothoka FMU was limited to "...provide information on present land use practices and forest utilization by the local population... This information shall be incorporated into a new forest management plan..."

However, in line with the general statement of His Majesty King Jigmi Singye Wangchuk in 1979 that "the participation of the local community is the key to the conservation and utilization of forest resources"<sup>4</sup>, in consideration of RGOB's policies to increase community and non-governmental involvement in the planning and implementation of environmental activities and to encourage communities to take part in the protection and

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<sup>4</sup> quoted in Namgyel 1996: 5

management of forest resources, and finally in view of the project's efforts "to involve local people in the planning process and later for effective forest resource management..."<sup>5</sup>, a further-reaching approach is proposed. It should be:

- in line with, and embedded in, the proposal for improved forest management planning (cf. Schindele 1995), especially with regard to socio-economic issues;
- economical, i.e. not significantly increase the workload of the participating institutions, but rather help to reduce efforts in planning and implementation further downstream;
- go beyond information provision to a plan made by technical experts, by providing scope for better and more permanent interaction between forest planners and the public.

It is in this context that a PRA- rather than an RRA-based methodological approach is warranted.

Whereas "RRA can be described as a systematic, semistructured activity conducted on-site by a multidisciplinary team with the aim of quickly and efficiently acquiring new information and hypotheses about rural life and rural resources" (Schoenhuth/Kievelitz 1994: 4),

"PRA is a way of enabling local (rural and urban) people to analyze their own conditions, to share the outcomes and to plan their activities. It's a 'handing over the stick to the insider' in methods and action." (op. cit.: 5) It is geared to become a longer-range process leading to participatory learning and action, usually in cooperation between local people and public institutions (Kievelitz 1996).

In the context of improved management of natural resources in Bhutan, in an effort of people and governmental as well as para-statal or private institutions, such an approach would be warranted and possible.

BG-IFMP's approaches in Gogona, Gasello and Rinchengang in the near future could be understood as ventures to develop such a methodology in detail, based on the specific institutional and social situation in Bhutan, and help to introduce it to the main actors in resource management, in particular with a focus on forest management (as forest is the main natural resource in the country). The exercise in Gogona could thus be a first step in this direction.

It would be especially favorable to try the proposed new approach in Gogona (and successively in Gasello and Rinchengang), since at the same time BG-IFMP intends to assist the establishment of a new Forest Management Plan in a new, more effective and efficient manner (cf. Schindele 1995). Thus, integrating a new social and socio-economic approach at the same time would make sure that a comprehensive model for forest management planning could step-wise be developed.

The objective for a PRA approach development in the context of the Forest Management Plan for Gogona FMU (and as a next step for Gasello and Rinchengang) is proposed to be as follows:

*To ensure an improved assessment and planning for the management of natural resources - in particular of forest resources - as a common effort of the local population and the involved Bhutanese institutions, on the basis of a Participatory Rural Appraisal methodology and process. The results of the assessment shall become part of the forest management planning for the future Gogona Forest Management Unit. At the same time the assessment and planning process will devise means of a more systematic interaction between the local people and the concerned public institutions for resource management in the area.*

The objective can be adapted to similar steps undertaken in Rinchengang and Gasello.

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<sup>5</sup> quoted from the Terms of Reference for PRA Study in Kothoka Forest Management Unit

### 3. Tasks and Methodology

The main tasks should be developed from the ones carried out in Kothoka and Nahi Valley (cf. Kievelitz 1995).

