

Participatory Peer Review Technique



The West Guangxi Poverty Alleviation Program (WGPAP) is a joint initiative of IFAD and the Chinese government, undertaken in ten impoverished counties in the Guangxi province, China. The project aims to address diverse issues, from infrastructure construction to capacity building. It provides technical trainings to rural vulnerable groups like women and poverty-stricken smallholders. The Guangxi Administration Center of Foreign Funded Projects for Agriculture (the Center) was appointed by the Chinese government as the implementation partner of WGPAP.



During the implementation of WGPAP, it was agreed that the involvement of field stakeholders is vital to ensure sustainable impacts of the project. After examining various methods for engaging the local population, the participatory peer-review technique (PPRT) was selected as the method for involving field stakeholders in project implementation as well as for improving quality control/learning processes. Because of positive experiences with the use of PPRT, its application was extended to the second phase of WGPAP: the Guangxi Integrated Agriculture Development Project (GIADP). Furthermore, the approach had some impact on the knowledge management level of implementing partners. The Center also introduced and integrated PPRT into other projects requiring careful monitoring and evaluation (M&E) with local stakeholder engagement, for example, the World Bank (WB)-funded Red Soil project.

What is PPRT

The PPRT method, developed by the Center, is derived from accumulated experiences gathered in the course of implementation of international projects. The development of the tool benefited from valuable inputs from experts of international organisations, including IFAD and the WB, (see Figure 1 for key steps of the PPRT).

One to three participants from each county are selected to visit and rate the performance of the project in other counties. The evaluators are usually experienced practitioners and are familiar with project management and M&E. Before being assigned to their designated counties, they are trained on the application and use of the PPRT rating forms, with indicators appropriate to project components. It also includes standards of rating that could be further revised after the field visits are completed.

The task of evaluators during field visits is to assess various aspects of project implementation, following a pre-set questionnaire. Some of the topics that are covered include quantity of project outputs and investment amounts, project bidding procedures and a review of balance funding. Upon their return from the field, the teams gather again under the coordination of the Provincial Project Management Office (PPMO). They compare data from the different counties and identify high-performing and low-performing project areas. PPMO team leaders, in consultation with external experts, summarise results and produce an overall score for each county. The score given to each county will be considered when allocating the annual work plan and budget (AWPB) and resources among the counties.



