

Training workshop on participatory community appraisal (PCA) in Michoacan, Mexico

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A training workshop on participatory community appraisal was held at the Laboratorio de Acuicultura, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolas de Hidalgo (UMSNH) from July 06 to 09, 2005. The trainees included staff of the Darwin Initiative project on Pescado Blanco (reported in the edition 31), as well as seven students of UMSNH. This training was designed to produce facilitators that could conduct community appraisal in communities where the Darwin-funded project is working.

During the training, participants were introduced to the importance of the participatory approach as well as the different characteristics of a good facilitator. The main part of the training was the demonstration of a number of participatory tools.

The dos and don'ts were discussed for each tool, and sample outputs from previous community appraisals were also presented to the participants to help them understand the topic being discussed. After discussing important participatory tools, participants were given the chance to practice the different methods through simulation or "role playing". Each of the tools discussed were practiced by the participants



Tools	Uses
Village mapping	To understand the important resources, services, and infrastructures in the community
Historical transect	To understand the different major events that had happened in the community that influence the development in the community
Transect walk	Ground truths. To be more familiar with the community and to have a better understanding of the different resources in the community
Well-being ranking	Understand the social composition of the community. This will also help outsiders understand how local villagers view wealth.
Seasonal calendars	To understand the situation of the village throughout the year. This can describe the different livelihood activities in the village including social and religious activities
Preference ranking	Understand how villagers prioritized things. This can also explain the different criteria that villagers used in determining the importance of such resources
Bio-resource flow	It describes the interaction of the different unit/resources in the community or those resources that are important to the villagers. This can illustrate the different benefits that villagers get from each resources
Institutional analysis	To understand the different organizations and institutions that are present in the community. What role do the different organization play in the community and who are benefiting.
Trend analysis	This will illustrate how specific things (aquatic animals) behave from the previous years to present.

Table. 1 Different PCA tools discussed during the training

To apply the learning from the PCA training, field activities were conducted and the trainees facilitated three community appraisals in three sites around Patzcuaro Lake; San Jeronimo, Erongaricuaru and Ichupeo. Participants were assigned to facilitate different groups of villagers in the three communities. The groups used several participatory tools to be able to understand the livelihoods of the community. During the first day, participatory tools such as village mapping; transect walk, historical transect and well-being ranking were used to understand the general situation in the village. The next day of the field activity focused more on the villagers. PCA tools such as seasonal calendars and preference ranking were used to understand the different livelihood activities. Important activities, resources, food being consumed and aquatic animals were all identified during the preference ranking/scoring activities. During the final stage of the field work, focused group discussion was used by the PCA team to understand the different perceptions, priorities, and the situations of the different groups (men, women, fishermen, and farmers) in the communities.

From this, our group learned that:

- It is very important to build rapport with the community first before doing any appraisal.
- Giving people/villagers a chance to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings is a fulfilling experience for all concerned.

- The PCA team should have a very flexible plan to adopt and adjust with the situation in the field.
- Although living in the same place, people have different views in life.
- Working as a team to understand the community is important.

Particular challenges identified were:

- Lack of community's interest to participate in group activities.
- Some key persons in the community have difficulty participating in PCA due to their other commitments (jobs).

Overall, this participatory community appraisal workshop created an opportunity for the participants to learn and apply participatory tools to understand the livelihoods of the villagers in the community. The results provide the Darwin project with a sound social basis on which to build and develop aquaculture of Chirostoma.

The Darwin Initiative project "Sustaining livelihoods and protecting biodiversity through development of Pescado Blanco aquaculture" is a collaboration between the Institute of Aquaculture, University of Stirling and UMSNH in Morelia, Mexico, with funding from the UK Department of Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).