

# AN EXPERIENCE OF SCALING UP AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF PRA APPROACH IN TURKEY<sup>1</sup>

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## **Introduction**

In recent decade the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach had made a significant progress in the world. In our Centre of Agricultural Extension we found the approach very useful for Turkey in rural extension. The Centre is a unit of Ege University, and located in the Agricultural Faculty. It is responsible to settle relations between Agricultural Faculty and farmers and extension agents. Also research and education activities on extension are the Centre's functions. In 1998 with our very little team (the authors of this paper) we conducted a PRA project in a village (Halilbeyli) of Izmir province. Halilbeyli project had very successful results. (Özkaya&Karaturhan&Boyacı, 1999) In six months with two groups many actions had been performed by farmers, milk production had increased, and women and poor had been empowered relatively. In Turkey governmental extension system is very rigid and inefficient. But there are not alternative extension systems. The input dealers are not effectively interested with information supply and agricultural chambers are also rather alienated to farmers and could not settle an extension system. At the end of the 1998 we prepared a new project to scaling-up and institutionalisation of PRA approach in a county (Menemen) of Izmir province. This paper aims to share the results of project and to open a discussion to find an effective way of scaling-up and institutionalisation of PRA approach in Turkey and perhaps in similar countries.

## **About project and Menemen County**

Menemen County was chosen as the target area. The institutionalisation would take place in all institutions related with agriculture. County extension service, the chamber of farmers and irrigation associations (two) all of which does not have any extension service are the project partners. There is no effective NGO in Menemen for rural area development.

Menemen is a county of Izmir with a high agricultural potential. It has 34 villages. The river Gediz coming from other 3 provinces has heavy environmental problems. Also near one of the villages of Menemen there is a waste disposal area for Izmir metropolitan area. Cotton, raisin, olive, vegetable, milk are the major products of the county.

At the beginning of the project we met with Izmir Province Extension Centre managers and decided to conduct the project in Menemen. The managers let us cooperate with Menemen County Extension service but they could never take this project as one of their own activities. More or less this was the same for Menemen County manager.

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A weekly training program for facilitators on PRA was organised in Menemen by our team with the assistance of a sociologist from university. 11 extensionists (8 out of which is 5 men and 3 women, from county extension service, 2 (one is woman) from irrigation association, 1 from the chamber of farmers) participated in the training program. Longer and in-village training was not possible because of County Extension Service limitations.

The project covered six villages and nine (4 woman and 5 man) farmer groups. There were 6 to 25 persons in each of these groups, consisting of farmer leaders, progressive farmers', small farmers' representatives. The study has been conducted as weekly sessions. In these sessions the extensionists acted as facilitators. Each of the facilitator was responsible for a certain village and a certain group. We had supported the facilitators by attending many of the sessions, obtaining some information, providing financial support, vehicles, training etc. In the first session, the participants discussed and chose the priorities of the problems and opportunities. The sessions generally were done in common buildings in village. For the visualisation of the data, opinions and action programs big paper sheets were used either on a wall or on a table or sometimes on the floor especially in women groups. Visual materials were a mean not an end, and sometimes only oral discussions had taken place. Although oral discussions have to be combined with visual sharing, the facilitators were sometimes in problem of preparation of visual materials.

No free production inputs or financial support were promised or distributed to farmers throughout the project. Chamber of Farmers had given the fuel for transportation for a part of the project period and some technicians used their private cars. No any extra money had been given to facilitators and many times the group sessions had been carried out at nights. However, night work was one of the limiting factors for unmotivated extensionists. And if inconvenient session time for farmers, unmotivated, ignorant and lazy facilitators come together the results were totally bad.

Although the farmer participants of groups were generally from small or medium scale farms, and the actions of the farmers were not against the poor, a separate agenda against rural poverty could not be realised in the project.

### **Results of the project**

The project team has worked in negative conditions. It was like swimming against the current. The most important aims of the project were scaling-up and institutionalisation of the PRA approach in Turkey and more importantly to learn the problems and the solutions of this process. The County extension service, Chamber of Farmers and Irrigation Associations as institutions could

not internalise the philosophy, methods and technics. So there is not a real institutionalisation in the project. However, after the establishment of Menemen Gediz River Council as a result of the project, the manager of the Extension Service declared in the wider meetings that the project was a joint project. Only 4 of the 11 facilitators could internalise the approach. Two of them were home economists, one was an agriculture technician (from county extension service), and one was an agricultural economist (from Chamber of Farmers). Their attitudes and behaviours made them closer to this kind of approach. One of them were very successful in this approach, but all of them had problems in visual sharing. Because of other heavy works two agronomists (one from extension service, one from irrigation association) could not continue and even begin to group sessions. But 5 of the facilitators could not be effective. One of them had tried a lot but could not succeed. Four of them had motivation problems. For one of the four it would be a miracle to make him move to any job.

