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Q1(e)

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Learning and Action (PLA).

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · Anthropology GS 1 · 10 marks · Tools of data collection

(c) Tools of data collection: observation, interview, schedules, questionnaire, case study, genealogy, life-history, oral history, secondary sources of information, participatory methods.

Core demand of the question

- Write a note on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and **Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)**
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

Revision summary

PRA lets villagers draw maps, seasons, and wealth ranks.

Chambers made facilitation the outsider's job.

PLA adds action-reflection loops in health and natural-resource work.

The method descends from participant observation.

Watch caste and gender capture of the exercise.

Introduction

PRA and PLA are field methods that treat villagers as analysts, not only as respondents. They grew from applied anthropology and rural development practice.

Body**Tools**

- **Robert Chambers** popularised PRA: village maps, seasonal calendars, **wealth ranking**, and transect walks done by local people with the outsider as facilitator.
- PLA stresses cycles of action and reflection, used in health, forestry, and watershed projects.
- **Malinowski's** participant observation is the ancestor. PRA shortens it into a workshop without dropping local categories.

Caution

- Rank and gender can capture the map. A dominant caste may draw the well as public when Dalit access is blocked, a point **Beteille** and village ethnography already knew.
- Good PRA names who held the stick, who was silent, and what was done after the chart.

Flow diagram

PRA PLA PLA -> Maps calendars ranking

PRA PLA -> Local analysts

Local analysts -> Action

Conclusion

PRA and PLA turn appraisal into joint learning. They work when power in the meeting is watched as carefully as the map.

Facts & figures

Robert Chambers

Rural Development: Putting the Last First argued that professionals must reverse learning from the poor.

Wealth ranking

A PRA tool in which local people sort households by locally defined well-being, not by a survey income line.

Transect walk

A walk across the village landscape to mark soils, water, and use-rights on a joint sketch.

Limit

A public map can hide women's and Dalit knowledge unless separate sessions are held.