

## CHECKLIST FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

### RELATING TO RESEARCH CARRIED OUT THROUGH PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL (PA)

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#### Introduction

Participatory Appraisal (PA) is one approach to carrying out ethnographic research to identify problems, interests, needs and solutions in rural or urban development work. The validity of its methods and findings can be assessed in the same way as any other qualitative research project. Where PA is used within a wider vision of developing participation and partnership in public services development, additional outcomes of using PA may include:

- empowerment
- capacity building, and
- increased involvement in decision-making for the respondents

This process is known as Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

Both PA and PLA have been widely used in the South to underpin planning for poverty reduction programmes with a range of stakeholders, including farming communities, refugees and peri-urban settlement dwellers (see, for example, *PRA: Analysis of Experiences*, Robert Chambers, 1994, *World Development* 22(9):1253-1268.). These approaches have also been used in a range of sectors and contexts in the North, for example, with drug users in Norway, urban planning in Japan, community development in Scotland and literacy work with immigrant women in Canada (see *PLA Notes 38: Participatory Processes in the North (2000) I.I.E.D.*)

The following checklist is based on CIDT's many years of experience using PA:

- Participatory work overseas. For example, PA to support partnerships between schools and communities in order to enhance children's education in China and Jamaica
- Training overseas professionals to develop PA / PLA skills in rural areas of Britain and Ireland
- PA / PLA work with health and community development professionals and voluntary sector workers in urban regeneration areas in UK.

The checklist is intended to help assess the quality of PA work regarding the validity and reliability of

- i) the research findings and
- ii) the additional outcomes.

For further advice or information about PA / PLA quality assurance, please contact:  
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**Centre for International Development and Training for Salford Primary Care Trust  
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## **CHECKLIST FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE RELATING TO RESEARCH CARRIED OUT THROUGH PARTICIPATORY APPRAISAL (PA)**

1. Are the PA teams trained in the research philosophy and methods to an appropriate standard for the PA/PLA work in hand?
2. Are the aims of the appraisal clear, relevant and owned by both the PA researchers and the respondents?
3. Has permission been sought and received from recognised gatekeepers, in accordance with any ethical guidelines in use by the relevant organisation /s?
4. Has consent been sought and received from respondents?
5. Does the composition of each PA team reflect mixed backgrounds, interests and experience?
6. Do all the PA teams employ a similar procedure and approach in carrying out the appraisal?
7. Do all the PA teams work according to a common list of key questions / issues?
8. Do the tools and techniques used effectively address the questions they intend to address?
9. Do questioning and activities avoid bias? (eg. through the use of open questions and by 'handing over the stick' to respondents)
10. Does the range of respondents included in the appraisal reflect the composition of the local community? (Has the question "Who is missing?" been asked?)
11. Is a range of PA tools employed?
12. Are respondents fully involved in the appraisal activity / ies?
13. Is feedback about the process gathered from participants?
14. Are there common recording methods used consistently by all teams?
15. Is the reliability of the recorded data cross-checked with other members of the team?
16. Are the data processed consistently by all the teams?
17. Is bias avoided through collective analysis of the data?

18. Is there a correspondence / consensus between the findings of the different teams?
19. Does the research reveal paradoxes, special issues for specific interest groups, issues and questions for further research?
20. Are the initial findings reflected back to a representative sample (or all) of the respondents in order to check reliability?
21. Do the findings correspond with other sources of data? (eg. other studies carried out in similar or the same location) (see *Appendix 2. Triangulation*)
22. Are respondents involved in reviewing the findings and in discussing / agreeing on future decisions / plans / action?
23. Does the written report of the work reflect multiple voices / perspectives?
24. Does the written report include sufficient information about the process? (basic data on the respondents; research questions used; the research schedule; examples of the tools employed; secondary sources)
25. Does the written report include reflection on any problems, shortfalls or limitations within the appraisal process which might affect the validity of its findings?
26. Are the report's recommendations based firmly on the findings of the appraisal?
27. Do subsequent plans and implementation processes incorporate the findings and some or all of the respondents?