Scaling-up the approach were rather successful. But of course if the county extension office manager had been interested with the project and seen the project as “our project” rather than “else’s project”, farmer groups from more villages could had been established so the impact would be greater in that case.

Out of the village group sessions done, some of the results of the actions decided by farmer are as follows:

- The farmers accepted many innovations, such as farming practices, new inputs or varieties, etc. Some of these innovations were transferred “from farmer to farmer” Some new crops, like mushroom, organic vegetable (by women in their home gardens for the family) were accepted by farmers.
- The farmers planned and realised to make some adaptation research conducted by farmers for the whole village.
- Some collective actions had been performed, such as planting eucalyptus trees, collecting soil samples to analyse, etc.
- Nearly at the end of the project the Gediz River pollution problem again became the most important part of the Menemen County agenda by the attempts of a project village leader and our team. A Council for that problem had been established covering all-important leaders of County. The actions will be continuing after the October 2001.
- Again, one of the most important results came from a women group. The Izmir Metropolitan waste disposal area is near the Harmandali village. It is not properly established and brings a lot of environmental problems for

Menemen and also for Izmir metropolitan. The women group brought the problem to village agenda and urged Mayor to more energetically interested with the problem. They together demonstrated against the Izmir Metropolitan Majority by preventing waste trucks to pass through. The women established a council by their representatives for that problem. It is a very big problem related also with Izmir Metropolitan area. The process is continuing.

- In Harmandali village the men group could not succeed because of facilitator problems. But the village leaders and men were not also interested with sessions. But the women group was very effective in milk production. Women work intensively in milk production and the men are retail sellers in the city. The women group and their actions became a driving force in milk production for the whole village as also happened in waste problem.
- In the women groups health problems, birth control problems, human relations problems, women rights were the most important topics of the sessions and in many of them they made progress. For that topics B. Karaturhan (which was the coordinator of all women groups) got the help of other organisations. By this project these governmental organisations could enter the villages.
- The women empowered relatively. Self-confidence increase was very high for some woman.

### **The Problems in Project**

- In the university the reward system depends on publications. The easiest way of promotion for extensionists or economists is to conduct surveys. For agronomists and zootechnicians establishing experiments are more easy and academically less threading. So PRA is less attractive for academics. It was not easy to find academics to participate at the project.
- Project preparation and evaluation process is not very suitable for PRA projects. PRA projects should be very elastic. In the project preparation period it was not easy to define which person and institution will do what. The collaboration of others could not be obtained easily later on.
- Governmental extension system is very bureaucratic, alienated to farmers, and as institutional culture very far from the philosophy of PRA. State budget deficits also limit the activities of extensionists. The extensionists many times could not find vehicles to go to villages. Chamber of farmers allocated a little budget for fuel and some technicians accept to use their private cars for that. Some supporting programs like direct payments also

obstructed extension works since no time left. Some of the extensionists have no self-confidence and have low motivation since there is no effective in service training. Some extensionists could not understand the sociological conflicts between farmers and this brought failure in one village. Also the governmental extension system is blamed, but for many years no any effective alternative could be found. This psychological climate paralyses many extension workers. During the PRA training programs for facilitators some managers of County extension service declared that it was useless to hope something from their organisation. It is very hard to penalise to any extensionist who does not work effectively. As a result the managers of extension service had not supported the project.

- There is no effective NGOs on rural area in Izmir or Menemen. Cooperatives are weak. We worked with Chamber of Farmers and Irrigation Associations. They also helped us. But financial and personal resources of them are not sufficient. Although some progress were realised during project process, but they have no strong relations with farmers.

## **Conclusions**

Some findings can be summarised as follows:

1. In the projects for scaling-up and institutionalisation of PRA, before the project preparations enough time has to be allocated to convince the top managers of the targeted institutions.
2. For effective PRA application, there should be an intervention from the Ministry level also. But in our situation it was not possible.
3. Only one of the 3-4 facilitators were able to trained in respectively short PRA courses. To increase this ratio, longer and in village condition training is needed. Also there should be a more effective motivation system for facilitators, but in Turkey it is not possible in Agriculture Ministry now.
4. For effective village group sessions convenient time selection is important. It has to be decided by farmers. Sometimes it is at night.
5. Institutionalisation of PRA approach in governmental extension services is very hard in these conditions, but scaling-up can be realised with big efforts. Participants in this project have adopted many innovations. The motivated extensionists had been more effective with PRA approach.
6. Big conscious jump happened at unexpected times after sessions in villages. Also only one village can be leader for all County. This is what happened in Gediz River Pollution problem. So the facilitators should be very patient.

7. The women can play very active roles in rural development using PRA approach. In one village the men were very passive and the women take the initiative about milk production and waste disposal area problem.
8. Before the sessions begin, a good preparation has to be done to reach the required information.

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