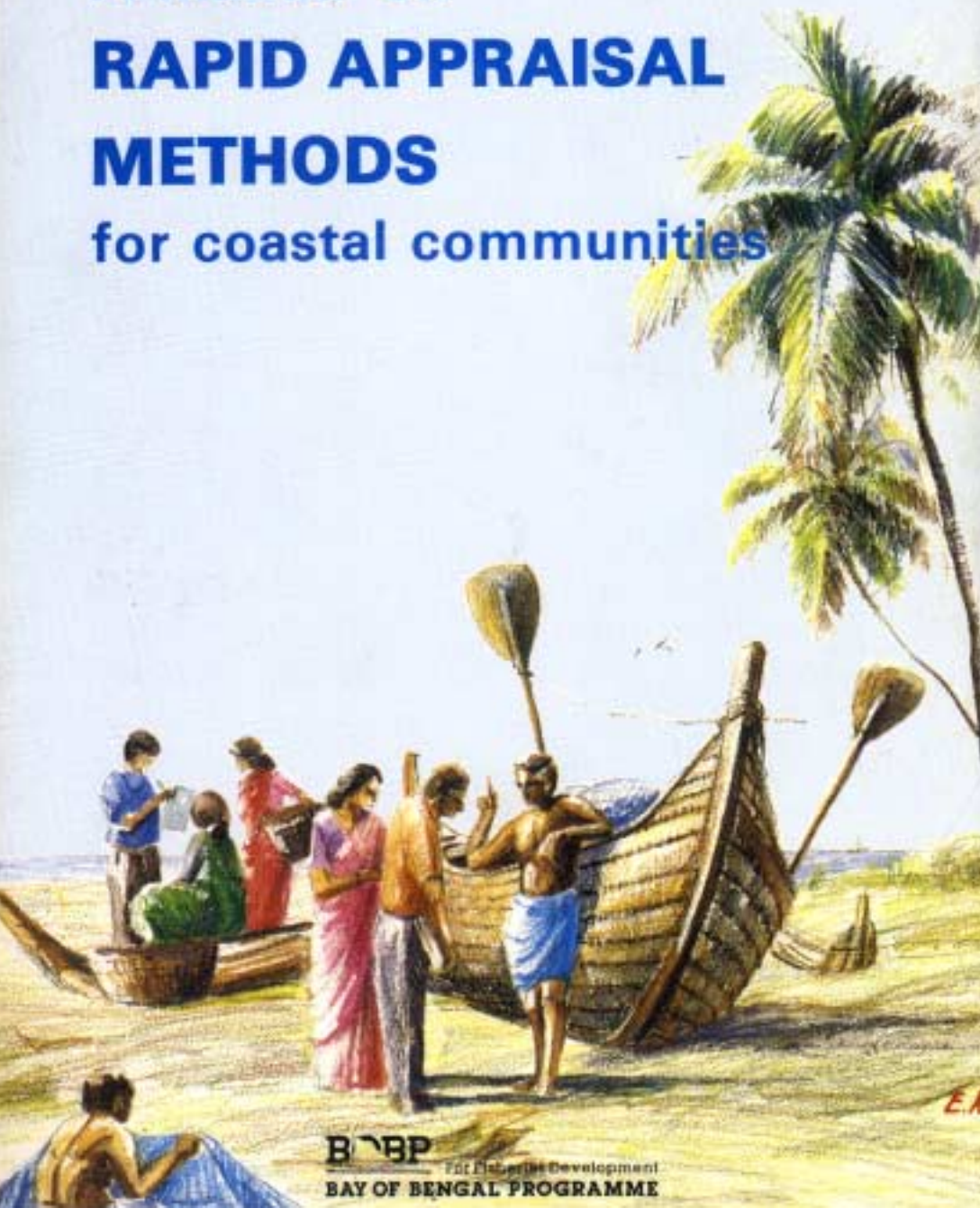


A manual on
**RAPID APPRAISAL
METHODS**
for coastal communities



RAPID APPRAISAL METHODS FOR COASTAL COMMUNITIES

A MANUAL

by

Philip Townsley
Assicuate Professional Officer

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid Rural Appraisal, or RRA, is a repertoire of rapid approaches to collecting information and identifying problems. It is increasingly being used by development agencies, government departments and non-government organisations (NGOs) the world over to learn about conditions 'in the field'. Until now, it has most frequently been applied in agricultural communities and rural areas (thus, Rapid Rural Appraisal). However, as it gains acceptance, it is being used in a wider range of situations and conditions. It has been used to find out more about urban communities and to look at problems outside the agricultural sector, in such areas as forestry, health, nutrition, family planning and small industry development.