They should on the one hand be aimed at complementing the forest management planning as proposed by Schindele (1995), on the other hand at initiating the participatory process between people and the respective institutions. The complementarity in steps between the different processes can be gathered from the following overview:

| FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING  |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| (Forest) Economic Process   | Environmental Process             | Social (PRA) Process   |
| 1. <u>Reconnaissance Inventory</u><br>* Forest Resources Inventory<br><br>* Cost-Benefit Analysis   | * Environmental Impact Assessment | * Socio-Economic Appraisal<br>* Identification of key stakeholders for further process<br><br>* Contributions to EIA from local people |
| 2. <u>Forest Management Inventory</u><br>Elaboration of human impacts, wildlife, NTFP issues on stand level in cooperation with local representatives/stakeholders<br>potentially designation of individual stands for social or community forestry purposes, sokshing or other usage by the local population |                                   |  |
| 3. <u>Plan approval</u>   |                                   | * Feedback to the people about the FMP   |
| 4. <u>Plan Implementation</u><br>* Sustainable forest exploitation  |                                   | * Social or community forestry activities, NTFP utilization etc.   |
| 5. <u>Periodic Monitoring</u><br>* Economic monitoring  | * Environmental monitoring        | * Social monitoring  |

The main tasks can be divided into four steps: familiarization, situation analysis, problem analysis with focus on natural resources, and common development of next steps (action planning). In some detail, they are given as follows:

| Major Tasks  | PRA Methods to employ   |
|--|---|
| <u><b>Familiarization</b></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>analyze secondary data on the area</li> <li>make a familiarization visit, informing local representatives and coming to agreements regarding cooperation in the next steps</li> </ul> | Document analysis<br>short 2 day visit with observation and informal discussion |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• get to know the (formal and informal) leaders/key stakeholders of the village</li> <li>• get to know the area: develop spatial situation and demographic baseline (settlement pattern, population, gender division of labor etc.)</li> <li>• get to know the institutional set-up of the area</li> </ul>   | <p>discussion; network diagram</p> <p>transect walk; social and resource mapping; daily calendars for gender division of labor</p> <p>institutional diagramming</p>   |
| <p><b>Situation Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify major land use and land right situation</li> <li>• Identify the history of the area with emphasis on the changing land use</li> <li>• Understand the present farming system</li> <li>• Understand the grazing pattern and grazing intensity</li> </ul>           | <p>“interviewing” the resource map</p> <p>historic map; time line; interviews with old people</p> <p>seasonal calendar</p> <p>“interviewing” the resource map; mobility mapping of grazing herds; “interviewing cows”</p>                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commonly assess the importance of the forest in terms of provision of wood products, non-timber forest products and grazing, from the perspective of area utilized, products made use of, and economics</li> <li>• Commonly identify specific wildlife situation</li> </ul>                                | <p>“interviewing” the resource map; seasonal diagrams; SSI<sup>6</sup> and focus group discussion for local knowledge; transect walks through forest</p>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the general living situation (education, health, water availability and quality, etc)</li> </ul>  | <p>“interviewing” the resource map; transect walk through forest</p> <p>institutional diagram; SSI</p>  |
| <p><b>Problem Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and discuss major land use problems and conflicts</li> <li>• Identify specific problems and constraints of forest utilization</li> <li>• Analyze additional problems of the settlements</li> <li>• Identify the priority of local problems</li> </ul>              | <p>“interviewing” the resource map; SSI and focus group discussions; transect walks</p> <p>“interviewing” the resource map; SSI and focus group discussions; transect walks</p> <p>SSI and focus group discussions</p> <p>problem ranking</p> |
| <p><b>Common Development of Next Steps (Action Planning)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and agree on representatives of the settlement(s) for the next planning steps</li> <li>• Commonly develop potential next steps for the resolution of the main issues, problems</li> <li>• Devise a simple action plan</li> </ul> | <p>public meeting</p> <p>simple cause-effect diagrams</p> <p>“Now-soon-later” matrix in public meeting<sup>7</sup></p>  |

The mentioned methods are part of the present standard repertoire of PRA and are described in detail elsewhere<sup>8</sup>.

#### 4. Duration and Schedule of the PRA Process

The staging of the PRA process is a result, on the one hand, of the integration with the overall forest management planning approach; on the other hand, it is a result of the tasks and methodologies outlined above. The following procedure is proposed:

| PRA Step  | Duration | Remarks                         |
|---|----------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Step 1</b><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secondary literature study</li> </ul> | 2 weeks  | <b>before first step of FMP</b> |
| <b>Step 2</b>   |          |                                 |

<sup>6</sup> Semi-Structured Interviews

<sup>7</sup> cf. Gibson 1991

<sup>8</sup> The methods are described in detail in: IIED 1995; Schoenhuth/Kievelitz 1994; RRA/PLA Notes 1ff.

