



Using Participatory Community Analysis in Ethiopia: Africa RISING participatory research toolkit

Introduction

In 2013, the Africa RISING project in Ethiopia initiated a series of participatory assessments to diagnose and characterize the farming systems and communities where the project is working. This brief explains how the project used Participatory Community Analysis (PCA) to help generate diversified information with communities.

The PCAs were the first phase in a participatory research and extension process in all eight Africa RISING project kebeles. They provided for kebele engagement and social mobilization, providing each kebele with an opportunity to carry out its own analysis of the challenges and opportunities they face. Men, women and youth groups identified challenges and opportunities separately to capture differences in gender and age related perceptions and to tailor subsequent interventions accordingly.

Multi-disciplinary teams from research centers, universities and regional Bureaus of Agriculture facilitated the PCAs.

Why use this approach

- Share knowledge and gain information about people's livelihoods, especially in relation to crop and livestock production systems, processing and marketing.
- Identify constraints and opportunities to improve people's livelihoods.
- Assess existing technology options, challenges, coping strategies and opportunities for improvement.
- Identify entry points to test selected new technology options.
- Identify kebele based organizations and kebele leaders with whom to work in testing technology options and addressing constraints that might limit adoption.
- Establish a basis for kebele-based innovation platforms comprising representatives of key stakeholders working in the areas, CBOs and kebele leaders.

Steps in using the approach

- A training workshop on PCA tools was conducted for two days to familiarize resource persons.
- 8 resource persons were involved for the PCA in each of the 4 AR sites
- Field work on PCA conducted for three weeks in the sites.
- People participating in each kebele ranged from 30 to 40 individuals, with nearly 300 people participating across the eight kebeles.
- In each kebele, discussions were facilitated in separate groups of men, women and young men.
- The PCA focused mainly on livelihood analysis, community based institutional analysis, identification and characterization of farmer profiles/typologies, understanding of local farming systems, prioritization of food and cash crops/livestock enterprises for different social groups, value chain analysis for priority crops and livestock, and water harvesting related activities.
- Discussions were held with communities on the possibilities of establishing innovation platforms.

Findings from using this approach

Many inter-related challenges were identified and prioritized across the kebeles. Those mentioned most often included:

- Farmers lack access to seeds of improved varieties.
- Inability of many farmers to access agro-chemicals when required, especially for weed and pest control. Problems of adulteration, selling after expiration dates and failure to work effectively were often mentioned.
- Many farmers indicate they do not have sufficient draft animals and inadequate equipment with farmers sharing or borrowing oxen. This often results in late land preparation, late planting and subsequent yield losses.
- Erratic rainfall and drought both between and within seasons, flooding in some areas, insufficient land (the highlands being the areas with the highest population density) and destruction of crops by livestock.
- Declining soil fertility and soil erosion is recognized as contributing to declining production. Farmers indicate costs for fertilizers are high and actual application rates are considerably lower than those recommended.

- Lack of crop storage facilities leading to post harvest pest and disease problems; lack of knowledge about processing and lack of processing equipment which limit opportunities for adding value.
- Low market prices, inadequate access roads and poor transport facilities. Little value addition was reported, with output prices being largely dictated by traders.
- Shortage of grazing land and limited access to feed were major challenges for all livestock types.
- Poor access to veterinary drugs and animal health services resulting in pest and disease problems leading to low production and high mortality rates.
- Lack of improved breeds, watering points and predators were all mentioned as problems limiting production.
- Little value addition occurs other than for milk from cows used for making butter using traditional labour intensive processing equipment.
- Household nutrition appears inadequate with diets lacking protein and other vitamins.

This brief was produced by the Africa RISING project in Ethiopia. It summarizes some experiences with the different participatory diagnostic/characterization tools used in the project.

Participatory tools and approaches described in this series include:

- Rapid telephone surveys
- SLATE
- Rapid market assessment
- Participatory community assessment
- Participatory community analysis
- Agro-ecological knowledge toolkit

Strengths and weaknesses of the approach

PCA is strong in capturing community rather than household or individual concerns and issues. It enables a rich face to face communication and interactions with communities. It also creates possibilities to observe farming experiences, challenges and opportunities from the farm to the catchment level. The information generated is more qualitative than quantitative. The PCA exercise can be costly in terms of financial and human resources.

More information

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The Africa Research In Sustainable Intensification for the Next Generation (Africa RISING) program comprises three research-for-development projects supported by the United States Agency for International Development as part of the U.S. government's Feed the Future initiative.

Through action research and development partnerships, Africa RISING will create opportunities for smallholder farm households to move out of hunger and poverty through sustainably intensified farming systems that improve food, nutrition, and income security, particularly for women and children, and conserve or enhance the natural resource base.

The three projects are led by the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (in West Africa and East and Southern Africa) and the International Livestock Research Institute (in the Ethiopian Highlands). The International Food Policy Research Institute leads an associated project on monitoring, evaluation and impact assessment.

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