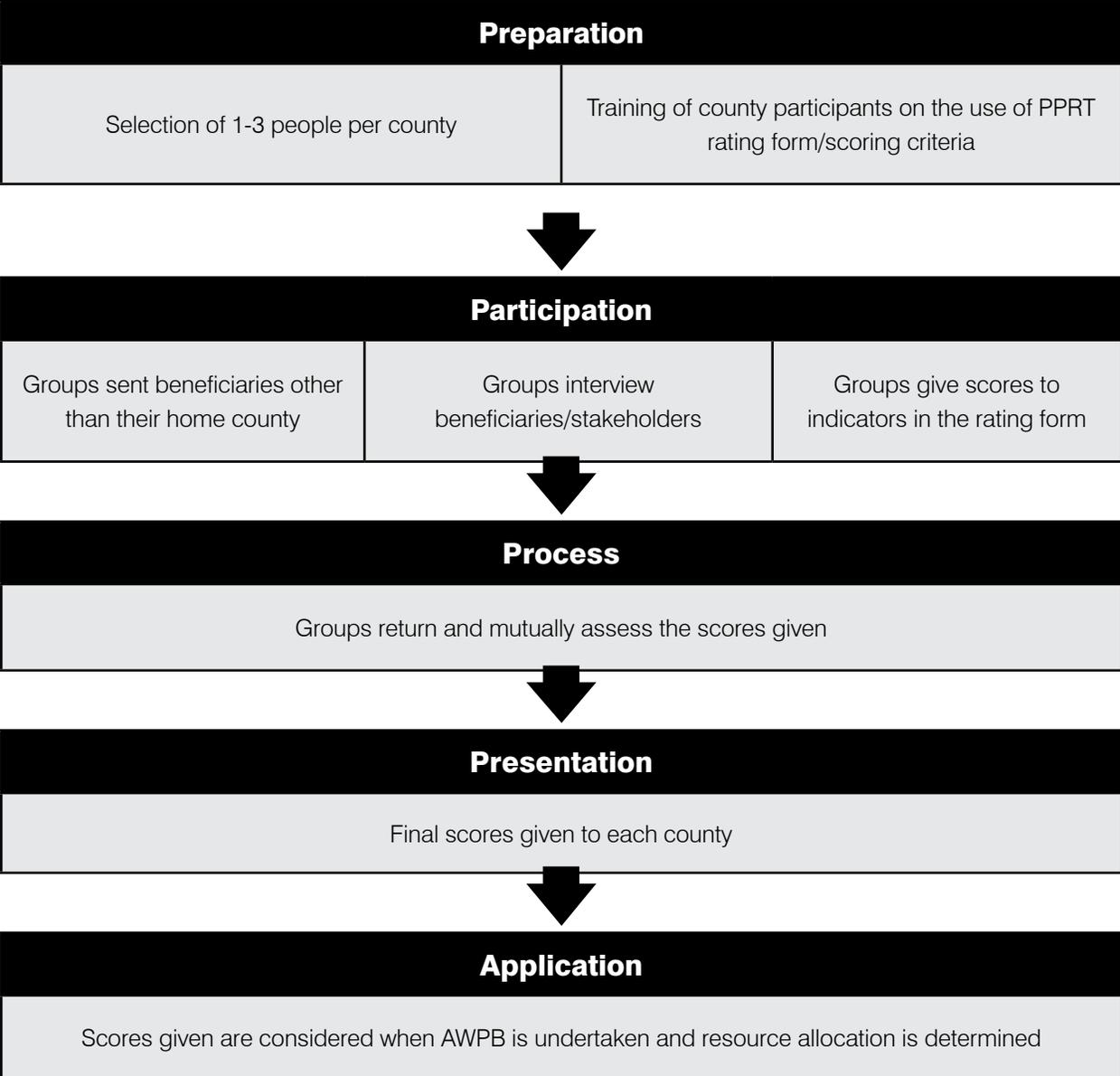


Figure 1. Key steps of PPRT.

PPRT vs. conventional M&E

Compared with conventional top-down M&E approaches, (see Table 1), PPRT does not require highly skilled M&E evaluators and implementation costs are lower. The communication of findings to a broader audience is enhanced.



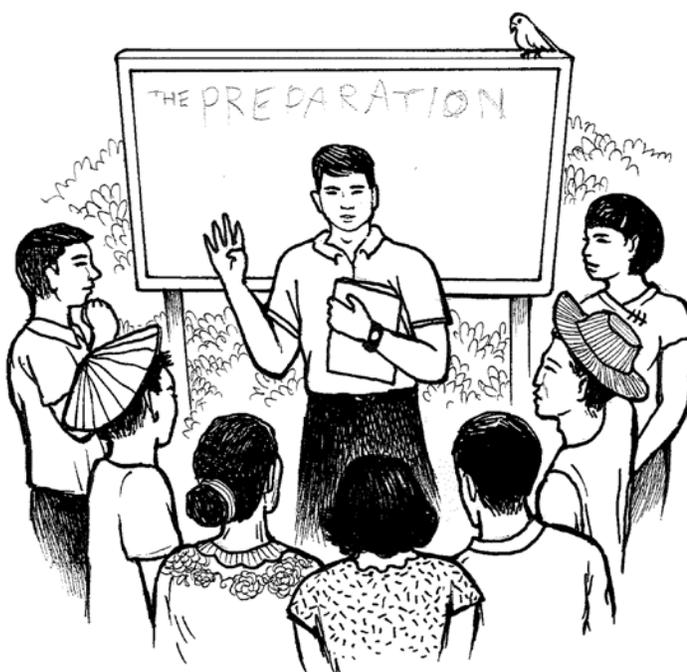
Category	Conventional review	PPRT
Review Location	Project site	Project site
Reviewer	Expert from IFAD or PPMO	Project implementer
Review orientation	Vertical	Horizontal
Level of expertise required	In depth	Low
Control	High	Low
Communication capacity	Weak	Strong
Review cost	High	Low
Authenticity of information	Low to medium	Medium to high

Table 1 Advantages of PPRT over conventional review methods.

Lessons learned from PPRT

Involving more project beneficiaries in a participatory process has been a challenge. This is often particularly difficult when there is a large number of beneficiary households involved. The large number of beneficiary households, their wide distribution across the project area and limited human and financial resources pose a substantial challenge for the evaluation.

By sharing the findings across evaluator teams and engaging them in a discussion around the various scores, PPRT provides a platform for learning and communication between project stakeholders and beneficiaries from different counties. This ultimately enhances the opportunity to better capture, compile and disseminate the knowledge and information derived from the project. Compared with conventional M&E, it is cheaper to implement and does not require a long turnaround period before the data can be analysed and findings are derived. This versatility makes it suitable for repeated use throughout the project implementation cycle, which makes it an important periodic monitoring tool.



Acronyms and abbreviations

AWPB	annual work plan and budget
GIADP	Guangxi Integrated Agriculture Development Project
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
PPRT	participatory peer review technique
PPMO	Provincial Project Management Office
WGPAP	West Guangxi Poverty Alleviation Project

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- Guangxi Administration Center of Foreign Funded Project for Agriculture
- Project County Governments

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