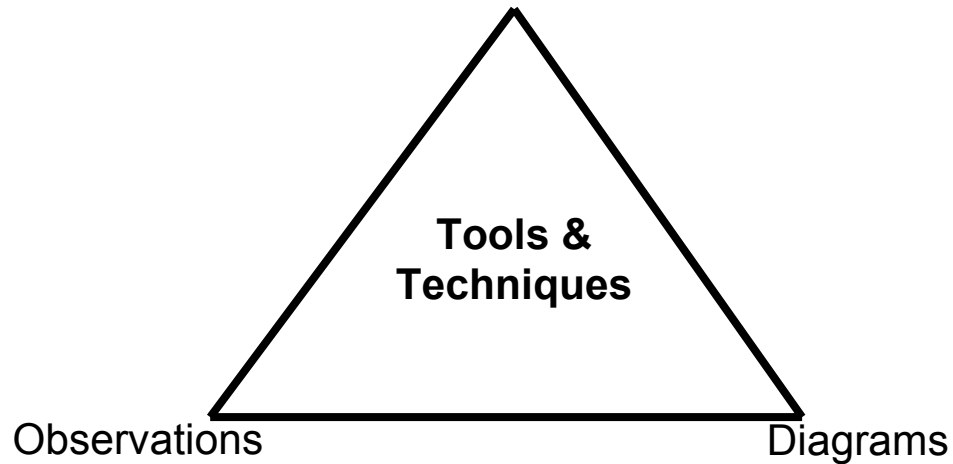
### **Descriptive Statistics**

While PA / PLA is primarily a qualitative approach, basic descriptive statistics about the respondents are useful for the following reasons:

- to work toward ensuring that diversity is represented (e.g. age, gender, ability, ethnicity, religion, language, geographical area (postcode) and interest groups)
- to learn whether any interest groups have been missed
- to highlight special needs of particular interest groups (e.g. parents, carers, mental health patients, women's health, disabled access etc.)
- to record numbers of individuals and groups involved in the PA / PLA research itself, in the feedback stage and in later stages of the process

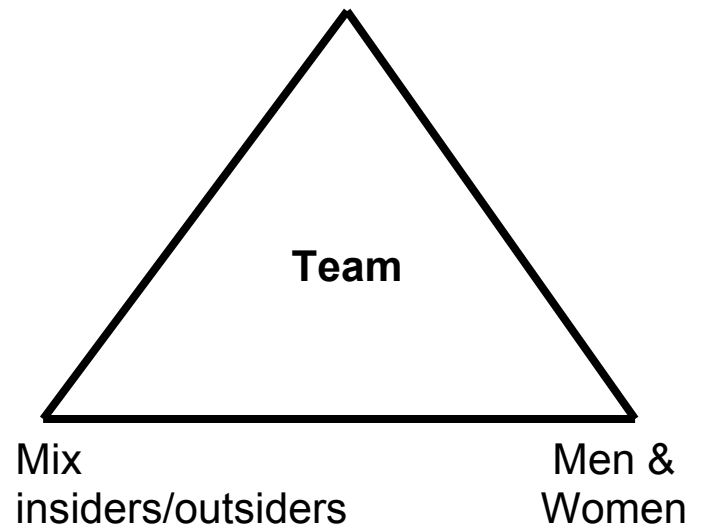
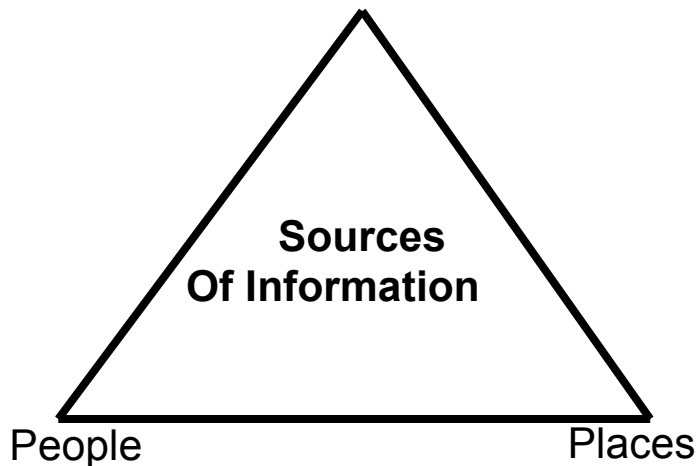
# TRIANGULATION

Interviews / FGD



Events and Processes

Multidisciplinary



Triangulation may be seen as seeking multiple perspectives through using different methods, different analysts, different locations, different sources of information. This provides opportunities for cross checking.