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Preliminary field visit</b></li> <li>• <b>final approach development</b></li> </ul>   | 2 days<br>1 day workshop                                    | <b>before first step of FMP<br/>at start of FMP</b>                       |
| <b>Step 3</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Team training</b></li> <li>• <b>Field work and action planning</b></li> </ul>   | 3 day workshop<br>6-7 day field visit                       | <b>at start of FMP<br/>including leader of FMP team</b>                   |
| <b>Step 4</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Report production</b></li> <li>• <b>Info sharing with institutions</b></li> </ul>   | 3-5 day joint teamwork<br>half day roundtable               |   |
| <b>Step 5</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Involvement of representatives of local population in forest management inventory</b></li> <li>• <b>Common design of social aspects of FMP</b></li> </ul> | not yet specified; repeated field work<br>not yet specified | <b>coinciding with step 2 of FMP<br/><br/>at the end of step 3 of FMP</b> |
| <b>Step 6</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Final feedback to and agreements with the local population</b></li> </ul>   | 1 day public meeting on site                                | <b>after FMP approval</b>   |

For Gogona, it is proposed to start the process in October 1996. As Gogona would have the objective of finalizing the approach together with the main stakeholders, a two-phased backstopping by the PRA/PLUP consultant is proposed: in the first stage, he should be involved in step 2 of the PRA process for about a week (possible end of October 1996). Secondly, he should be involved in step 3 of the process for a period of about 10 days (possibly in November 1996). It would be advantageous to let the consultant's involvement coincide with another planned consultancy on gender issues, which could best be integrated with part 3 of the process. Also, some overlapping with the consultant for forest management planning would be very helpful. Further backstopping needs should be decided upon at the beginning of step 3 in the process.

## 5. Team Composition

From the experiences of Nahi Valley and Kothoka, it has become obvious that a team of about eight people, out of whom four should be experienced professionals and four people junior trainees (to be qualified for later activities), is best for the type of process proposed in Gogona. A larger group of people quickly becomes ineffective and more difficult to handle; aside from this, it is uneconomical to involve so many people. The four professionals should have profound experiences regarding BOTH the concept of PRA and implementation at least of RRA, better even of PRA approaches. The team should also reflect an interdisciplinary composition: thus team members should come from the RNR sectors of agriculture, livestock and forestry; additionally social science know-how (at least agricultural extension) should be present; also, a wildlife specialist would be advantageous. A gender balance should as much as possible be striven for.

Taking all these points into consideration, the following pool of persons is suggested for participation in Gogona, judging from past experience in Nahi Valley and Kothoka:

| <b>Persons (in alphabetical order)</b> | <b>Institution</b> | <b>Specialization</b>             |
|--|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>A. Seniors:</b>                     |                    |                                   |
| • <b>Dr. Phub Dorji</b>                | NRTI               | <b>Livestock Specialist</b>       |
| • <b>Sangay Duba</b>                   | RNR-RC             | <b>Farming Systems Agronomist</b> |
| • <b>D.B. Dhital</b>                   | FRDS               | <b>Forester</b>                   |
| • <b>Phuntsho Namgyel</b>              | FRC                | <b>Forester</b>                   |
| • <b>Durga Devi Sharma</b>             | NCS                | <b>Wildlife specialist</b>        |
| <b>B. Juniors:</b>                     |                    |                                   |
| • <b>Chhimi Dorji</b>                  | NRTI               | <b>Horticulture specialist</b>    |
| • <b>Sonam Gyamtsho</b>                | Wangdi Dzongkhag   | <b>Forester</b>                   |
| • <b>Tenzing</b>                       | NRTI student       | <b>Forester</b>                   |

## 6. Literature

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