Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) to Gather Needs
Learning Objectives

Participants will be able to describe elements of a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA).

Participants will be able to implement a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) in their communities.

Participants will be able to analyze the results of a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA).
Rapid Rural Appraisals

RRA is a systematic activity to gather information on rural existences. If is not methodical and given some structure it can turn into “rural tourism.”

The RRA method consists of a variety of tools, including:

- Key informant interviews
- Group interviews
- Direct observations, etc.

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a version of RRA that uses techniques that allow for more visualization, contribution and management. Occasionally, RRA and PRA are viewed as one in the same. However, there are differences in terms of process and analysis controls. In RRA, the researchers use and analyze the collected information. In PRA, the rural individuals should be in charge of these tasks.
Rapid Rural Appraisals

Key traits of RRA:
• Observation of “problem” from different viewpoints.
• Probing and repetitive.
• Researchers have ability to learn quickly.
• An interdisciplinary collaborative style is used.
• Researchers conduct interviews rather than bureaucrats.
• Participants are purposefully sampled.
• Problem/opportunity/solution oriented.
• The context of information gathered is valued as much as the data gathered.
• Variability is explored and not concealed by averages.
Key Informants

Any individual with relevant information and a willingness to be interviewed is a key informant.

The interview might follow predetermined guidelines but is informal, in that it is not using a predetermined questionnaire.

The key interviews should represent the different interests and viewpoints of the context being studied. These interviews will allow an overall view of the problem to be attained while identifying topics for more in-depth research.
Key Informants

Key informant interviews are necessary in any study with a social aspect.

They are useful in the early stages of research when the researchers are still trying to gain an overall view of the problem area.

At any time during the ARD process (description, explanation and verification) different informants can beneficial.
Key Informants

Strengths

1. Easy to establish and organize.
2. Allows examination of different perspectives.
3. Allows quick reorganization to follow new ideas discovered throughout the process due to its flexibility.
Key Informants

Weaknesses

1. Vulnerable to many forms of bias.
2. Risk of taking information as “anecdotal evidence,” without confirming through other means.
3. The informal nature of the interview could cause a loss of focus in regards to the information sought. It is necessary to establish goals and interview guidelines prior to the interview to avoid this issue.
Group Interviews

Interviewing groups of people can have numerous variations:

• **Communal meetings** involve whoever shows up for the meeting. A general viewpoint regarding the community or area is the goal of this meeting

• **Focus groups** use a smaller group of 6-10 people to give their particular familiarity and viewpoint on an issue.
Group Interviews

Community meetings are especially useful in the exploratory phases of a study.

Focus groups are useful in the explanation and verification phases of the ARD process.

Community meetings are useful for getting the collective wisdom or knowledge of a community.
Group Interviews

Strengths
• A large amount of information can be gathered in a short time.
• Information can be verified or investigated quickly. Varying viewpoints can be examined rapidly.
• A group setting often reduces participants’ reservations about information shared.
• The dynamics of the group promote discussion and social learning as people reply to the comments of others.
Group Interviews

Weaknesses

• Group interviews require strong facilitation skills.

• The interviews can be controlled by a few vocal individuals or a powerful social group. However, this can reveal the inequality of relationships and provide a key outcome.

• Organizing community meetings in a socially acceptable manner can take time.

• The meetings are also subject to bias regarding participants (location to meeting, time needed to attend meeting, gender of participants, etc.).
Case Studies

Are suitable, when smaller number of sampled units is used as a representative of the population to allow for comprehensive study of each unit.

The power of the data collected from each case makes it hard to make statistical inferences about the population.
Case Studies

Allow an in-depth understanding of complex beliefs, actions or interactions.

This is considered more important than statistical analysis of the data collected.

Case studies are the only alternative when the information gathered is particularly subjective or sensitive.
Evaluation

Identify components of a Rapid Rural Appraisal.

Conduct a Rapid Rural Appraisal in a local community, and provide the findings to the facilitator.

Upon analyzing the results of a Rapid Rural Appraisal, what did the needs assessment tool tell you?
References


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