Until now, RRA techniques have rarely been applied, in a systematic way, in coastal communities and, in particular, in the fisheries sector. But, interestingly, some of the techniques which make up the RRA approach are already in use by individuals or groups involved in fisheries development. Many people working in fisheries development also have their own techniques for collecting information and arriving at conclusions which could and should be included in the RRA repertoire. What has been lacking so far are attempts to use RRA systematically in looking at fishing communities, their way of life and livelihood, and the coastal ecosystems in which they live.

The purpose of the manual

This manual hopes to make a start by setting down a range of techniques which could be used while undertaking rapid appraisals

in small-scale coastal fishing communities. The Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) has limited experience in conducting RRAs and, so, in preparing this manual, we have drawn on the experience of people who have worked for many years in RRA and fisheries development. Thus, this manual should be seen as a first step to encourage interest in the RRA approach among people working in fisheries development.

Who is it for?

This manual is particularly intended as an introduction to Rapid Appraisal for people in departments of fisheries, local fisheries services and NGOs. They could, with modifications and additions, freely use it as a basis for developing their own manuals and training materials (in their local languages).

The language is deliberately non-academic and simple. There are no lengthy discussions of the theory of Rapid Appraisal. Anyone who wants to know more about this can refer to the annotated bibliography. The check-lists in the manual are aimed at providing a quick, easy-to-use reference for people working in the field, to help them 'keep on track' when they are doing a Rapid Appraisal.

RRA originally developed out of the accumulated experience of many people working in rural development. Through sharing their practical experience, a set of replicable and adaptable techniques have been developed (and are still being developed) which have come to be called RRA. It is hoped that a similar process can take place in the field of fisheries, with experienced practitioners sharing their 'tricks of the trade' and 'rules of thumb' with others so that RRA models specifically adapted to fisheries and fisherfolk communities will gradually emerge.

Acknowledgements

Almost everything in this manual can be found in work already done by others on Rapid Rural Appraisal elsewhere. These borrowings have not been acknowledged in the text as this

document is not intended for academic use but to be used by practitioners in the field of fisheries development. The inclusion of numerous references in the text would have only confused the issue for most users who might be hundreds of miles from the nearest library. This is not intended in any way to diminish the sense of indebtedness of the author to the considerable body of work available on Rapid Rural Appraisal in its various manifestations.

The bibliography at the end of the manual, which is itself copied from Augusta Molnar's review paper on Rapid Appraisal — community Forestry : Rapid Appraisal (FAO Community Forestry Note 3, Rome, 1989) — includes all the authors and works which have been used in the preparation of this manual and many more besides.

Special mention should be made of the contributions made by Jennifer McCracken (International Institute of Environment and Development, London), on the spot in Tamil Nadu; Robert Chambers (Indian Administrative Staff Training College, Hyderabad), by post from Hyderabad; and P.Christy and Rajendran (SNEHA, Nagapattinam), G.S.Ghouse (Inspector of Fisheries, Mayiladuthurai), Isaac Rajendran (Post-Harvest Fisheries Consultant, Madras) and M.H.Kalavathy (Consultant Socio-Anthropologist, Madras), who helped us to try out a Rapid Appraisal in the field.

In this manual, the term 'Rapid Appraisal' has been used instead of Rapid Rural Appraisal or RRA. This is not just to be different. It is because the word 'rural' might cause some confusion. While many fisherfolk communities are also rural communities, a large number are located in urban or semi-urban areas, and it is hoped that the techniques outlined here can be used equally in either setting.

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