FGD = Focus Group Discussion

## What is PLA?

- An approach for learning about communities which places equal value on the knowledge and experience of local people and their capacity to come up with solutions to problems that affect them
- A growing family of methods, tools and techniques for interacting with people in a way that enables everyone to share their skills, experience and knowledge of life
- A creative learning process, which involves a team of local people, people from local groups and services and organisations all with different backgrounds and experience working together
- It involves people in a cycle of activity and learning, finding out, checking out and working out solutions

## **AVOIDANCE OF BIAS**

**We need to be aware of the way in which are own perceptions, attitudes and values may lead us to be biased in our assessment of the information.**

The following are common forms of bias:

### **Elite Bias**

If we look at the situation from the viewpoint of someone in a more privileged and powerful social position than our informants, bias may lead us to confirm stereotypes or prevailing expectations of marginalised and vulnerable groups

### **Hypothesis Confirmation Bias**

We need to beware of appropriating someone else's experience to fit in with our own ideological stance.

### **Consistency Bias**

We have to be careful of looking too soon to make all the information fit together neatly into a pattern - ignoring or explaining away the apparent contradictions or paradoxes which might actually illuminate our research.

### **Concreteness bias**

Accepting opinion or rumour as fact or truth without triangulating / cross-checking the information.

### **Comprehensiveness Bias**

We need to be able to admit the limitations of our findings and not pretend they are comprehensive or 'the whole truth' rather than merely helping to illuminate the truth.

### **Gender Bias**

Viewing the world from a male perspective; assuming that what men say or do is generalisable to women's experience and needs (and vice versa); using information which has not been disaggregated according to gender; relying on male informants only; acceptance of traditional roles, activities and family structures as 'the norm'; evaluating identical behaviour by different means for males and females - or the converse: treating the sexes as two entirely distinct social groups.

## RECORDING FIELDWORK

<b>Date:</b>	
<b>Venue:</b>	
<b>Group Characteristics:</b> (area, special focus, common interest etc)	
<b>Type of discussion:</b> Rapid / Focus Group	<b>Length of discussion:</b>
<b>Group contact details:</b>	
<b>Who was involved? RAPID APPRAISAL</b>	<b>Who was involved? FOCUS GROUP</b>

**ASK PERMISSION TO RECORD:** photos / video / recording voice

<b>PROCESS</b>	
Which tool?	
Drawn by:	
Facilitated by:	
Other observations:	
<b>KEY ISSUES ARISING</b>	<b>'VOICES'</b>

<b>FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSED:</b>

## FUTHER READING

Blackburn, J. & Holland, J. (1997). **Who Changes? Institutionalising Participation in Development.** London ITP

Burkey. S. (1993) **People first: A guide to self-reliant participatory development** London: Zed Books

Chambers, R. (1983). **Rural Development: putting the last first.** Harlow: Longman

CIDT (2001a) **Participation, Learning and Action (Course Handbook)** Walsall: University of Wolverhampton

CIDT (2001b) **Participation, Learning and Action. Initial Report of a strategy to promote greater participation in Salford,** Walsall: University of Wolverhampton for Salford West Primary Care Group

Gant, K. (1991) **Dreaming for Real,** Walsall Community Arts Team

Guijt, I. **Questions of Difference. PRA, Gender and Environment (Training Video)** London: IIED

Guijt, I. & Meera, S.K. (1998) **The Myth of Community. Gender and participation.** London: IT Publications

IIED (1998) **Participation, literacy and empowerment (REFLECT)PLA Notes 32,** London: International Institute for Environment and Development

IIED (2000) **Participatory Processes in the North PLA Notes 38,** London: International Institute for Environment and Development

Mayoux, I. (1995) **Beyond Naivety: Women, Gender Inequality and Participatory Development** *Development and Change* Vol. 26: 235-258

Neighbourhood Initiatives Enterprises (1999) **Planning For Real. A users guide**

Nelson, N. and Wright, S. (1995) **Power and Participatory Development. Theory and Practice** London: ITP

Sellers, T. (1998) **A Participatory Appraisal of Domestic Violence. Community Perceptions in the Caldmore and Palfrey Areas of Walsall ,** University of Hull / Walsall Domestic Violence Forum

## USEFUL WEBSITES

Neighbourhood Initiatives

[www.nif.co.uk](http://www.nif.co.uk)

Intermediate Technology Publications

[www.itpubs.org.uk](http://www.itpubs.org.uk)

International Development Studies, University of Sussex

[www.ids.ac.uk/prasources.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/prasources.html)

[www.ids.ac.uk/eldis/prasources.html](http://www.ids.ac.uk/eldis/prasources.html)

One World

[www.oneworld.org](http://www.oneworld.org)

International Institute for Environment and Development

[www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)